

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

BOWING DOWN IN THE PLAIN OF DURA

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. Daniel 3:1

The kingdoms of this world are the property of the sovereign GOD of the universe who has formed them for HIS own purpose and sets over them, wicked men. *"This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."* (Dan 4:17)

Every king, president, prime minister or governor occupies the position which the LORD has ordained for them to occupy and they shall continue in power only until HE has accomplished HIS purpose for their reign. *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."* (Pro 21:1) *"And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:"* (Dan 2:21)

HE is pleased to bless nations under the rule of some and to bring judgment to them with the hand of others. Whether the rulers of nations are to our liking or not they are nonetheless ordained of GOD to occupy that place of leadership until such time as it pleases the LORD to remove them. Regardless of the direction which a country's leaders should take the LORD is always working all things together for the benefit of HIS people (i.e.; the called according to HIS purpose, see Rom.8:28).

In the days of Daniel, the LORD had raised up the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar to be a scourge in HIS hand to chasten the nation of Israel, bringing her into captivity, and taking away her traditional religious observances. Nebuchadnezzar is much like Egypt's Pharaoh whom the scripture says was raised up to demonstrate the LORD's power. (see Rom 9:17)

Nebuchadnezzar was a wicked king who was enamored of his own power and thought that he actually had the ability to do as he pleased. He was shown his error in a grass field (perhaps in this same plain of Dura) as he was grazing like an ox, as the LORD brought him to understand that *"all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"* (Dan 4:35)

Before coming to this revelation however, Nebuchadnezzar decided to build a monument to his own glory in the plain of Dura (which is, perhaps, the very same place where the tower of Babel was built). It was fashioned of fine gold and rose above the landscape approximately ninety feet tall, so that it was on display for all eyes to behold. Having built this fine image, he thought it proper to compel men to bow down before it. The vast majority of Babylon's inhabitants did so without so much as a second thought.

Babylon is a type and shadow in the scripture of the religion of men. Even as the plain of Dura is the place of man's perspective of that religion. This golden image is a type of the religious error which men by nature embrace, since they have an affection for it even as men

have a natural affection for gold. All of man's religion(s) though they may encompass many differing doctrines and practices have one thing in common, which is a reverence for the free will of men and subsequently an exaltation of the supposed worth, immortality and invincibility of men in one degree or another. Just as Nebuchadnezzar was angry at those who would not worship his image, so the worshippers of man's free will and intrinsic worth will grow vehemently irate when those who will not bow before this monstrosity of error speak out against it, and seek by the grace of GOD to lay the axe to the root of man's pride.

This was the very reason that the Jews hated the message of CHRIST. HE told them in no uncertain terms that they could not receive or believe HIS words. (see John 7:34; 8:34-48) HE gave them nothing in which they could glory or perpetuate their preeminence in the sight of men. HE lost most of those who called themselves HIS disciples when HE said, *"no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."* (John 6:65-66) The natural man cannot endure sound teaching and hates any message which robs him of a place to glory.

Yet today there is a golden image of even greater proportions than the one which Nebuchadnezzar built, and raised up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon,. Great are the numbers of those who bow down before it, worldwide, as the sounds of many instruments play the siren songs that appeal to their flesh.

The metal from which it is fashioned is fool's gold and its message is that which plainly denies the very words of CHRIST and makes the salvation of sinners to be dependent on their own free will decision or choice. One only has to listen to the religious hucksters of the day for a short time until are heard emasculating the power of GOD to save HIS own, by telling men that GOD has to wait for them to let HIM save them and that they can thwart HIS purpose by not believing. I heard one of these physicians of no value on the radio just this Sunday saying that GOD could not save a man unless the man gave HIM permission. This is a great deception, really an outright lie, which is as a mighty broom sweeping many to their destruction as they bow on the plain of Dura and worship this golden image which is so pleasant to look upon, thinking themselves to be the followers of CHRIST. (see Mat 7:21-23)

The LORD's hand is not shortened, nor is HIS power to bring salvation to as many as the FATHER has given HIM, in any wise diminished, nor is HIS purpose to give them the kingdom in any sense thwarted. *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."* (John 6:37) We see this fact demonstrated in the three Hebrews who would not bow down to this image in the plain of Dura, regardless of the cost. If one is interested in building great congregations of people, or preaching a message that will appeal to the masses, then he cannot preach the same message that CHRIST did. The fiery furnace of disapproval will be heated seven times hotter by those that worship this image and despise those who worship none but CHRIST.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, would not bow to this image and manifested the likeness of the quickened sons of GOD in that:

They will worship none but the true CHRIST. The LORD said, *"For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."* (Mar 13:22) *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."*(John 10:27)

They have no regard to the cost of following CHRIST. Peter said, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."* (John 6:68) *"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."* (Acts 5:41)

JESUS CHRIST alone is the basis of all their hope. There was a "FOURTH MAN" walking in the fire with the three Hebrew men and upon HIM were all of their hopes cast. They had no idea beforehand if GOD would deliver them from this furnace but they had no other upon whom they would call even as Job testified, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."* (Job 13:15) The only hope of CHRIST's people is JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified.