

THE LORD IS THY KEEPER

February 19, 2017

Daniel 3:1-30

“Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

Psalm 121:4-8

The history recorded in Daniel 3 teaches us how to reconcile two “conflicting” demands of Scripture. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew the first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above . . . : Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:3-5a). They refused to dishonor God by bowing to a lifeless image.

Romans 13:1 admonishes: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” Although the Epistle to the Romans had not yet been written, these men knew this principle of godliness. They could not submit to Nebuchadnezzar’s anti-God decree. Nevertheless, they submitted to his authority. Respectfully, they told him they would obey God, Who could deliver them if He pleased. Without reviling or rebelling, they submitted to the king’s authority, willing to suffer whatever he demanded. Hereby they honored God and the king, fulfilling both biblical admonitions. Duties do not conflict.

Their Dilemma: God revealed Himself to their forefathers by many miracles, but especially by His Word, the Ten Commandments. To obey God’s law would put them at odds with man’s law, ensuring that they would suffer the king’s harsh penalty. They faced a perplexing decision: obey the king and live, or refuse obedience and burn to death.

Their Devotion: The decision they made demonstrated the faith they professed, which should always be the mark of those who profess faith in Christ. They were probably young men anticipating long life. They were part of the ruling class, likely with a comfortable living. Yet they modeled Christ’s exhortation: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 16:24-26).

Their Deliverance: The fire that killed the men who put them in the furnace, had no effect upon them. Their hair was not singed, nor was the smell of smoke upon them. The king saw a fourth man in the fire. This was Christ, Whom God sends for the deliverance of His people. He appeared to Moses as a flame in the bush (Exodus 3), and as the pillar of fire that led the people of Israel through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21, 22). The unfueled flame that appeared to Moses appeared again to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, enveloping them in the furnace, protecting them from the devouring flame. Christ is the only deliverance for His people. He alone could deliver them from the fiery furnace, and He alone will deliver his

people from the fires of hell.