

SABBATH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

BIBLE LESSONS, 1878. LESSON VII. MAY 26. THE FIERY FURNACE. Daniel III. 21-27. B. C. 606.

LESSON OUTLINE. I. Cast into the furnace. II. Abettors consumed. III. Martyrs saved. IV. Effect on Nebuchadnezzar.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION. Years passed on, and what Jerome says was true of the Babylonian king: "We soon forget the truth. He who had been worshipping the servant of God as if he were God, now makes an image of himself, that he may be worshipped."

EXPOSITION. BY PROF. G. E. D. PEPPER, D. D.

Preliminary Explanations. The date (B. C. 586) is not certain. The place (vs. 1) may perhaps be marked by a row of mounds near the ruins of Babylon, as these mounds bear the name of Dura, and one of them, 46 feet square, and 194 feet high, of unbaked brick, may have served for the pedestal of this very image.

VERSE 21.—These men.—For their original names, see i. 10; for their office, and cause for their promotion, see i. 49, and the connection; for their offence, and the fact and motive of its disclosure, see iii. 12, and the connection.

VERSE 22.—The king's commandment was urgent.—Literally, was harsh. The heat of the furnace was to be as furious as the heat of his wrath. Slew those men, etc. Not that this was specially a judgment upon them. They were, doubtless, not the envious accusers of the three, but servants of the king, to whom this kind of business belonged as a part of their official duty.

VERSE 23.—Fell down bound.—Apparently referring to the death of "those that had taken them up," and who therefore could not cast them in; although in a general way they are said to have been "cast in." Vs. 21.

VERSE 25.—Four men.—All called men, because even the fourth had a human form. Loose. The metal chains were dissolved, though they were the very things that would naturally be the last to dissolve. Everything that was against them was brought to naught.

VERSE 26.—Came near to the mouth, etc.—See above, on verse 21. We see in this action the emotion of the king—the vehement energy of his nature turned now from rage to fear, from desire for the death of the three to desire for their presence.

VERSE 27.—The princes [satraps], etc.—They were, in immense numbers, present from all parts, on occasion of the dedication of the image. So was the occasion one in which God could and did make widely known his supreme power.

COURSE OF THOUGHT. I. THE EXECUTION.—Verse 21. (1.) The sentence was rigidly executed. Piety crossed the will of earthly power, and so the blow fell. It ever has been thus, and still is, though the forms of the blow change.

II. THE ACCIDENT.—Verse 22. (1.) Death struck those for whom it was not intended: There is only one Being whose plans are sure never to fail, and who can perfectly secure his servants from harm.

III. THE ASTONISHMENT.—Verses 24, 25. (1.) The fact of it is noteworthy. God can make the mightiest wonder at a might that is mightier than that of the mightiest. There is a hidden power which escapes the notice of the great and wise—outside of nature, above nature, able to control nature—even as it originally created, and evermore sustains nature.

IV. THE DELIVERANCE.—Verses 26, 27. (1.) It was complete.—Even the king's hostility had turned to favor, and the command to cast them in had been followed by a more urgent command for them to come out. And then, while their person and clothes were unharmed, their reputation was greatly increased.

A Laughable French Miracle. Father Bridaine was always poor, for the simple reason that he gave away everything that he had. One evening he asked for a night's lodging of the curate of the village through which he passed, and the worthy man, having only one bed, shared it with him.

VERSE 28.—Fell down bound.—Apparently referring to the death of "those that had taken them up," and who therefore could not cast them in; although in a general way they are said to have been "cast in." Vs. 21.

TEMPERANCE.

Only a few weeks before his death, Rev. William Arnot of Edinburgh wrote as follows in reference to the great evil arising from the use of tobacco:

"I don't smoke; I never smoked; God helping me, I never will. I have lots of reasons, more than I could crowd into one paper; but here are some, taken as they rise to memory. I have sons, some of them grown up, and some growing. Whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the effect of tobacco on the health of men, I believe all are agreed that it damages at the root the constitution of youth, if they use it before they reach manhood.

But there is one reason against smoking which is so big that it seems to me to comprehend nearly all others within it. It is that the use of tobacco makes it more difficult to be a Christian—hinders a Christian mightily in being a true witness to his Lord. I am accustomed now to pity greatly Christians who are also smokers. The practice not only drains the life-sap out of the smoker's cheeks, it also drains charity out of the smoker's soul.

Notice to Contractors. SEALED TENDERS addressed to the undersigned, and enclosed in envelopes for Post Office St. John, N. B., will be received at this office until MONDAY, the 20th day of May, next, at noon, for the erection and completion of the above buildings.

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At 10.30 A. M. (Accommodation) for Point du Chêne and Way Stations.

At 1.30 P. M. (Express) for Sussex.

At 5.00 P. M. (Express) from Halifax and points North and West, and for Halifax, Pictou and intermediate stations.

At 6.30 A. M. (Express) from Rivière du Loup and points North and West, and from Halifax and intermediate stations.

At 9.15 A. M. (Express) from Sussex.

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