

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL 3

In this chapter an account is given of a golden image made by Nebuchadnezzar; its size; and where placed, (⁽²¹⁰⁾Daniel 3:1), a summons to all his princes, governors, and officers, to attend the dedication of it, (⁽²¹⁰⁾Daniel 3:2,3), a proclamation commanding men of all nations to fall down and worship it, at hearing the sound of music, (⁽²¹⁰⁾Daniel 3:4-7), an accusation of the Jews to the king, particularly Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, for not worshipping it, (⁽²¹⁰⁾Daniel 3:8-12), the king's sending for them in rage, and threatening to cast them into a fiery furnace if they continued to disobey his will, (⁽²¹⁰⁾Daniel 3:13-15), their answer, which showed an inflexible resolution at all events not to comply with it, (⁽²¹⁰⁾Daniel 3:16-18) the king's order to heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual, and cast them into it, which was executed; the consequence of which was, they that cast them in were destroyed through the vehement heat of the furnace, but the three Jews were unhurt, (⁽²¹⁰⁾Daniel 3:19-23). Nebuchadnezzar's amazement at the sight of four persons, instead of three; and these loose, walking in the midst of the fire without hurt; and one of them like the Son of God, which he observed to his counsellors, (⁽²¹⁰⁾Daniel 3:24,25), upon which he called to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to come out of the furnace, which they did in the presence of his princes, governors, and officers, having received not the least harm in their persons or clothes, (⁽²¹⁰⁾Daniel 3:26,27) and then the king, praising the God of the Jews, published an edict that none should speak against him on pain of death; and restored the three men to their former dignity, (⁽²¹⁰⁾Daniel 3:28-30).

Ver. 1. *Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold*, etc.] Not of solid gold; but either of a plate of gold, and hollow within; or of wood overlaid with gold; for otherwise it must have took up a prodigious quantity of gold to make an image of such dimensions as follow; this be ordered his statuaries or workmen to make for him; whether this image was for himself, or his father Nabopolassar, or for his chief god Bel, or as a new deity, is not easy to say; however, it was made for religious worship:

the reasons that moved him to it cannot be ascertained; it might be out of pride and vanity, and to set forth the glory and stability of his monarchy, as if he was not only the head of gold, but as an image all of gold; and to contradict the interpretation of his dream, and avert the fate of his empire signified by it; or to purge himself from the jealousies his subjects had entertained of him, of relinquishing the religion of his country, and embracing the Jewish religion, by his praise of the God of Israel, and the promotion of Jews to places of trust and honour; or this might be done by the advice of his nobles, to establish an uniformity of religion in his kingdom, and to prevent the growth of Judaism; and it may be to lay a snare for Daniel and his companions; of which we have an instance of the like kind in chapter six. When this image was made is not certain; some think in a short time after his dream before related; if so, he soon forgot it, and the God that had revealed it. The Septuagint and Arabic versions place it in the eighteenth year of his reign; and some are of opinion that it was after his victories over the Jews, Tyre, Egypt, and others; and that being flushed therewith, in the pride of his heart, ordered this image to be made; and out of the spoils he brought with him from the various countries he had conquered. Mr. Whiston^{f116} places this fact in the year of the world 3417 A.M., and before Christ 587; and so Dr. Prideaux^{f117}, who makes it to be in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, agreeably to the above versions. Mr. Bedford^{f118} puts it in the year before Christ 585:

whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits; a common cubit being half a yard, it was thirty yards high, and three yards broad; but Herodotus^{f119} says the king's cubit in Babylon was three fingers larger than the usual one; and, according to that, this image must be thirty five yards high, and three yards and a half broad; but since there is so great a disproportion between the height and breadth, some have thought that the height includes the pedestal on which it stood; and, allowing twelve cubits for that, the height of the image was forty six cubits. Diodorus Siculus^{f120} makes mention of a statue of gold in the temple of Belus, which Xerxes demolished, which was forty feet high, and contained a thousand Babylonish talents of gold, which, at the lowest computation, amounts to three millions and a half of our money; which image Doctor Prideaux^{f121} conjectures was this image of Nebuchadnezzar's; but this seems not likely, since the one was between thirty and forty yards high, the other but thirteen or fourteen; the one in the plain of Dura, the other in the temple of Bel:

he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon; that so it might be seen of all, and there might be room enough for a vast number of worshippers together. The Septuagint version calls this place the plain of Deeira, which some take to be the Deera of Ptolemy^{f122}; but that is in the province of Susiana; rather this is Duraba^{f123}, which he places near the river Euphrates, in the province of Babylon. Aben Ezra says, this is the place where the children of Ephraim fell, and where the Chaldeans slew the Jews when they came into captivity. In the Talmud^{f124} it is said,

“from the river Eshal unto Rabbath is the valley of Dura;”

in Arabic <Arabic>, “dauro” signifies “round”; it was a round valley. The Jews have a notion that this was the valley in the land of Shinar where the tower of Babel was built; and observe, that

“although the design of that generation was not accomplished, yet after their times their punishment was made manifest, in that they said, “let us make us a name”, (^{<01104>}Genesis 11:4) for Nebuchadnezzar having wasted and subverted many kingdoms, and destroyed the sanctuary, thought it possible to put in execution the wicked design of the age of the dispersion; hence it is said, (^{<2703>}Daniel 3:1), “King Nebuchadnezzar made an image, etc. and set it up”, *arwd t [qbb*, “in the valley of generation”, in the province of Babylon, which is the valley spoken of in (^{<01102>}Genesis 11:2,9) what therefore they could not do, he attempted to do; hence he gathered all the people to worship the image, which agrees with (^{<01104>}Genesis 11:4), for he put a certain vessel of the vessels of the temple on the mouth of it (the image), on which was engraven the divine name, that he might render ineffectual the intention of the dispersed generation but the Scripture says, (^{<2514>}Jeremiah 51:44), “and I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up, and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him”; for Daniel came and caused that vessel that was swallowed to be taken out of the mouth of the image, whence it fell, and was broke to pieces, which is the same as that in (^{<01104>}Genesis 11:4)^{f125}.”

Ver. 2. *Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes,* etc.] He sent letters, or dispatched messengers, into the several provinces of his empire, and parts of his dominions, to convene all the peers of his

realm, and governors of provinces, and all officers, civil, military, and religious, expressed by various names and titles:

the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces; who are particularly and distinctly designed is not easy to say. Jacchiades thinks they answer to the same offices and officers which now obtain in the Turkish empire; princes are the “bashaws”; governors the “beglerbegs”; captains the “agas” of the janizaries; judges the “kadies”; treasurers the “dephterdaries”; the counsellors the “alphakies”; and “zayties the sheriffs”; their chief doctors their “muphties”, as L’Empereur; and the rulers of the provinces the “zangiakies” or “viziers”; but, be they who they will, they were the principal men of the empire, both in things civil, military, and ecclesiastic, who were ordered

to come to the dedication of the image, which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; for though it was made and set up, it was not a proper object of worship till dedicated; and which was done by burning incense, blowing trumpets, etc. now these great men were gathered together on this occasion, because of the greater honour done hereby to the king and his image; and also by their example to engage the populace the more easily to the worship of it; and likewise as being the representatives of them since they could not all be collected together in one place; and it may be it was done, as some think, to ensnare Daniel and his companions. Philostratus^{f126} makes mention of an officer at Babylon that had the keeping of the great gate into the city; which some take to be the same with the first sort here mentioned; who first offered the golden statue of the king to be worshipped before he would permit any to enter into the city, which perhaps might take its rise from the worship of this golden image.

Ver. 3. *Then the princes, the governors, and captains*, etc.] And all the rest of the officers before mentioned, having received their orders from the king, in obedience to them,

were gathered together unto the dedication of the image Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; at great expense, and with much fatigue and trouble, they came from all parts to attend this great solemnity:

and they stood before the image Nebuchadnezzar had set up; they stood and looked at it, and viewed its several parts; they stood and beheld it with wonder, its richness and largeness; they stood and attended to all the rites

and ceremonies of the dedication of it; they stood and were ready to fall down and worship it, when the word of command was given; so obsequious were they to the king's will.

Ver. 4. *Then an herald cried aloud*, etc.] That his voice might be heard all over the plain; or if it should be thought that one was not sufficient to be heard throughout, which probably was the case, and where; so great a number being assembled together, all could not hear one man, the singular may be put for the plural; and many being set in different places in the plain, and speaking different languages, might proclaim when the image was dedicated, as follows:

to you it is commanded; by the king's authority:

O people, nations, and languages; the several kingdoms, states, and provinces, that belonged to the Babylonian monarchy, and spoke different languages, as now represented by their several governors and officers; as the Armenians, Parthians, Medes, Persians, etc.

Ver. 5. *That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet*, etc.] So called of the horn of which it was made; a sort of trumpet; so the Jews had trumpets of rams' horns:

flute; or pipe, or whistle, so called for its hissing noise; it is used of the shepherd's pipe or whistle; (see ³⁸⁰⁸Zechariah 10:8),

harp; an instrument of music used by David, and much in use among the Jews, and other nations;

sackbut; or "sambuca"; which, according to Athenaeus^{f127}, was a four stringed instrument, an invention of the Syrians; and Strabo^{f128}, a Greek writer, speaks of it as a barbarous name, as the eastern ones were reckoned by the Grecians:

psaltery; this seems to be a Greek word, as does the next that follows, rendered "dulcimer"; but in the original text is "symphonia"; which does not signify symphony, or a concert or consort of music, but a particular instrument of music. Maimonides^{f129} makes mention of it as a musical instrument, among others; Servius^{f130} calls it an oblique pipe; and Isidore^{f131} describes it a hollow piece of wood, with leather stretched upon it, and beat upon with rods or sticks, something like our drum: the king of

Babylon might have Grecian musicians, or, however, Grecian instruments of music, in his court, as the Grecians had from the eastern nations:

and all kinds of music; that could be had or thought of; and this was done in honour to this idol, and to allure carnal sensual persons to the worship of it, according to the order given:

ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up; when they heard the music sound, immediately they were to repair to the plain where the image stood, and pay their adoration to it; or to fall down prostrate in their own houses in honour of it; and perhaps persons were appointed in all cities and towns throughout the empire to play this music; at hearing which, all people, nations, and tongues, were to bow down, in token of their religious regard unto it.

Ver. 6. *And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth*, etc.] Who refuses to worship it, or wilfully neglects it; which would be interpreted a contempt of it, and of the king's command:

shall in the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; such as were used to burn stones in for lime, as Jarchi observes: the music was to draw, the furnace was to drive, men to this idolatrous worship; the one was to please and sooth the minds of men, and so allure them to such stupid service; the other to frighten them into obedience. This is the first time that mention is made of "hours" in the sacred Scriptures; it was very probably the invention of the Chaldeans or Babylonians; for Herodotus^{f132} says the Greeks received the twelve parts of the day from the Babylonians.

Ver. 7. *Therefore at that time*, etc.] Such a severe edict being published, threatening with so terrible a punishment:

when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music; not only at Babylon, and that lived near the plain of Dura, but in all places where it was played:

all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; what through love of music, the fear of the furnace, regard to superstition and idolatry, and to the king's command, men of all nations and languages gave it homage and worship.

Ver. 8. *Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near*, etc.] That is, to King Nebuchadnezzar, either in his palace at Babylon, or more likely in the plain of Dura:

and accused the Jews; particularly Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, as after mentioned, of not obeying the king's command, to worship the golden image: these Chaldeans at the time of adoration had their eyes upon the Jews, particularly those three men, to observe how they would behave; and as they stood up while the others fell down, they were easily observed; wherefore they immediately hasten to the king, to give this information against them; whose places of trust and honour they envied, and now hoped to be put into them in their place and if these were the Chaldeans, or some of them, whose lives these men had been the means of saving, as is probable, they acted a very ungrateful part. Should it be asked, how came these three men to be present? it may be answered, they came here in obedience to the king's orders, as his officers, who had summoned them to this place; which they judged their duty to do, though they determined not to worship his image, should he require it; or they came here on purpose to bear their testimony against such idolatry. No mention is made of Daniel; very probably he was not here; for what reasons cannot be said; however, no accusation is laid against him; perhaps he was too great to be meddled with, being high in the king's favour.

