

had a great image prepared (see *Light from the East*), before which all the leading men of his kingdom were commanded to prostrate themselves in worship. But there were three Jews who refused to bow the knee, and the king's word had been that all who refused should be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. Vs. 1-12.

#### I. A Cruel Threat, 13-15.

Vs. 13, 14. *Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury*; when he heard of the rebellious Jews. *Commanded to bring*; that they might be summarily tried. *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego*. See ch. 1:6, 7. *Is it of purpose...* (Rev. Ver.)? "Can you really be such insolent fools as to disobey my command?"

V. 15. *If ye be ready*; not an offer of a second chance, but a means of verifying the accusation made against the three. *Coronet*; a horn, straight or curved, used for giving signals, like our bugle. *Flute*; either the long flute, like our clarinet, played by blowing into one end, or the flute played by blowing into a hole in one side, like our flute. *Harp*; a stringed instrument, of which there were many kinds. *Sackbut*; probably a small triangular harp with four strings, making a sharp sound, or perhaps a large and powerful harp with a rich quality of tone. *Psallery*; a sort of harp with a sounding-board, played with a plectrum or small rod. *Dulcimer*; almost certainly some wind instrument: according to many, the bagpipes. *Worship not... a burning fiery furnace*; probably a pit in the ground lined with brick or stone and covered by a low mound with a vent at the top. Death by burning was common till recently in Persia, and was in vogue amongst the Babylonians (see Jer. 29:22). *Who is that God, etc.*? A defiant challenge to the Almighty.

#### II. A Heroic Reply, 16-18.

Vs. 16-18. *We have no need to answer thee* (Rev. Ver.). They were accountable to God alone, and not to the king for their worship. *God... is able, etc.* He can save, if He will, from the flames or from any other punishment the king can devise. *If not, etc.* Cost what it might, they would do the right.

#### III. A Great Deliverance, 19-28.

Vs. 19-23. *Form of his visage was changed*. His features were distorted by his rage. *Heat*

*the furnace one seven times more*; in order to make death more certain. *Bound*; perhaps bound hand and foot with their own clothing (see the description in *Light from the East*), so as to be perfectly helpless. *Coats*; mantles. *Tunics* (Rev. Ver.); inner garments. *Hats*; head coverings. (But see *Light from the East*.) *Slew those men*; the flames streaming out as if at God's bidding.

Vs. 24-28. *Nebuchadnezzar... was astonished* ("astonished"); as he looked through the grated gate at one side of the furnace. *Counsellors*; ministers of the royal court. *Four men*; instead of three. *Loose*; whereas the three Jews had been bound. *Walking... no hurt*; in spite of the fierceness of the flames. *Like a son of the gods* (Rev. Ver.); some divine being sent from heaven, for only such could walk unharmed amidst the flames, and keep others alive. *Servants of the Most High God* (Rev. Ver.); the God who rules supreme in heaven and earth. *Princes... saw*. The deliverance was public, unmistakable and testified to by many witnesses. *Blessed be the God, etc.* The king now recognized and acknowledged the power of the only true God. *Yielded their bodies*. Men so faithful to God could not be unfaithful to their king.

Vs. 29, 30 narrate that the king acknowledged Jehovah as the supreme God, and forbade any word to be spoken against Him, and that the three Hebrews prospered in their places.

#### Light from the East

IMAGE—This was probably a figure of Bel-Merodach, the patron deity of Babylon. The statue was nine feet wide and ninety feet high, which no doubt included the pedestal. Many huge images were made in the ancient world. The Colossus of Rhodes and the statue of the Emperor Nero were both over a hundred feet in height. There is still well preserved, at Kamakura, in Japan, a bronze image of Buddha, cast in sections in A.D. 749, in a sitting posture, 47 feet in height, besides the pedestal. The largest image of ancient times was the statue of Rameses II., which now lies in pieces on the site of Zoan. It was carved from a single block of red