

## When We Walk In Faith

### Introduction

I was thinking about my childhood recently and recalled a story my dad told me about an old native Indian man living alone in Oklahoma. There was a tornado that went through his area and caused a lot of damage. When asked about his losses during the storm he responded, “**Lost shed, rack, me shack, and a bedroll.**” He told me this story because he had seen what my Sunday school lesson was going to be about. Later, my teacher asked my parents why I was repeatedly pronouncing Abednego as “a bedroll?” I also came across something someone said about this story and began to realize I needed to study this account in the Bible again. This has led to today’s Sunday school lesson.

Nebuchadnezzar is widely considered the third most powerful King during Old Testament times behind Solomon and David. He is known for his **military genius** conquering new lands (including Jerusalem and all of Israel), the **development of Babylon** into the most modern city and countryside of the day (formerly Jerusalem’s honor) and creating **architectural and building wonders** (Babylon’s famous Hanging Gardens built for his wife to remind her of her homeland, Persia and the Ishtar Gate built with the plunder from Jerusalem).



### Lesson



King Nebuchadnezzar’s empire expanded from the Black Sea, around the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, south through Egypt and east to the Persian Gulf. His home city of Babylon is located in what is now known as Iraq. Saddam Hussein often compared his regime to Nebuchadnezzar’s (in his own mind), although it paled in comparison.

Nebuchadnezzar had an idol built in his image. It was **125 feet tall and 12 ½ feet wide** and stood on a large pedestal for all to see. The head was gold. The breast was silver. The thighs were brass. The legs were iron and the feet were an iron and clay compound.



At the sound of the horn and other instruments all the people were to bow down and worship the idol. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to obey. They would only worship the ONE true God. They would rather die than break the first two commandments or dishonor God in any way.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego remembered what God had said.

*And God spake all these words, saying, <sup>2</sup> I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. <sup>3</sup> **Thou shalt have no other gods before me.** <sup>4</sup> **Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: <sup>5</sup> **Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:** for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;***

**Exodus 20:1-5**

*...ye fall down (Heb. Napal, to fall down) and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? <sup>16</sup> (notice, they were respectful, but firm) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

**Daniel 3:15-18**

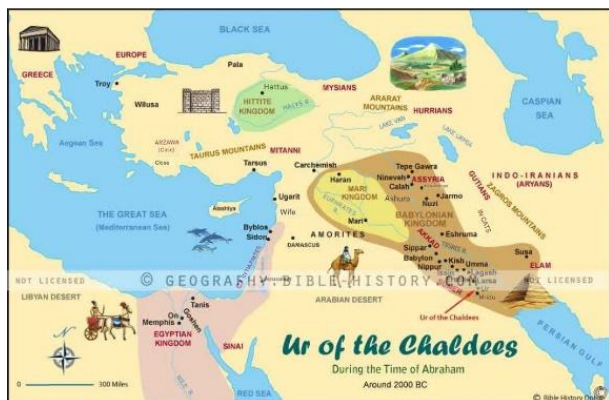
This answer to King Nebuchadnezzar is **an astonishing statement of faith**. In it we see their unswerving **conviction** in God, their **confidence** in who God is and who is the “power” of that moment, and their **faith** in God’s power to deliver them from evil. King Nebuchadnezzar was furious!

*Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage (face, including expression) was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. <sup>20</sup> And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.*

**Daniel 3:19-20**

**Background** – When God gave Daniel the details of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and the interpretation of the dream, **the King bowed down and worshiped Daniel** - in Chapter 2 (although there is no indication Daniel accepted this worship.) **The King also gave honor to God placing Him above all other Gods**. He made Daniel a wealthy man and placed him over all of Babylon. Then, at Daniel’s request, the King appointed Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego over all the affairs of the province of Babylon.

*Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face (Chaldee/Heb. Nepal, to fall down), and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation (Heb. Minha, sacrificial offering, often a meat offering) and sweet odours unto him.* <sup>47</sup> *The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.* <sup>48</sup> *Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.* <sup>49</sup> *Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province (Heb. Medina, a judgeship) of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.*



### Daniel 2:46-49

The region of Chaldees is well known. Abram was called out of that area to follow God. They were historically a highly skilled people in military weapons, education, architecture, soothsaying, idol worship and sin. They were a major part of Nebuchadnezzar's council. They were jealous that Daniel and the others had risen above them.

*Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.* <sup>9</sup> *They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.* <sup>10</sup> *Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down (Chaldee/Heb. Nepal, to fall down) and worship the golden image:* <sup>11</sup> *And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.* <sup>12</sup> *There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

### Daniel 3:8-12

So, King Nebuchadnezzar is about to kill some very important people here. **Even if** Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had to suffer a horrible and painful death, they refused to abandon God and worship an idol. There is a historical record of this event in Jewish worship called, "The Song of the Three Holy Children of the Apocrypha." It claims to be written during this time and recounts (or, sings) these moments stating the fire was fueled more and more until it eventually produced a flame of 49 cubits or **102 feet** above the furnace itself. Although we cannot confirm the authenticity of these measurements. The point is **it was a big flame, perhaps as high as the idol of King Nebuchadnezzar.**

*Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen (Heb. pettish, a wide gown, outer garment), and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the*

*midst of the burning fiery furnace.* <sup>22</sup> Therefore because the king's commandment was **urgent**, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of **the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.**

**Daniel 3:21-22**

The important positions of these three in the Babylon province explain their elaborate clothing. In the New Testament Jesus told His twelve disciples **not to fear** the one who can kill your **body** but fear the **ONE** who can **kill your body AND** your soul.

*And I say unto you my friends, **Be not afraid of them that kill the body**, and after that have no more that they can do.<sup>5</sup> But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: **Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell;** yea, I say unto you, **Fear him.***

**Luke 12:4-5**

*And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, **fell down** (Chaldee/Heb. Nepal, to fall down) bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

**Daniel 3:23**

Did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fall on their face to worship, thank God for saving them, or just fall because they were thrown into the fiery furnace? Or, both? What would you and I be doing?

*Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. <sup>25</sup> He answered and said, Lo, **I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like** (Heb. Dema, to resemble or be like) **the Son of God.***

**Daniel 3:24-25**

Notice, **it never says** that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego **saw the fourth member** walking with them in the fire. King Nebuchadnezzar saw him. Did they see him? Who was this fourth member, **the** Son of God, or **a** Son of God like an angel? Well, God can do or reveal anything. How could King Nebuchadnezzar know about Christ over 600 years before He came to this world and began His ministry? This fourth member could be an angel. We do not know the details to God's miracle here.

**1. I know God is always there whether I see the miracle or simply the results of the miracle.**

In my own life, I have not always seen the miracles of God that benefitted me and even saved my life. But I know God was there because I saw the results of His miracles. I know God can do anything He chooses to do on my behalf.

Paul wrote:

*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup> For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: <sup>3</sup> If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. <sup>4</sup> For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. <sup>5</sup> Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath **given unto us the earnest** (Gr. *arrabōn*, a pledge, a security or down payment, an advance) **of the Spirit.** <sup>6</sup> Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: <sup>7</sup> **(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)** <sup>8</sup> **We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.** <sup>9</sup> Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.*

## 2 Corinthians 5:1-9

**I may have said**, “Okay, I am saved from the fire, now get me out of here!” Yet, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were simply walking around in the fire.

*Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. <sup>27</sup> And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies **the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.***

## Daniel 3:26-27

It seems as though Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and their clothes were within **a holy envelope of protection** from the heat of that fire. This tells me **why** Daniel was careful to itemize what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were wearing when they were thrown into the fire, **Daniel 3:21** “*Then these men were **bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.***”

2. Their bindings were burned away, but not the clothes. They spoke to the King with great respect yet refused his command to worship him or his idol instead of God. How much harder would it have been for the King to change his mind, set them free, and given them places of importance and honor if they would have been rude or insulting to him? This reminds me **never to make someone swallow their pride to come to God**, change their life, or end their defiance and follow Him. **My opinions of their behavior will not produce results. God's conviction of their sins is what gets results!**

*Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath **sent his angel**, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have **changed the king's word**, and yielded their bodies, that they **might not serve nor worship any god,***

*except their own God.* <sup>29</sup> Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because **there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.** <sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

Daniel 3:28-30

## Conclusion

“When we walk by faith,” (*For we walk by faith, not by sight: 2 Corinthians 5:7*), there may be those times in our life that **seem** like fiery persecution. We need to remember that Christ is with us just as he was with our brave three today. We may not always see Christ or His angels, but He/they are there. The Holy Spirit is continually reminding us whom the power is, and whom we should fear.

*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* <sup>19</sup> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: <sup>20</sup> Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, **I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.** Amen.

Matthew 28:18-20

3. **Stand your ground.** Defiantly stand if you must. Yet, stand in the way Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood – **respectfully**. Believe in the ONE who led you to this **time** in your life, then brought you to this **important moment**, and is intending to **bring you all the way to the other side of this trial**, for His glory!

*Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer* (Heb. **natan**, cause or appoint) *the righteous to be moved* (Heb. **Mot** – Waver, slip, shake, fall, fallen in decay, slide).

Psalms 55:22

We need to leave our burdens in God's hands and stop worrying about the outcome of our trials. **God is in charge!** There have been times in my life when I hated what I was going through. Times when I didn't see how anything could possibly change, get better or stop happening. Then the Holy Spirit would softly remind me that I would **dislike being** those other people or that other person more. Then I knew I needed to **tell myself off** for being weak and begin to thank God for all His many blessings.

*Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely...* <sup>3</sup> He *healeth* the broken in heart, and *bindeth up* their wounds. <sup>4</sup> He *telleth* the number of the stars; he *calleth* them all by their names. <sup>5</sup> **Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.** <sup>6</sup> **The LORD lifteth up the meek:** he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

Psalm 147:1, 3-6

**Christ will ultimately save us and sustain us.** His **hedge** around us is like that **envelope** of protection around Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but **the righteous into life eternal.***

**Matthew 25:46**

Remember, when we are in our fiery trials it is also time to reveal to the world the ONE who can deliver us from these trials. I like to think of Paul's comforting words.

*Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. <sup>15</sup> **For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.** <sup>16</sup> **For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.** <sup>17</sup> **For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;** <sup>18</sup> **While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.***

**2 Corinthians 4:14-18**

Speaking of death in **2 Corinthians 4:16** "... **though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day,**" Paul was saying **we cannot lose heart.** Although we are wasting away outwardly, we are being renewed by His Holy Spirit every day. These trials and troubles are but a moment in time when compared to eternity. **Do not focus on what is seen, but what is unseen. What we see now is temporary. What we do not see is eternal.**

Remember, **this life is not the end. Eternity awaits.** This is Jesus' promise to all of us because we love and obey Him. Knowing this, **Jesus gives us the ability to live above the pain of this life and enjoy His blessings now,** when we are apart from Him (physically) **and then in eternity when we are with Him forever.**

*Jesus answered and said unto him, **If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.***

**John 14:23**

Like, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we do not have to actually see God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or His angels. But we know they are there blessing us with whatever we need to give us victory and take us safely to the other side. **The place that is beyond our trials.**

1. Know that God is always there whether we see the miracles or simply the results of the miracles that are for our benefit.
2. Expressing our opinions of people's behavior will not produce the desired spiritual results. God's conviction of their sins through the Holy Spirit is what gets results!
3. Stand your ground for consistent Christian living. But do it respectfully. Never tear down the unbeliever or make them swallow their pride before they can kneel before God and repent of their sins.

