Present Truth, February 15, 1900

THE WISDOM OF BABYLON CANNOT SAVE FROM DEATH.

**(Daniel** ii. **1-18)** We now come to the first of the three experiences in which the God of heaven revealed Himself to Nebuchadnezzar, and through him to all the people of his realm. The faithfulness to principle on the part of Daniel and his companions, and their " skill in all learning and wisdom," as set forth in the first chapter, had prepared them to act their part in preaching the Gospel of the kingdom in Babylon.

A MYSTERIOUS DREAM.

" And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Then spoke the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, 0 king, live forever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation."

Only a short time after the Hebrew captives had completed their course of training at the court of the king, an opportunity was offered in the providence of the Lord to put to a practical test the value of such wisdom as was imparted in the Babylonish system of education, as compared with the wisdom which God gives to those who are true to the principles of His kingdom.

" Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams." It is evident that he had had the same experience more than once, that the same dream was repeated, so that he was deeply impressed with it, and then he could dream no more because " his sleep brake from him."

A SEVERE TEST.

Unable to recall the dream, and yet impressed with the idea that it had a meaning of deep import to him, the king called for his wise men, those who professed to be trained in the methods of finding out secret things which were hidden from others. But their claims were now to be subjected to such a test as they had not had before. The God of heaven was directing affairs in such a way as to bring out clearly the wide contrast between the false and the true systems of education, and to make Himself known as the only source of genuine wisdom. The dream which had been taken from the king was also hidden from them, and they were compelled to ask that the dream be told to them.

" The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me : if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it. The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me, But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you : for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me till the time be changed : therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof."

These professed wise men had been able to maintain their position as the sole channels of superior knowledge, because no one had come forward to question their claims, and no circumstances had arisen which had made the demand upon them for a real revelation of secret things. For the first time in their experience they were really required to make good their profession, and they themselves must now stand or fall with their system. But the wisdom and knowledge which were imparted by the Babylonish system of education would not stand such a test as this. Their wisdom was foolishness, and their system of ed cation a fraud, and their only hope of success in maintaining confidence in their supposed revelations was that there should be no fair opportunity to test them. And so they asked that the king should show them before they showed him; that he should furnish them with the key with which to unlock his difficulties. But the king would not help them, if he desired to do so, and thus they were left to reveal the utter folly of their vaunted wisdom.

THE WISE TAKEN IN THEIR OWN CRAFTINESS.

" The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter : therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things of any magician, or astrologer or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requires, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

In their effort to convince the king of the unreasonableness of his demand, these professed wise men really threw up their whole case, and practically acknowledged that their system was a deception. While claiming that their course of training had opened up to them supernatural channels of wisdom, which were not at the command of ordinary people, they were forced to acknowledge that their wisdom consisted merely in speculation on the possible meaning of facts which must be supplied to them by others. Their utter failure, and their positive declaration that " there is not a man upon earth that can show the king's matter," only served to make the triumph of God's system of education the more complete. They had the first opportunity to demonstrate the value of worldly wisdom, and to win a signal victory for their own system; and in defense of their failure to meet the demand made upon them they declared that the ability to do what the king required would be an unmistakable proof of Divinity manifested through humanity. But this is just where the heathen religion fails. It deals with "the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh." It is the vain effort of the flesh to satisfy the hunger of the soul after its Maker, with forms and ceremonies of human invention. It deals with "imaginations" and "reasonings", but has no means of acquiring a knowledge of invisible realities. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

Thus was the gauntlet again thrown down by the heathen, and the superiority of the kingdom of heaven over the kingdom of Babylon was again to be demonstrated. The way was prepared now for the true God to reveal Himself as "the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity," and yet as the meek and lowly One whose dwelling is with flesh. It was now to be shown that there is such a thing as genuine communion with God, who gives wisdom to those who seek it, and that such wisdom is life to those who find it. The difference was to be made plain between a philosophy which is merely human and a knowledge which is merely speculative, and a philosophy which is divine and a knowledge which is positive. The one is heathenism, the other is the Gospel. The one is the mystery of iniquity, the other is the mystery of godliness.

A HELPLESS KING.

" For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went forth that all the wise men should be slain ; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain."

Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon, but he was not king of himself. His dominion was an outward one, and was maintained by fleshly power. He was a stranger to that kingdom whose scepter is a scepter of righteousness. He had not learned that a man may sit upon a throne, and deck himself with alt the outward signs of royalty, and yet not be a king. Circumstances were revealing that the men who occupied the place of wise men were not wise men at all, and that the man who occupied the place of a king was not a king at all. This was why it was necessary that the Gospel of the kingdom should be proclaimed in Babylon, in order that true wisdom and genuine kingship might be revealed. The failure of Nebuchadnezzar to maintain his claim to the outward profession which he made was no less apparent than the failure of the Chaldeans, He is called a king, but the very fact that " he was angry and very furious " shows that he had no real claim to the name. He was really in bondage,—a slave to hi3 own passions. Thus it is in Babylon, and thus has "the god of this world" confused right principles, so that kings are found in hovels, and slaves upon thrones." He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city." "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God."

Anger is unreasoning, and so the command went forth “to destroy *all* the wise men." It matters not that "in all matters of wisdom and understanding" the king found Daniel and his companions "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers." They were now all classed together. The wise men had failed to do what he required, and so they were all to be destroyed. The first intimation which Daniel had of this whole matter was when he was sought after to be slain.

ASKING WISDOM OF GOD.

"Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king ? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they should desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret: that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon."

Having learned the cause of the hasty decree, Daniel did not hesitate to assure the king that he would show the interpretation of the dream. He did not ask the king to tell him the dream, but that he would give him time, and this time he used not in gazing at the stars, or consulting the evil spirits, but in seeking mercies from the God of heaven. It was a case of life or death. The knowledge of this secret meant life to them. Unless Daniel could fulfil his agreement with the king, they would all perish together. All the circumstances of this experience make it clear that "this secret" which was to be made known to the king through the interpretation of his dream is the "mystery of the kingdom of God." This is that which is hidden from "the wise and prudent," and revealed unto babes. This is the Gospel, whose chief glory is that Divinity is joined with humanity, that "Christ lives in me," and that “the tabernacle of God is with men." God has commissioned His servants "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, and it was for this purpose that Daniel and his fellows were in Babylon. They were to make known the power of a kingdom greater than the kingdom of Babylon, and to show that this power is revealed in man, in human flesh. They were to reveal in themselves the fact that this power in man, this power of the Divine character, determines not simply the destiny of individuals, but also of the nations of the earth," and that the kingdom of God within man is the only enduring kingdom.

It is only a living communion with God, which enables anyone to fulfil such a commission as this, for it is *the life* which is to be manifested, a fellowship with "that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested," and is always to be manifested by every true child of the kingdom.
Thus only can the contrast be sharply and distinctly drawn between the professed wisdom of this world and that wisdom which comes from above, between a man upon a throne and a genuine king, between the kingdom of Babylon and the kingdom of God.

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