

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Scripture: Daniel 3

Time Period: Babylon, during the exile

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

About 300 years after the death of Solomon, the people of Israel had been taken captive and some of them were now living in the land of Babylon or modern day Iraq. Among them were three young men who had become leaders in the land of Babylon. They were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These three young men believed in and worshiped the true God.

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. At times he would worship Yahweh, the God of Israel and then other times he would turn to worship and make false idols. Nebuchadnezzar made a tall statue out of gold. It was about as tall as a nine-story building! The statue stood on a plain in Babylon where everyone could see it. King Nebuchadnezzar called for all of the important officials in Babylon to come and stand around the new statue. Then one of the king's heralds made an important announcement: "When you hear the music from many types of instruments, you must fall down and worship this gold statue. Anyone who does not obey this rule will be thrown into a fiery furnace!" The rule was for everyone in Babylon, all the peoples, nations, and languages. So when the people heard the music, they fell down and worshiped the gold statue like the king commanded. But not everyone bowed down and worshiped the statue. Three men from Judah—who had been renamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—refused to bow down to a statue. They just stood there. Some men went to King Nebuchadnezzar to complain about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They did not like these men from Judah who did not obey their king. "You have made a rule for all the people," they reminded the king. "But some of the men from Judah do not pay attention to you, they do not serve your gods, or bow down and worship your statue." This news made King Nebuchadnezzar angry! He called for the men. "Shadrach! Meshach! Abednego! Come here!" The three men stood before the king. He asked them, "Is it true that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold statue I set up? If you do not bow down when you hear the music, I will throw you into a fiery furnace! Then what god could rescue you from my power?" The three friends answered, "King, we don't need to answer your question. If the God we serve exists, He can rescue us from the fiery furnace. He can save us from you. But even if God chooses not to rescue us, we won't serve your gods. And we won't bow down and worship the gold statue."



King Nebuchadnezzar was angrier than ever! The furnace was already very hot, but King Nebuchadnezzar ordered his workers to make it seven times hotter! He told the strongest soldiers in his army to come and tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the fiery furnace. The furnace was so hot that the strong soldiers died when they threw in the three friends. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fell into the furnace all tied up.

Suddenly, King Nebuchadnezzar jumped to his feet. "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the fire?" "Yes, King," his advisers said. "Look!" the king shouted. "I see four men walking around in the fire. They aren't tied up, and they aren't hurt! The fourth man looks like an angel!" Nebuchadnezzar quickly went to the door of the furnace. He called out, "Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego—servants of the Most High God! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. The king and all his officials looked at them. They had not been hurt by the fire at all! Their bodies and hair were not burned, and their robes were not burned. They didn't even smell like they had been near a fire!

Nebuchadnezzar praised God. "The God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego sent an angel and rescued His servants! They trusted in Him—they were willing to die for Him—and He saved them!" King Nebuchadnezzar made a new law for all the people. "Anyone who says anything against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's God will be punished! No other god can save people like this!" Then the king gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego even more important jobs in the kingdom of Babylon.