

Daniel

III (∞). Daniel's Friends Take a Stand and Take the Heat

- Recall that ch.2 ended w/ D.'s elevation to ruler over the entire province of Babylon; and his first administrative move was to petition the king to install his friends as administrators under him;
- W/ this our attention has been focused upon them which sets the stage for the events of ch.3 in which *Daniel's Friends Take a Stand and Take the Heat*;
- BTW, because the focus is on Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, it is not surprising to find that this is one of two chapters where D. is not mentioned in the story (the other is ch.11 – an extended narration of a dream by an angelic being);
A. The Occasion, vv.1-2:
- The story begins on the dedication of a giant statue, vv.1-2, READ;
- Immediately, we're reminded of that statue in Neb.'s dream (of gold, silver, bronze, iron), this one, however, is all of gold;
 - Though Neb. was in awe of D. and his God because he had discovered the king's dream, he was not apparently sufficiently convinced that the word of this God concerning the future would come to pass; OR...
 - Hearing this prediction, he sought to defy it fashioning an image after his own likeness,
 - "his own likeness," loosely, in that D. said of him, "*You, O king, are that head of gold...*" [2:38c]);
 - Though the image was more likely that of his patron god, Nebo – WHY? 1) The king's name = "may Nebo protect the crown"; 2) the accusations against D.'s friends [vv.12, 14, 18] are that they would not worship the king's gods or the image;
 - Though bowing to the image is by extension expressing allegiance to the god's viceroy (the king); refusing this taken as the same;
 - If not his own likeness, it is an image according to his own preference, in contrast to that revealed in ch.2;
 - So he is the typical man of this fallen world who would despise the word of God and be the master of his own fate, the captain of his own soul;
 - He is representative of many who would tip their hat to Christ, extolling the virtues of Chrstnty for its practical value, for its stabilizing moral influence on individuals and society; its generally positive and uplifting effect on human culture – but who have never been converted;
 - They are those who have "*a form of godliness but deny its power*" (2Tim.3:5); who may associate w/ the people of God but who remain dead in their trespasses and sins; those who at the last day will say "*Lord, Lord...*" but to whom Jesus will say, "*Depart from me you wicked. I never knew you,*" (Matt.7:23);
 - Or we might compare him to those who are powerfully affected in an evangelistic meeting; who have some powerful workings of the HS upon them convicting them of sin and revealing the glories of Christ, but who do not embrace Him as Lord and Savior. They quickly return to their sin and idolatry;
- **B. The Problem, vv.3-7:**
- Neb.'s pride is displayed not merely in the fact that he's constructed this image of himself but has compelled all the rulers of his realm to appear and worship it; "suggest[ing] an egotism tending toward megalomania," (Gleason Archer, *Daniel*, EBC, 50), vv.3-7, READ;
- BTW, this is not an unusual phenomena in totalitarian countries even today – China, U.S.S.R., N. Korea, Iraq – the supreme leader represented in larger than life statues and portraits in public places and smaller copies in private homes are a tacit expression of allegiance; Not so much a part of democratic governments (?);

- **Q.** WHAT kind of situation has been created for D. and his friends? **A.** Stand (literally) for God, or compromise;

C. The Accusation, vv.8-12:

- Just what they chose to do is made clear in the following verses, vv.8-12, READ;
- At this point it is clear that only D.'s friends are accused and so we might ask the Q...
- **Q.** WHERE might D. have been? **A.** This is not made clear; we can only speculate – G. Archer:
 1. Absent from Babylon at the time...on government business;
 2. Closeted w/ other members of the king's cabinet working on legislative or military plans;
 3. Too ill to attend the public ceremony, cf.8:27;
 4. As the king's vizier (PM) he was not required to make public demonstration of his loyalty [in this way];
 5. Neither D.'s office as ruler, nor any of the wise men over whom he was chief were mentioned in the 7 categories of public officials required to attend (IOW, some people were exempt);
 6. Perhaps D.'s reputation as a diviner was so formidable that even the jealous Chaldeans did not dare attack him before the king.
- What is inconceivable and must be rejected is that D. is not accused because he bowed to the statue;

D. The Trial, vv.13-18:

- Being accused, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are arraigned before the king;
 1. **Examination, vv.13-15:**
 - Neb.'s reaction began in fury, but he had regained some control by the time they arrived 1) asking if it was true they had defied him (v.14), and 2) magnanimously offering them another chance to save themselves (v.15a-b);
 - Though as he speaks this magnanimity is consumed again by the passion of his pride and he openly defies the God of these Jews (v.15c);

2. Testimony, vv.16-18:

- The response of the 3 is immediate, vv.16-18, READ;
- NOTE they respond w/ that same determination w/ which they resolved not to defy themselves w/ the king's food and drink;
- As we NOTED in the previous ch., they can stand for God in great things because they had stood for God in small things; they are able to glorify God in the hour of death because they had glorified God daily in matters of food and drink...;
- Let us not presume we can live flippantly, carelessly, even faithlessly day after day, then stand in faith in the hour of trial; This daily "standing in faith" Paul has in view [Eph.6:10-18a](#)
- The **substance** of their faith is seen in their reply...
 1. They looked to God for vindication: The word order in the 1st sentence places the emphasis on "we"; IOW, S/M/A are convinced that they will not vindicate themselves, it is God who will do it;
 2. They believed in God's infinite power: "*The God we serve is able to save us...*"
 3. They trusted in His sovereign will: "*But even if He does not...*"

E. The Execution, vv.19-23:

- This answer elicits a predictable response from the king, vv.19-23;
- NOTE in the hour or so it took to prepare for their execution – many thoughts would go through their mind: Will God deliver us from the furnace?; How will He deliver us?; If we're thrown into the flames will it hurt?;

F. Their Deliverance, vv.24-30:

- What S/M/A saw and felt as they fell into the furnace we're not told; we are told what Neb. and those outside saw, vv.24-25, READ;
- Such was the king's astonishment that he orders them to come out (v.26, READ) and they are found to be unscathed;
- **Q.** Were they preserved w/in the furnace, or did they find the furnace transformed ...?
- NOTE whether we live or die God is w/ us; "Whoever loses his life for Christ's sake will find it"