Ver. 9. *They spake and said to Nebuchadnezzar*, etc.] Having got access unto him, and within his hearing, they expressed themselves in the following manner:

O king, live for ever; this they said to show their fidelity and hearty attachment to him, and their regard to his welfare, and the continuance of his life; and the rather to ingratiate themselves into his affections, and gain audience of him; (see Gill on "~~200~~ Daniel 2:4").

Ver. 10. *Thou, O king, hast made a decree*, etc.] According to his own mind and will, and which he had published as such to his subjects:

that every man; let him be who he will, high or low, rich or poor, in whatsoever station or condition:

that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music; such as had been just then blown or played on:

shall fall down and worship the golden image; which the king had ordered to be made and set up, and now dedicated, and had been worshipped by men of all ranks.

Ver. 11. *And whoso falleth not down and worshippingeth*, etc.] The image; the above is the decree, this that follows the sanction of it:

that he should be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace; (see Gill on “^{27R6}Daniel 3:6”).

Ver. 12. *There are certain Jews*, etc.] Men, by birth, by nation, and religion, despicable, foreigners, exiles, and captives; this they observe by way of contempt, and tacitly suggest that they were never worthy of the king’s regard, and improper persons to be put in places of profit and trust, and that the king had done a wrong thing in advancing them:

whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon; not to see that the streets, ways, and walls, were kept in order, as Saadiah observes; for this is mentioned as an aggravation of their crime, that, being set in such high places, should be guilty of such ingratitude to the king, and set such a bad example to his subjects:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; by name; they say nothing of the common people of the Jews, who either were not present, being employed in a servile manner, or were below their notice; nor of Daniel, who was above them, and out of their reach, and whom the king himself, as Aben Ezra observes, had ordered an oblation to be offered to; or perhaps he was not there, being sick, or on the king’s business elsewhere; for that he was present, and worshipped, can never be imagined by any that know his character. The Jews, who do not show all the respect that is due unto Daniel, say^{f133} some very idle and foolish things of him, as reasons why he was not present at this time. It is asked,

“where did Daniel go? says Rab, to dig a large river in Tiberias; some copies read, in a mountain; but Samuel says, to fetch the seed of herbs, food for beasts; and R. Jochanan says, to fetch swine from Alexandria in Egypt there were three in the consultation about his absence at this time, the holy blessed God, Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel himself. The holy blessed God said, let Daniel be gone, that it may not be said, they (the three children) were delivered by his merits; Daniel said, I will be gone from hence, that I may not fulfil that, “the graven images of their gods shall ye burn”;

Nebuchadnezzar said, let Daniel be absent, that it may not be said he burnt his God in the fire.”

These men, O king, have not regarded thee; showed no respect to his person and authority; they disobeyed his orders, and were guilty of rebellion against him, and contempt of majesty: the proof follows,

they serve not thy gods; whom the king and the nation worshipped, as Bel, Nebo, Merodach, and others:

nor worship the golden image, which thou hast set up; they did not bow down to it, in reverence of it, as had been ordered; this they knew would be most provoking to the king.

Ver. 13. *Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury*, etc.] Which did not become him as a man, much less as a king, and still less as engaged in devotion and religion;

commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; that is, immediately before him; who very probably were not afar off: he did not order them in his wrath and fury to be slain directly, as he did the wise men and soothsayers in another case; but to be brought before him, and examined first, that he might know the truth of these allegations against them; which shows, amidst all his rage, he retained still some respect for them, and esteem of them:

then they brought these men before the king; which they had not much trouble to do, being very ready to come and answer for themselves, and give an account of their conduct, and their reason for it.

Ver. 14. *Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, is it true*, etc.] What I have heard of you, what you are charged with and accused of; surely it cannot be; so Aben Ezra and Saadiah interpret the word as we do, and all the Oriental versions: it is only used in this place: it is expressed by way of admiration, as Jacchiades observes; it being incredible to the king, what he could never believe, unless it appeared plain in his own eyes. Some^{f134} render it, is it a “desolation?” so Jarchi; is my decree such? or should you not obey it? was this suffered, nothing but disorder and desolation would follow in the kingdom: or, “is it of purpose?” as others^{f135}; have you done this willingly and knowingly, or through imprudence and inadvertency? if the latter, it is pardonable; if not, it cannot be borne with. Deuteronomy Dieu, from the Syriac use of the word, renders it, “is it a joke?” are you

serious, and in good earnest, or in joke, “that ye worship not my gods? or do you mock me and them?”

