

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Three young Hebrews refuse to bow to a golden idol and are thrown into a blazing furnace. Their faith and God's miraculous rescue change a king's heart.

Daniel 3:1-30

CHARACTERS: Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, King Nebuchadnezzar, The fourth man in the fire

THEMES: Faithfulness, Idolatry, Courage, God's protection, Witness

KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR MADE an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in Babylon. He summoned all the officials of his kingdom to its dedication and issued a command: 'When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.'

At the sound of the music, all the people fell down and worshiped—all except three young Hebrews: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who served in Nebuchadnezzar's government alongside their friend Daniel. They would not bow.

Some Babylonians brought the accusation to the king. 'These Jews pay no attention to you. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold.'

Furious, Nebuchadnezzar summoned the three. 'Is it true that you do not serve my gods or worship the image? I will give you one more chance. When the music plays, if you fall down and worship, very good. But if you do not, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?'

Their answer echoes through the ages: 'King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'

'Even if He does not.' This is the faith that does not bargain with God—that trusts whether or not deliverance comes.

Nebuchadnezzar's face twisted with rage. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. The fire was so intense that the soldiers who threw the three men into it were killed by the heat.

But as the king watched, his anger turned to astonishment. He leaped to his feet. 'Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?'

'Certainly, Your Majesty.'

'Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed—and the fourth looks like a son of the gods!'

Nebuchadnezzar approached the opening of the furnace. 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out!'

They walked out of the fire. All the officials crowded around. The fire had not harmed them. Not a hair of their heads was singed. Their robes were not scorched. There was no smell of fire on them.

Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed: 'Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and rescued His servants! They trusted in Him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that anyone who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be cut into pieces. No other god can save in this way.'

Then the king promoted the three men to even higher positions in the province of Babylon. Their refusal to bow had become the greatest witness of all.

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