

Three Refuse to Break a Covenant

Key Verse: *“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. 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 3:17,18

Selected Scripture:
Daniel 3

bow down to the image when the music was played. In particular, three individuals—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were singled out for not bowing down. King Nebuchadnezzar asked that they be brought to him, upon which he inquired, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?” (vs. 14) Thinking that they had perhaps just misunderstood and unintentionally

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his vast kingdom, King Nebuchadnezzar had a golden image of himself fashioned and placed in the flat plain of the land of Babylon. The image was massive, about ninety feet tall and nine feet wide, and was visible from miles around. A decree was given to all the people that when they heard certain music being played they were to bow down toward this image and worship it, with the penalty for not doing so that of being cast into a burning fiery furnace.—Dan. 3:1-7

Shortly after the decree was given, it was noticed that some of the Israelite captives did not

failed to bow down to the image, he gave them a second chance, reiterating the decree that when the designated music was played, they worship the golden image.

The reply of the three Israelites is in our Key Verses, and indicates a high degree of faith on their part in the power of God to deliver them, if it be his will. Just as important, however, was their unwavering obedience to God's law, which stated, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 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: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." (Exod. 20:3-5) They knew it would be a violation of God's law to bow down to the king's image, and were obedient to what they knew to be right, regardless of the consequences.

As one might expect, King Nebuchadnezzar was extremely angry and commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than normal, and that the three Hebrews be thrown in. So hot was the furnace that the men who thrust them in were slain by the heat. The next morning the king was astonished to see, looking into the furnace, not just three, but four men loose, walking in the middle of the fire, with the fourth having the appearance like the Son of God. (Dan. 3:19-25) He called for the three to come forth, upon which they did, right out of the midst of the fire. They had no burns on their bodies or their clothes, not even the smell of fire was present.—vss. 26,27

King Nebuchadnezzar recognized that only a most powerful God could deliver such as he had witnessed, and he proclaimed, "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."—vs. 29 ■