

The Fiery Furnace

"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." Revelation 13:7.

"By many, the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is made void, being treated as a thing of naught; while the spurious sabbath, the child of the papacy, is exalted. In the place of God's laws, are elevated the laws of the man of sin—laws that are to be received and regarded as the wonderful golden image of Nebuchadnezzar was by the Babylonians. Forming this great image, Nebuchadnezzar commanded that it should receive universal homage from all, both great and small, high and low, rich and poor."—Manuscript 24, 1891.

SUNDAY

1. What did Nebuchadnezzar do that was related to the dream that God had given him?

DANIEL 3:1-2 *Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ²Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.*

"From his rich store of treasure, Nebuchadnezzar caused to be made a great golden image, similar in its general features to that which had been seen in vision, save in the one particular of the material of which it was composed. Accustomed as they were to magnificent representations of their heathen deities, the Chaldeans had never before produced anything so imposing and majestic as this resplendent statue, threescore cubits in height and six cubits in breadth. And it is not surprising that in a land where idol worship was of universal prevalence, the beautiful and priceless image in the plain of Dura, representing the glory of Babylon and its magnificence and power, should be consecrated as an object of worship. This was accordingly provided for, and a decree went forth that on the day of the dedication all should show their supreme loyalty to the Babylonian power by bowing before the image."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 505.

MONDAY

2. What was his purpose? What did he threaten?

DANIEL 3:4-6 *Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, ⁵That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down*

and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: ⁶And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

"The appointed day came, and a vast concourse from all 'people, nations, and languages,' assembled on the plain of Dura. In harmony with the king's command, when the sound of music was heard, the whole company 'fell down and worshipped the golden image.' On that eventful day the powers of darkness seemed to be gaining a signal triumph; the worship of the golden image bade fair to become connected permanently with the established forms of idolatry recognized as the state religion of the land. Satan hoped thereby to defeat God's purpose of making the presence of captive Israel in Babylon a means of blessing to all the nations of heathendom....

"To Nebuchadnezzar, flushed with triumph, was brought the word that among his subjects there were some who dared disobey his mandate. Certain of the wise men, jealous of the honors that had been bestowed upon the faithful companions of Daniel, now reported to the king their flagrant violation of his wishes." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 506.

TUESDAY

3. Who became the center of attention in that situation? Why?

DANIEL 3:8, 12 *Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.... ¹²There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

"Not all had bowed the knee to the idolatrous symbol of human power. In the midst of the worshipping multitude there were three men who were firmly resolved not thus to dishonor the God of heaven. Their God was King of kings and Lord of lords; they would bow to none other." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 506.

WEDNESDAY

4. What happened immediately? What did the faithful young men reply to the king's threat?

DANIEL 3:13-18 *Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? ¹⁵Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psalter, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. ¹⁷If 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. ¹⁸But 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.*

"In vain were the king's threats. He could not turn the men from their allegiance to the Ruler of the universe. From the history of their fathers they had learned that disobedience to God results in dishonor, disaster, and death; and that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the foundation of all true prosperity. Calmly facing the furnace, they said, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so [if this is your decision], 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.' Their faith strengthened as they declared that God would be glorified by delivering them, and with triumphant assurance born of implicit trust in God, they added, '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.'" —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 507.

THURSDAY

5. How did Nebuchadnezzar react to their words of faith? What did he determine to do?

DANIEL 3:19-23 *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. ²⁰And 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. ²¹Then 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. ²²Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flames of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

"When the king saw that his will was not received as the will of God, he was 'full of fury,' and the form of his visage was changed against these men. Satanic attributes made his countenance appear as the countenance of a demon; and with all the force he could command, he ordered that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than its wont, and commanded the most mighty men to bind the youth, and cast them into the furnace. He felt that it required more than ordinary power to deal with these noble men. His mind was strongly impressed that something unusual would interpose in their behalf, and his strongest men were ordered to deal with them." —*Signs of the Times*, May 6, 1897.

FRIDAY

6. Suddenly, what did the king see? What did he do?

DANIEL 3:24-26 *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. ²⁵He 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. ²⁶Then 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.*

“How did Nebuchadnezzar know that the form of the fourth was like the Son of God? He had heard of the Son of God from the Hebrew captives that were in his kingdom. They had brought the knowledge of the living God who ruleth all things.” —*Review and Herald*, May 3, 1892.

SABBATH

7. What was established? What decree did King Nebuchadnezzar issue?

DANIEL 3:27-30 *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. ²⁸Then 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. ²⁹Therefore 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. ³⁰Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.*

“These faithful Hebrews possessed great natural ability and intellectual culture, and they occupied a high position of honor; but all these advantages did not lead them to forget God. All their powers were yielded to the sanctifying influence of divine grace. By their godly example, their steadfast integrity, they showed forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. In their wonderful deliverance was displayed, before that vast assembly, the power and majesty of God. Jesus placed Himself by their side in the fiery furnace, and by the glory of His presence convinced the proud king of Babylon that it could be no other than the Son of God. The light of heaven had been shining forth from Daniel and his companions, until all their associates understood the faith which ennobled their lives and beautified their characters.” —*Review and Herald*, February 1, 1881.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“As in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so in the closing period of earth's history the Lord will work mightily in behalf of those who stand steadfastly for the right. He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a 'God of gods,' able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 513.