

## MARCH OF EMPIRE - LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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### CHAPTER 5

#### The King's Heart is Changed

#### LESSON TEXT -- Daniel 3:19-25

*The Image Which King Nebuchadnezzar Set Up Was the Result of His Failure to Believe GOD's Word and Was an Act of Idolatry Born Out of the Pride of His Heart -- The Three Hebrew Children Refused to Obey the King Because They Believed GOD's Word and Were Determined to Obey GOD Rather Than Man -- The Result of This Miracle Upon the King -- Men Discover CHRIST in the Furnace of Affliction -- A Present and Prophetic Application of the Truth Taught by This Miracle of Faith and Preservation -- The King's Decree*

Our last message was based upon Daniel 3:1-18, where we have an account of the image which Nebuchadnezzar set up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. This was purely an act of idolatry which Nebuchadnezzar arranged for, and commanded all people to perform, and this whole event was born out of the pride of his own heart. It was therefore displeasing to GOD. Nebuchadnezzar should have known better than to do this, because GOD had given to him a wonderful revelation of divine truth, through the dream which he had had, and which had been interpreted to him by Daniel.

Verses 8 to 18 of the third chapter of Daniel reveal to us that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were Daniel's Jewish companions in captivity, refused to bow to the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

In Daniel 3:16-18 it says, "**Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.**"

Thus my friends, with such language, which was born of faith and courage, the three Hebrew Children exposed themselves to the wrath of the king and to the dangers of the fiery furnace, and threw themselves unreservedly upon the grace and the mercy of GOD.

## LESSON TEXT

We are not ready to advance in our study by considering what is written in verses 19 to 25, where it says, **"Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace, one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men, loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."**

## A GREAT FAITH -- A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE

This is a simple narrative but one which has a profound meaning. First of all it reveals the power of a living faith in the living GOD. Needless to say, few men in all history have manifested the degree of faith which these three young men had, who deliberately set themselves to obey GOD rather than man, and who were willing to suffer the consequences of their own choice in the matter.

How striking it was that those who threw them into the flames were slain by the heat of the furnace while Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego went down into the very midst of the furnace and were unharmed.

In this striking event the words of Isaiah 43:1-3 were literally fulfilled, where it says, **"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle unto thee, for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."**

## THE KING'S HEART WAS CHANGED

The story of the fiery furnace is interesting also because of the effect which it had upon King Nebuchadnezzar. In verses 24 and 25 of our lesson text it says, **"Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in hast, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Then answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the**

**midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."**

## **WHERE MEN DISCOVER CHRIST**

Indeed, my friends, what a strange place for such a great king as Nebuchadnezzar to have received a vision of the Son of GOD, for the fourth man in the furnace was none other than the prehistoric CHRIST, who appeared in this form, in the furnace, with the three Hebrew children.

Strange as it may seem, kings, potentates and great men do not find GOD or catch a vision of His Son, the Lord JESUS CHRIST in the halls of greatness or in the courts of fame. On the contrary, like Nebuchadnezzar, they find that the Lord manifests Himself among those who are afflicted and in distress.

For instance, when the Children of Israel were in Egyptian bondage and were sorely afflicted, it was then that the Lord manifested Himself to Moses and spoke to him out of the midst of the burning bush at the backside of the desert. He, who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush was the very same one who joined the three Hebrew Children in the midst of the burning fiery furnace. He is the same one who commissioned Moses and Aaron to deliver the Children of Israel from their affliction. He it was who went before them in the pillar of cloud by day and in the pillar of fire by night to lead them in the way, as they journeyed out of Egypt toward the Promised land.

The place, therefore, to look for the Son of man is not among the rich and the powerful; but those who would look upon Him, may expect to find Him in the midst of His afflicted people among whom He dwells, in SPIRIT, to comfort them in their distress and to deliver them from the hands of the enemy.

When JESUS was upon earth, He lived out His life according to this same principle. Those who were looking for our Lord did not find Him among the rich people of Jerusalem or among the scribes and Pharisees, but they found Him among the poor and the afflicted who needed Him most and who appreciated His presence and the wonderful ministry of healing for their bodies, which He was able to perform.

So it was, that Nebuchadnezzar did not catch a glimpse of the Son of man in the courts and palaces of the great empire of which he was the head, but unexpectedly he did catch a glimpse of the Son of GOD in the midst of the burning fiery furnace with the three Hebrew children, whom he had sought to destroy.

## **A PRESENT APPLICATION**

There is also a present application which can be made of the truth suggested to us in this passage, and that is that He who visited the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace to deliver them from the wrath of the king, is with his afflicted children also today, who are passing through fiery trials.

In I Peter 4:12-13, the Apostle said, "**Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.**"

For those who are passing through strange and fiery trials, we remind you that in I Corinthians 10:13 it says, "**There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.**"

We may rest assured, therefore that He who stood in the midst of the fiery furnace with the Hebrew children is standing with all true Christians today, in the midst of their fiery trials through which they are passing. He will defend us against those who would do us harm, at least until our work upon earth is finished.

### **A PROPHETIC APPLICATION**

A third application of the truth presented in our lesson text is, that the three Hebrew children who were tried in the fiery furnace and were delivered, were a type of the believing remnant in Israel, who will be called upon to pass through the fiery trials of the coming time of tribulation. The Scriptures clearly reveal that a time of unparalleled trouble will come upon the nations because of their sin, and unbelief, and disobedience.

The suffering of the Children of Israel during that time is spoken of as the time of Jacob's trouble. In Jeremiah 30:5-7 it says, "**And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel, and concerning Judah. For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.**"

Thus, my friends, we see that the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace were a type of the believing remnant in Israel, who will suffer fiery trials during the time of the great tribulation, and who will be saved out of it through their faith and courage and obedience to GOD, the same as the Hebrew children were saved in times past.

How glad and how thankful, therefore, all of us should be that there is one, even the Son of man, who is willing to stand with us in our affliction and to defend us from the wrath and the evil purposes of Satan, against us.

### **THE RESULT OF THIS MIRACLE OF FAITH AND PRESERVATION**

What was the result of this strange experience of the Hebrew Children upon Nebuchadnezzar? The answer to this question is found in verses 26 to 28 of our lesson text where it says, "**Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,**

came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, **Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.**"

## **THE KING'S DECREE**

Thus, my friends, we see that by this event, which no one could dispute or deny, the mind and purpose of the king toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was completely changed, so much so, that he was persuaded to make a decree in their behalf.

In verses 29 and 30 of our lesson text the king said, **"Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon."**

Thus, my friends, we see that when the three Hebrew children by their faith and courage put themselves as it were on the altar of GOD, for sacrifice or for service, GOD used them as the means whereby a great miracle was performed which changed the mind of a king and which gave the Lord opportunity to manifest Himself not only unto themselves but unto others. As a result of the decree which King Nebuchadnezzar made these things became known to all nations throughout the Babylonian kingdom. Thus did GOD turn apparent defeat into victory, and thus did He cause the wrath of man to praise Him, all of which was brought to pass because the three Hebrew Children dared to believe and obey GOD rather than men.

I am constrained to believe, therefore, that if GOD could find such faith in the hearts of men and women who are living today, He would use it perhaps in some other way to get glory unto Himself and to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Therefore, in the language of the Apostle Paul **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"** (Romans 12:1-2).

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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