

Daniel 3:28-30

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Nebuchadnezzar confesses that the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego rescued them from his hand. He makes a strict law that forbids offensive speech toward the Most High God. Nebuchadnezzar makes sure that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego live prosperous lives in Babylon.

After trying to execute Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego for refusing to bow to his golden idol, Nebuchadnezzar witnesses an amazing event. Though the three Jews are thrown into a fire for execution, they do not die. A fourth person, a supernatural being, appears in the fire with them. Nebuchadnezzar calls them out of the furnace and all gathered there see that the three men have not experienced any harm from the fire. Their hair and clothing and even their smell is free of the effects of fire.

Now, Nebuchadnezzar responds to this event. His judgement and wrath have been entirely dismissed by the God of Israel, the *God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego*. Nebuchadnezzar summarizes what has happened, recognizing that God “*sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him.*” The king acknowledges that this was in defiance to his efforts, “*violating the king’s command.*” In their defiance, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego *yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God*. So, Nebuchadnezzar has reasoned, the three men were saved by God’s angel because they trusted Him and refused to serve any deity except for their own. Their faith and obedience was rewarded with salvation from the fire.

After witnessing this, Nebuchadnezzar changes his own beliefs and humbles himself. He says, “*Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Israel shall be torn limb from limb and their houses destroyed, reduced to a rubbish heap.*”

In a remarkable turnabout, Nebuchadnezzar’s law condemns hostile speech against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego’s God on punishment of death and destruction. It appears the king is attempting to right the wrong that led to these men’s trial and attempted execution. It is no longer a crime that they

should refuse to bow to his golden idol, or worship their own God exclusively. Nor does the new law force all men to worship the God of Israel, as Nebuchadnezzar had tried to force all his rulers to worship his golden statue. Instead, he is preventing the persecution of the Jews in Babylon.

We will see that Nebuchadnezzar's humbling will be a work in progress. It will result in Nebuchadnezzar writing an amazing testimony that is included as a part of scripture, making him one of the few or perhaps the only non-Jewish author in the Bible.

This passage began with the king's decree that all must bow to his idol. And working within that law, certain Chaldeans—political rivals of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—took advantage of the new decree and tried to have the three men killed. Now, Nebuchadnezzar rightly understands that *there is no other god who is able to deliver men from death*. He sees the true power and authority of the God of Israel, whom he calls “the Most High God” (v. 26). His new law prevents further harm to come to those who exclusively worship God, because Nebuchadnezzar now understands how mighty this God is.

Not only are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego given religious freedom—they are also given better lives. Nebuchadnezzar causes them *to prosper in the province of Babylon*.

These three faithful believers in God are strangers in a strange land. They were stolen from their home in Judah as young men and put to work for the king who enslaved them. But rather than start a rebellion or try to escape, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego adapted to their new situation. In Daniel 1, we see they learn the language and literature of their new land, they serve the king for years and help govern his kingdom. They have worked hard in a country to which they do not belong nor want to be.

But all that time in a land of pagan idols, they worshipped their God alone. He rescued them from an unjust death, and worked to bless their earthly circumstances because of their faithfulness. He is the sovereign judge over all life, not an earthly king like Nebuchadnezzar.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego have overcome the trial of being slaves far from home by living rightly in their earthly circumstance while remaining faithful to their Heavenly Father. They exemplify the idea of being in the world,

but not of it. They overcome the world through their faith in God, and are rewarded for their obedience to Him.

Biblical Text:

²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." ³⁰ Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.