

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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I SEE FOUR MEN

Daniel 3: 1-30

*“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.”*

Daniel 3:25

H. David Nichols
Gethsemane Baptist Church
Adult Sunday School Class

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“Everything in Daniel 3 suggests clearly that the main purpose of this chapter is directly practical rather than doctrinal. There are no predictions. The narrative simply reports the fortunes of the three friends of Daniel as steadfast confessors of faith. (Daniel does not figure in the chapter at all.)” (Wycliffe. P.781) Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a *“great image, whose brightness was excellent”* (2:31) It is no wonder, when one considers the large ego that this ruler must have had, that he would attempt to create a physical image that resembled his dream. *“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.”* (Dan. 3:1) This statue was about 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. One reason he created this image may have been to unify the governors of his vast empire. He required all of the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image and required them to bow down as a symbol of their loyalty to his

kingdom. This is why he became so enraged when the three Hebrew children would not bow down. The second reason he built the statue was to present himself as a god. He required the leaders to *“fall down and worship the golden image”* (3:5b) He wanted them to see him as a god. He is the one that they honored, looked to and expected blessing from. When blessings came, their loyalty and fidelity were assured.

The scene was set. The music started and the people fell down to worship. However, there were three in the crowd that had decided long ago that they would have no other gods before the one true God of Heaven. The commandment continues in Exodus 20: 4-5. *“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:”* Even if it meant the loss of their lives they would not worship this pagan idol.

The question arises, “Where was Daniel when all this was going on?” We are not told

expressly where Daniel was. “Why Daniel was not found in civil disobedience as the three were is best explained by the conjecture that he was absent from the city on some official errand.” (Wycliffe. P.781) A clue to his whereabouts might be found by comparing chapter 2:48 and 3:2. When he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream *“the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon.”* (Dan. 2:48) He was responsible for the entire province. All of the other rulers were on the plain of Dura with Nebuchadnezzar and the image. Daniel was probably in Babylon keeping watch over the kingdom.

When the orchestra sounded all the people on the plain bowed in worship. Why would they not? They had been told, *“And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”* (Vs. 3:6) It was a minor compromise at best for most of the people. Those who objected were forced into doing it by bowed because of the peer pressure. How

often do we Christians give in to the world's pressures to conform for no other reason than, "Well, everyone else is doing it." We need to determine before the pressure comes that we will not fail our Lord just because others are doing it. That is what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did. They said, "*We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.*" (Vs. 16) The essence of what they said was, "We don't need to answer you. Our minds are already made up. If God so chooses, He can deliver us from the flames. If He does or does not, it is no matter. We will not disobey God. Years before they decided they would do what was right. In his blind rage Nebuchadnezzar commanded to heat the furnace seven times hotter than normal and throw the men to the flames. It was so hot that the even the guards were overcome by the heat. "*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.” (Vs. 24-25) His conclusion was, “Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak anything 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.” (Vs. 29)

The king had learned much about the God of the Hebrews. God was dealing with him in a special way. This episode was a powerful lesson to him. The lesson Nebuchadnezzar still had not learned about the Hebrew God, however, was the most important one. To him He is still just the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He still had not learned to see Him as his God. Many people today acknowledge that God is. However, they do not see him as their God. In the story the Father is still working with Nebuchadnezzar. He is revealing Himself to him in steps. In chapter four is found

the final chapter in God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. God patiently works with us to bring us to himself. He brings other believers into our lives to give their testimonies. He speaks to us from His Word. He moves on our hearts to convince us that He is real. He loves us that much.

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