

Daniel 3:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

Analysis

The king's question 'Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?' offers opportunity to recant. Nebuchadnezzar possibly hoped the accusation was false, given these men's valuable service. Yet the question's framing—'do not ye serve my gods'—reveals the issue's theological nature. The king claims ownership of deities ('my gods'), showing pagan understanding of gods as national property or royal assets. The accusation targets both general idolatry ('my gods') and specific state worship (the image), making religious conviction rather than political rebellion the real issue.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern polytheism allowed worshiping multiple deities without theological contradiction. Refusing to honor a king's gods was seen as politically dangerous—divine favor secured military victory and prosperity. Subjects were expected to honor state gods even while maintaining personal patron deities. The Jews' exclusive monotheism made them religiously inflexible in polytheistic societies. Nebuchadnezzar's question shows genuine puzzlement—why would these capable administrators risk everything over religious scruples meaningless to polytheists?

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does exclusive loyalty to the one true God conflict with cultures that demand tolerance for all religious claims?
2. What does the king's ownership language ('my gods') reveal about pagan religion as political tool rather than transcendent truth?

Interlinear Text

שָׁדְרַח הַ	הֲצִדְא	לֵה וִן	וְאָמַר	נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר	עֲנֵה
O Shadrach	unto them	Is it true	and said	Nebuchadnezzar	spake
H7715	H6656	H0	H560	H5020	H6032
פְּלַח יִן	אֵיתִיכֹן	לֹא	לֵאלֹהֵי	נְגֻוֹ	וְעַבְדִּי
serve	ye	do not	my gods	and Abednego	Meshach
H6399	H383	H3809	H426	H5665	H4336
סֻגְדִּין:	לֹא	הֵקֵן יָמַת	דִּי	זָהָב־א	וּלְצֶלֶם
worship	do not	which I have set	H1768	the golden	image
H5457	H3809	H6966		H1722	H6755

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 50:2 (Parallel theme): Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is

confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.

Daniel 3:1 (Parallel theme): 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.

Isaiah 46:1 (Parallel theme): Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast.

Daniel 4:8 (References God): But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying,