



Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego In The Fire

Three In The Fire

God had judged His people because they disobeyed Him. God's judgement had come by the hand of the Babylonians when they defeated Israel. When they did, they forced many of the Jewish people (Hebrews) to leave Israel, including Daniel and his friends. They were probably teenagers when they went to live in Babylon, but they did not forget God.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were Daniel's friends, and that's why Daniel tells their story in his book. These friends lived and worked together in the Babylonian king's court. They had encouraged each other to be faithful to God by refusing to eat from the king's table, and God had blessed these three friends.

When Nebuchadnezzar had a statue made and required everyone to worship it, the three friends knew that to obey the king would be wrong. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew that God had commanded them in the Ten Commandments to worship only God. They knew that God was stronger than any statue made of gold. So, the three friends stood together and refused to bow to the statue.

This made the king very angry. When he made a rule, he expected it to be obeyed. When he was told the three friends refused to bow, the king decided to give them a second chance, but the three men didn't respond as the king expected.

Instead, they said, "Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need to give you an answer to this question. If the God we serve exists, then He can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He can rescue us from the power of you, the king. But even if He does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up." (Daniel 3:16-18, HCSB)

The king was furious. No one talked to the king that way! He was so mad that he ordered that the furnace be made three times hotter than normal, and that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be tied up and thrown into the fiery furnace. And that's exactly what happened.

But the three men didn't die! And as the surprised king looked into the furnace, he couldn't believe his eyes. "Didn't we throw three men into the fire," the king asked. "Yes, of course, Your Majesty," he was told. He exclaimed, 'Look! I see four men, not tied, walking around in the fire unharmed; and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.'

The surprised king called the men to come out of the fire, and they did. The three men were untouched by the flames. . . and that probably made the king afraid. He had made a statue and commanded everyone to worship it, because the king thought he was stronger than God. When he commanded the three friends to be thrown into the fire, the king didn't believe in their God, but when they came out of the fire unhurt, the king was convinced that God was powerful. So, the king made a new rule that everyone should worship the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

But what about the fourth person in the furnace? Honestly, we don't know. What we do know is that God promises to be with His people whatever we face, and He showed us the extent of His love when Jesus paid the price for our sin by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Today, we know more than the three friends did as they faced the angry king, but their story reminds us that God is in control of all nations and will protect His people in accordance with His will and purposes.