O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; on whom I have conferred so many favours, raised from a low to a high estate, and yet used by you in this manner:

do ye not serve my gods; one would think he had no need to have asked this question; since he must needs know, that, by their nation and religion, they served only one God, and could serve no other; and that by their daily practice they never did, in which they were indulged:

nor worship the golden image that I have set up? it is for the sake of this the question is put; this was the thing his heart was set upon; and such was his pride, that he could not bear any control in it.

Ver. 15. *Now if ye be ready that at what time ye shall hear*, etc.] The meaning is, that if they were disposed in mind, which the king was very desirous they should, both for his own honour, and for their safety, for whom he had a regard; and were willing to comply with his orders, and readily yield obedience to his will, and worship his idol; the following would be a signal to them, and all would be well with them: or it may be rendered, “when now ye shall be, that at what time ye shall hear”^{f136}; for the word signifies future, as well as “ready”, and is by some so translated; and the sense is, when it shall be, or for the future, that they should hear

the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music; which was played not once only, but perhaps at certain times every day, and designed to be continued:

ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; it is well; so doing the king’s wrath would be appeased, their lives would be preserved, and they continued in his favour, and in their honourable posts:

but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; immediately, without any delay; no reprieve will be granted, and much less a pardon:

and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? he knew their confidence in the God of Israel, which he attempts to break and remove; he foresaw the objection they would make, which he endeavours to anticipate

by this proud and vain boast, forgetting what he himself had said, (~~2018~~ Daniel 2:47).

Ver. 16. *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king,* etc.] In a mild and gentle manner, without affronting his majesty, or insulting his gods, and yet without the least degree of servile fear or fawning flattery:

O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter; about worshipping the image; we are not solicitous about a choice of words, or in what manner to draw up our answer, it is ready in our mouths; we have no need to take time and consider of this matter, and think what to say, we are at a point about it: as thou art peremptory in thy will to have thine image worshipped, we are as resolute, as determined, never to worship it; so that there is no need to spend time in a debate about it; thou art come to a conclusion, and so are we: or in this matter, about the power of our God to deliver, we are not solicitous about an answer to that; we leave him to defend himself, and his own power, against such insults upon him.

Ver. 17. *If it be so,* etc.] That we must be cast into the fiery furnace, as thou hast threatened:

our God whom we serve; for though they did not serve the gods of the Babylonians, they did not live without God in the world; they believed in the one true God, the God of Israel, their covenant God and Father; whom they worshipped, had an interest in, and who had and would have a regard for them: he, say they,

is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; either to prevent their being cast into it, or to preserve them unhurt in it, and to bring them safe out of it: instances of his power in other cases, such as the passage of the Israelites through the Red sea safe, when their enemies were drowned, with others, confirmed their faith in this:

and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king; they might have a well grounded hope and persuasion of deliverance, arising partly from former instances of the divine power and goodness in such like cases; and partly from the consideration of the glory of God, which would be greatly conspicuous herein; and chiefly because of the king's defiance of God, and blasphemy against him, which they had reason to believe would be taken notice of; for it does not appear that they had any foresight of certain

deliverance, or any secret intimation of it to them, or a full assurance of it, as is evident by what follows:

Ver. 18. *But if not*, etc.] If our God does not think fit to exert his power, and deliver us, which we are well assured he is able to do; if it is not his will, we are content, we are resigned unto it:

be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, be it as it will, whether we are delivered or not; we are not sure of the one, but we are at a point as to the other:

nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up; come life, come death, we are ready; we had rather die than sin: they were all of one mind, and agreed in this matter; a noble instance of spiritual fortitude and courage!

Ver. 19. *Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury*, etc.] Nettled at the answer given him; perceiving his threats made no impression on these three men, and that they were resolutely determined at all events not to obey his will:

and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; not only to what it was in times past, when they were his favourites, and he smiled upon them; but with respect to what it was while they were under examination, and he was trying to bring them to his will; when finding it impracticable, fury rose up, and showed itself in the furrows and frowns of his forehead; in the sharpness of his nose; in his sparkling eyes, foaming mouth, and gnashing teeth, and that general redness his face was covered with:

therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated; this seems to be a furnace for this purpose, and where it was usual to burn malefactors; it being a common punishment with the Chaldeans; (see ^{240D}Jeremiah 29:22) the order was to put seven times more fuel in the furnace, that it might be so much the hotter, and burn so much the fiercer; which order of the king shows indeed the greatness of his wrath and fury, but at the same time that it had transported him out of his sense and judgment; since so fierce a fire was the better for the three men, supposing them to have died as he intended; who would have been the sooner dispatched by it, and so not suffer so much pain and torment as in a slow fire, or less heat; but this was overruled by the providence of God, that so it should be, that the miracle

of their walking in it unsinged and unhurt, and their deliverance out of it, might appear the greater.

Ver. 20. *And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army,* etc.] The most famous for courage of mind, and strength of body, that were in all his army:

to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego either their hands or their feet, or both; unless it can be thought that they were all three bound together in one bundle, and so cast into the furnace; which is not improbable, as Gejerus observes; seeing the king afterwards wondered to see them walk separately in the furnace: there was no need to bind them, for they would not have resisted; and if he ordered this to secure them from the power of their God, it was vain and foolish:

and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace: if they were all three bound together, it required some able bodied men to take them up and cast them in, especially if the furnace was above them; though it is more probable that it was a more depressed place, or below them, and so the cast was more easy.

Ver. 21. *Then these men were bound in their coats,* etc.] Their upper coats, cloaks, or mantles, as Aben Ezra and Jacchiades; though, according to the use of the word in the Arabic language, the “femoralia”^{f137} or breeches are meant:

their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments: their turbants on their heads, which were usually wore in those countries; and their stockings and shoes, and other under garments, as waistcoats and shirts; which through haste or negligence, or with design, were kept on them, to make their torment the greater; but were intended by the Lord to make the miracle the more conspicuous. According to Cocceius^{f138} and Bynaeus^{f139}, the first of these words signifies the outward covering of the body, as cloaks, etc.; the second the covering of the feet, as socks, shoes, and sandals; and the third the covering of the head, as caps, turbants, helmets, etc.; the last the inner garments that were under the upper ones:

and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace; in the manner and circumstances before related.

Ver. 22. *And therefore, because the king’s commandment was urgent,* etc.] Or was ordered to be obeyed in haste, and with expedition and

dispatch, hence the men were cast into the furnace with clothes on; or those that cast them were not so careful of themselves:

and the furnace exceeding hot; being heated seven times more than usual:

the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; which came out of the furnace, being so excessive hot, and the smoke along with it; so that when those men took up the three children, and brought them so near to it as was necessary to cast them in, the flame and smoke caught their breath, and suffocated them; who might be men that advised the king to such cruel measures, or however were very ready, out of ill will to these good men, to execute them, and therefore righteously perished in their sins: in the Apocrypha it is said, that the flame issued out forty nine cubits above the furnace.

“So that the flame streamed forth above the furnace forty and nine cubits.” Song of the Three Holy Children 1:24

Ver. 23. *And these three men fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*] The fire not so much as destroying what they were bound with, and much less them; but being bound they fell, and there they lay for the present, unbound and alive; when those that cast them in were destroyed. In the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, follow sixty seven verses, containing the song of Azariah and his companions in the furnace, which are not in the Hebrew text.

Ver. 24. *Then Nebuchadnezzar was astonished,* At the burning of those that cast the three men into the furnace, as Jacchiades; or he might be seized with a panic, and his spirits filled with fear and dread, the word^{f140} is by some said to signify, and this from the immediate hand of God:

and rose up in haste; from the place where he was, and went to the mouth of the furnace, to see what was become of those that were cast into it:

and spake and said unto his counsellors; who had advised him to do what he had done, out of envy and ill will to these Jews:

did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? that is, was there not an order of council for it? and was it not done according to it?

they answered and said, true, O King; it was certainly so: thus they are brought to bear a testimony to the truth of this; it was not only the king

that gave the orders, and saw them obeyed, but his counsellors also; and which they own, and serves to corroborate the truth of the miracle.

