

THE BURNING QUESTION

What can I takeaway from the story of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego?

We all know that parts of the Bible can seem irrelevant to us or difficult to understand. After all, the Bible was written thousands of years ago to a completely different people group with a completely different culture. However, it's important that we understand how to read Scripture and apply it to our lives in the present. Over the next few weeks, we will break down some different stories from the Bible to show you how they apply to us in our current age. Today, we're looking at the story of 3 Jewish guys—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

Daniel 3

12 - But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.

16-18 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. *But even if He doesn't*, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.

19-20 - Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.

27 - Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!

LETS TALK ABOUT IT

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is one of the most inspiring stories that we find in the Bible. The Jewish people had been exiled from their land and taken captive by Babylon, led by King Nebuchadnezzar. During that time, these 3 guys along with Daniel earned favor with Nebuchadnezzar because Daniel had been interpreting the king's dreams. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were actually put in charge of all the affairs of Babylon. However, King Nebuchadnezzar built a massive gold statue of himself and instructed all the people that they were to bow down to it when music played. He said if anyone didn't bow, they'd be tossed into a fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow when the music played, and then refused a second time when the king gave them another chance to bow.

This infuriated the king, and he ordered that these 3 guys be thrown into the furnace. He even ordered the furnace to be cranked up 7 times hotter than normal. The Bible actually says that the fire was so hot that it killed the guards who threw them into the fire. While they were in the fire, King Nebuchadnezzar sees a 4th person who we understand to be God. He calls to them and tells the boys to come out. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego come out and Scripture says that not a hair on their heads was singed, and they didn't even smell like smoke! After that, Nebuchadnezzar proclaims the God of Israel to be the true God and promotes the guys even higher! Theologians even say these guys would've been in their teenage years! So what can we takeaway from their story for our daily lives?

VERTICAL MOVEMENT

1) We can't bow to culture: We may not have a king/politician telling us to bow down to a gold statue, but our culture is constantly trying to get us to bow down to or idolize things that aren't God. This just comes with living in a fallen world. However, we have to choose what we will stand for. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to bow to God alone, even though it went against what everyone else was doing.

What things does culture try to get us to bow to? What's one thing culture idolizes that's the most difficult for you to resist? How do you resist these things?

2) Standing for God will cost you: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood for God, even while knowing the king's threat of being thrown into a furnace. Standing for God is not easy, and it will probably cost you. We can let this discourage us and cause us to cave, or we can trust that what it costs us on earth won't come close to the reward that we will receive in Heaven.

Have you ever publicly made a stand for God? How did that feel? What things can standing for God cost us? (friends, popularity, status, experiences of this world, etc.) How can we stand for God while still showing love to people?

3) When you stand for God, He looks out for you: Even though their stance for God very well could've cost them their lives, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were saved by God when they were thrown into the furnace. While we can often expect standing for God to cost us, we can also trust that God will always look out for us when we stand for Him. He gives us the strength to endure!

How have you seen God look out for you when you've decided to stand for Him? How can we know that God will look out for us when we stand for Him? (He wouldn't have sent Jesus if He was gonna leave us to fend for ourselves) What keeps you from standing for God?

4) Standing for God takes faith: We can't make a stand for God if we don't have faith in who He is. In Daniel 3:16-18, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego share their confident faith that God will deliver them! They go on to say that even if He doesn't deliver them, they will only bow to Him! They were able to have this perspective because they had faith to believe that God is who He says He is. We must trust that God is not a liar, and He alone is worth serving even if He doesn't come through in the way we think He should.

What does it look like to have faith when standing for God? What is the reward for standing for Him? Is it hard for you to believe that God is who He says He is?

SO WHAT ABOUT ME?

You are going to be presented with opportunities to bow to things that aren't God on a daily basis. That can be popularity, lustful desires, beliefs that contradict Scripture, selfishness, and a host of other things. If you haven't decided where you stand with all of this, culture can get you to bow much easier.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been faithful to God and determined beforehand that they would only bow to God. This made the choice to refuse to bow much easier when it came time to make that decision. Make the decision to only serve God now so that you can stand when culture tries to get you to bow. God is looking for students who will go against the grain of culture and take a stand for Him.

What's one way that you can choose to stand for God in your school this week?