

Reading: Daniel Chapter 3

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon at the time, made a huge golden image, as large as a big tree. When it was finished he set it up, and called all the important people in the land together for a meeting to dedicate the image. Everyone assembled to hear the King and was eager to see the great golden image.

The people were afraid of the King because he killed all who disobeyed him. When they were all assembled they were instructed to bow down to the image at a prearranged signal.

"O people, nations, folk of every tongue, your orders are, whenever you hear the music of the horn, the pipe, the lyre the harp and the bagpipes you must fall down and bow before the golden image which King Nebuchadnezzar has set up."

"Anyone who does not fall down and worship shall be instantly flung into the fiery furnace." This would make the people afraid and they would listen for the music, because of course, they did not want to be burned alive. This was a wicked rule. Nebuchadnezzar was wrong to kill people who did not obey his instruction to worship an idol. But he was very proud and did not respect God's law.

In Babylon at the time there were three Jews named Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They heard the King's message, but knew that God was more important than the greatest King. They were determined to obey God's law, whatever happened to them. Each time the people heard the music everyone except Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego bowed down to the image.

When the King heard that the three Jews had not obeyed his orders, he flew into a rage and sent for them. He asked if the thing he had heard were true, and gave them a second chance. The King said: "If ye 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?"

The three Jews continued to disobey the King and worshipped God only. When the King heard this he became very angry and ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual. The King's soldiers tied up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and fully dressed the three Jews were cast into the middle of the fire. The heat was so great that it killed the soldiers. When the King looked into the furnace he was astonished to find a fourth person in the furnace with the three Jews. The fourth person was an angel, God protected Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fire.

Nebuchadnezzar was made to realize that there is no other God who can deliver in this way. Because Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego kept God's law they were saved from the fire.

Point to remember: God protects those who try to keep his laws.