Ver. 25. *He answered and said, lo, I see four men loose,* etc.] Not bound as the three were, when cast in; but quite at liberty in their hands and feet, and separate from one another. As this fiery furnace may be an emblem of the fiery trials and afflictive dispensations the children of God pass through in this world, being not joyous, but grievous to the flesh, though useful to purge and purify; so this and some other circumstances attending these good men in the furnace are applicable to the saints in such cases; for though afflictions are sometimes themselves called cords, with which men are said to be bound, yet by means of them they are loosed from other things from the power and prevalence of sin over them; from the world, and the things of it, they sometimes too much cleave and are glued unto; from a spirit of bondage, and from doubts and fears; their hearts under them being comforted and enlarged with the love of God; he knowing, visiting, and choosing them in the furnace of affliction; or making known himself to them, his love and choice of them; whereby their souls are set at liberty, and the graces of his Spirit are drawn forth into a lively exercise, through his love being shed abroad in them.

Walking in the midst of the fire; the furnace being large enough to walk in, and where they took their walks as in a garden; nor were they concerned to come out of it; nor uneasy at being in it; the violence of the fire being quenched, as the apostle says, referring to this instance, (⁸¹¹³⁴ Hebrews 11:34). Saadiah says, the angel Gabriel, who is over the hail, came and cooled the fire of the furnace. So afflictions are a path to walk in, the narrow way to eternal life, through which all must enter the kingdom of heaven, of which there will be an end. Walking in it supposes strength, which God gives his people at such seasons; and when they have his presence they are unconcerned; none of these things move them, nor can they separate them from the love of Christ; they walk on with pleasure and delight, sing the praises of God, as did Paul and Silas in a prison, and as many martyrs have done in the flames: conversing with Christ, and with his people, they pass on, and pass through the more cheerfully, and are not anxious about their deliverance, but leave it with God to work it in his own time and way; nay, are ready to say with the disciples, it is good for them to be here; and indeed it was better for these good men to be with Christ in the fiery furnace, than to be with Nebuchadnezzar in his palace without him.

And they have no hurt; either in their bodies, or in their garments, neither of them being burnt; they suffered no pain in the one, nor loss in the other. Afflictions do no hurt to the people of God; not to their persons, which are safe in Christ, and to whom he is a hiding place and covert, as from the storm and tempest, so from the force of fire, that it shall not kindle upon them to hurt them; nor to their graces, which are tried, refined, and brightened hereby; faith is strengthened, hope is encouraged, and love made to abound. All the afflictions of the saints are in love, and are designed for good, and do work together for good to them that love God; they are sometimes for their temporal, and often for their spiritual good, and always work for them an exceeding weight of glory.

And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God; like one of the angels, who are called the sons of God; so Jarchi, Saadiah, and Jacchiades; but many of the ancient Christian writers interpret it of Christ the Son of God, whom Nebuchadnezzar, though a Heathen prince, might have some knowledge of from Daniel and other Jews in his court, of whom he had heard them speak as a glorious Person; and this being such an one, he might conclude it was he, or one like to him; and it is highly probable it was he, since it was not unusual for him to appear in a human form, and to be present with his people, as he often is with them, and even in the furnace of affliction; (see ²³⁸⁰Isaiah 43:2 48:10), to sympathize with them; to revive and comfort them; to bear them up and support them; to teach and instruct them, and at last to deliver them out of their afflictions.

Ver. 26. *Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace*, etc.] He came so nigh before, as to see at a distance four persons walking in it; now he comes nearer, as near as he could with safety:

and spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God; he not only spake to them in a different tone than he did before; not in wrath and fury, but mildly and gently, with great respect unto them, and reverence of them; and not only calls them by the names he and his courtiers had given them, but styles them the servants of the most high God; he owns their God was a God above his: the Chaldeans worshipped fire, but the God of the Jews had power over that, and could restrain the force of it at pleasure; and he acknowledges that these men were faithful worshippers of him; who had in this wonderful manner appeared for them,

and thereby approved their faith and confidence in him, and their service of him; (see ^{<4167>}Acts 16:17):

come forth, and come hither; that is, come out of the furnace, and come to the place where I and my nobles are:

then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire; as they had been cast into it by the king's order, therefore they did not presume to go out of it without the same; nor were they concerned about coming out; they had very agreeable and delightful company, and had reason to say it was good for them to be there; however, when they had the king's order, they immediately obeyed it.

Ver. 27. *And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together*, etc.] Either by the order of the king, or of their own accord, to see the miracle that was wrought:

saw these men; saw them walking in the furnace, saw them come out of it at the king's call, and saw them when they were out, and examined them thoroughly; so that they had ocular demonstration, full proof and conviction, of the truth of what was done:

upon whose bodies the fire had no power; to blister, scorch, burn, and consume them, as it has usually over the bodies of men, or any creature:

nor was an hair of their head singed; which is easily done with the weakest flame; and this must be understood of the hair of their eyebrows and beards also; (see ^{<4218>}Luke 21:18):

neither were their coats changed; neither the substance, nor form, nor colour of them, but were just as they were when cast into the furnace; the same holds good of all their other garments, their interior ones, with their turbants, shoes, and stockings:

nor the smell of the fire had passed on them; as will upon persons that stay at any time in a place where there is much fire and smoke; and especially where much combustible things are burnt, as pitch, sulphur, and the like, as in furnaces; and very probably in this, which had been so vehemently heated; and yet there was no smell of it on their garments; all which serve to make the miracle the more wonderful.

Ver. 28. *Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said*, etc.] In the presence of his princes and prime ministers of state, and made the following confession, to

the praise and glory of the true God; which was extorted from him at this time through the force of conviction; for it does not appear to be a thorough conversion; nor did he relinquish his gods, and the worship of them:

blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; he does not call him his God, but theirs, as he had called him the God of Daniel before, (²⁰⁷Daniel 2:47):

who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him; the fourth man he saw in the furnace he now calls an angel of God; for the Heathens had notions of some being the messengers of the gods: this seems to favour the sense of those who think an angel is designed by the fourth person; though it does not follow that a created one must be meant; for it may be understood of the Angel of God's presence, the uncreated Angel, Jesus Christ; who, being sent by his divine Father; came and delivered these three persons from being consumed in the fire, who had in so strong a manner expressed their confidence in God, which the king now remembers and observes; (see ²⁰⁷Daniel 3:17,18):

and have changed the king's word; made it null and void, refused to obey it, knowing it was their duty to obey God rather than man; so that the king was forced to change his word, and, instead of obliging them to worship his image, blesses their God:

and yielded their bodies; freely gave them up, without any resistance, into the hands of those who were ordered by the king to take and bind them, and cast them into the furnace, to which also they readily yielded themselves: so the Septuagint and Arabic versions add, "to the fire",

that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God; they chose rather to deliver up themselves to death, to be burnt in a furnace, than to serve any other god than the God of Israel; such was their constancy and firmness of mind; such their attachment to the true God, and their faithfulness to him.

Ver. 29. *Therefore I make a decree*, etc.] Or, a "decree is made by me"^{f141}; which is as follows:

that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; anything indecent, blasphemous, or by way of contempt: he does not give orders that their

God should be worshipped or signify that he would worship him himself, and quit his false deities; no, only that he should not be spoken against, as very probably before this time he was, to the great grief of these good men; and to whom, therefore such an edict would be grateful, though no more could be obtained; by which it was enacted, that any such person, so blaspheming and reproaching,

shall be cut to pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; (see Gill on “²⁰¹⁶Daniel 2:5”);

because there is no other god that can deliver after this manner; no, not even Bel himself, as was plain; for he could not deliver the men at the mouth of the furnace, that cast in these three, for they were destroyed by the force of the flame and smoke that came out; but the true God delivered the three men cast in, even in the midst of it; this was beyond all contradiction, and therefore he could not but own it.

Ver. 30. *Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon,* etc.] He restored them to their places of trust and profit, and increased their honours: or, “made them to prosper”, as the word^{f142} signifies; they flourished in his court, and became very great and famous. The Septuagint and Arabic versions add,

“and he counted them worthy to preside over all the Jews that were in his kingdom.”