

IT WAS A "SET UP"

I was reading my Bible the other day and I was in the Book of Daniel in chapter 3. We know that this is the account of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and their miraculous salvation from the fiery furnace. This

is a fairly well known Bible account. However, as I was reading it, some things came back to my attention and I just wanted to share it with you.

As I had mentioned, we all know the account in Daniel 3. It is about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were three young Jewish men who were taken captive and were now in Babylon. We know that through the historical accounts the people from the Southern Kingdom of Judah were defeated by the Babylonian Empire. This defeat was caused by the people's lack of truly worshipping and allowing God to truly be their God.

At that time, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was already defeated and taken captive by the Assyrian Empire. A few years later the Southern Kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonian Empire who at that time was dominating that section of the world. We know that the Babylonian's deported practically all the people who were in the Southern Kingdom back to Babylon. Jeremiah was living at this time. God had told him that Judah was going to be taken away captive. Jeremiah reluctantly was taken by his own people and escaped to Egypt just prior to the Babylonians coming to defeat the the Southern Kingdom and take them back to Babylon.

The Southern Kingdom became servants to the Babylonians. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were deported to Babylon but we see because of their courage and the obvious blessings of God upon their lives, they were "promoted" miraculously into the king's service (Daniel 1:17-20). These men along with others from the kingdom of Babylon were taken and trained for their work unto the king and Babylon.

They were given the Babylonian names of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Belteshazzar. However, their Hebrew names were Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah and Daniel. We see that their faith in God was expressed in chapters 1 and 2 because they refused to eat of the king's food that was given to them while they were in "training" to be a part of the king's business affairs.

However, we read that they chose to just eat vegetables and not eat the king's planned menu. This was the starting point to let everyone know that these men were "different." It worked for them as we read in Daniel 1:17, *"As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."*

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego along with Daniel were chosen to do work in the king's governmental affairs. We get a picture of Daniel's ministry in Daniel 2 when He deciphered a dream that the king had. We see in Daniel 2:48-49 that Daniel was then promoted to sit at the "seat of the gate of the city of Babylon," which was a place of great honor and responsibility. Daniel chose Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to sit in some very high places of authority as well. They were to oversee certain affairs and matters of the Kingdom of Babylon.

As you may have guessed, this did not sit to well with the other men of position in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. After all, these four men were literally "captives" and they were literally "prisoners." Yet, here they were now as high officials in the realm. That was the backdrop of what took place in Daniel 3.

Daniel 3 starts off with Nebuchadnezzar deciding to make an "image," a.k.a. idol, that was over 60' tall and 18' wide. It was "set up" by Nebuchadnezzar in one of the main provinces of Babylon. He had commanded that everyone should come to worship and bow down to this "image."

It is interesting to take note of the language and the phrases that the Bible uses in Daniel 3:1-18. We see that it states very clearly, 8 times, that this "image" was "set up" by the king for everyone to come worship and to bow down before it. Now, I know that when the Bible was written the term "set up" meant that this "image" was erected under the direction of Nebuchadnezzar, the king. However, if we really look at this, we can see that this whole scenario was truly a "set up" by the devil against God's people.

This is exactly what the devil and his cohorts always try to do against the children of God – you and I. He tries to set us up to do something that is contrary to what God would have us do. In this account we see that the devil tried to pervert Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

from their walk and faith in the one true God. They just simply needed to do what everyone else would do – bow down and worship the “image.”

Yes, we read that Nebuchadnezzar had set this “image” up. It seemed as if it was a simple action by the king of Babylon to “set up” an “image” for his people to bow down to and worship. However, we see that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had refused to do this. We do not hear of Daniel in this matter.

We are not sure if Daniel had such a high position and being at the seat of the entrance to the city that he may not have had the ability to come. He may have been away at this time on another mission for the king and did not need to worry about this problem at that time-yet. We are not told. Maybe, he was assigned to come later on to come and bow down to this “image.” Which by the way, we are pretty well assured that Daniel would not have bowed down to this “image.” In Daniel 1:8, we read where Daniel’s heart was when it came to matters such as this, Daniel had “... *purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.*” He was God’s man.

However, we have Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were called to come and bow down to the “image.” We know that they had refused to come. This was the perfect situation for the other Babylonian leaders, who were jealous of them and their position, to plot against them. They brought the matter to the king.

In Daniel 3:6 it tells us what the punishment would be for anyone who did not bow down and worship this “image” when the music sounded. It reads, “*And whoso falls not down and worships shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.*” We read that when the time came to bow down, Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego refused to “bow down” and worship the “image.”

In verse 12 we read that the Chaldean leaders of Babylon went to the king and told him, “*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.***” We see it here again, those words, “...*thou set up.*”

The king became enraged and ordered them to be brought to him. In verses 13-15 the king questioned them and they answered honestly. The king again repeats his command that if anyone does not bow down and worship the “image,” they will be thrown into the fiery furnace and killed. We read their answer to the king’s command in verses 16-18, *“¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. ¹⁷If 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. ¹⁸But 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.*

If we read their response correctly, some may say, especially in today’s “faith based” teachings, that they were double minded. Hmm.... I do not think so. You see, in times of situations such as this, the believer must make a clear cut decision which is – let God’s will be accomplished. We know that throughout history many true believers in Jesus were “martyred” for their faith. They had to come to the place to be willing to be put to death for their faith in the one true God. This is where these three men were in their walk with their God.

As we continue, we read that it was a “golden image” that Nebuchadnezzar had built. Hmm... Isn’t that very similar to the image that we read of back in Exodus that was made and that the Israelites had yielded themselves to worship instead of God. That was another “golden image,” it was a “golden calf.” It is amazing how the devil will continually use many of the same tactics and many of the same tools to try to persuade the people of God to get away from their true worship of the Living God .

We know the rest of the account. The king in his outrage had these three men thrown into the fiery furnace. He actually increased the heat and made it “seven” times hotter. Hmm... “Seven” times hotter. That is the number, seven, that God uses in His Word to represent His fullness. It is one of God’s “perfect numbers.”

The furnace was so hot that even the men who were to throw them into this fiery furnace died from the heat when they got close enough to throw the Hebrew men in. Even though this happened we see something very odd in this whole account.

Even though the men who were to throw them into the furnace had died, the three men went into the furnace on their own accord. Wow!!! You would think that they would have thought that God had delivered them. After all, the men who were to throw them into the furnace were no longer there. This must have been their “out.” God saved them!!! But wait...

They still went into the furnace... on their own!!! They must have been crazy!!! No. I believe they just truly loved God and they ultimately went into the furnace on their own accord. We know the story. We read that the king saw another “person” in the furnace with the three men.

We read what Nebuchadnezzar saw in verses 24-26, *“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. ²⁵ 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 the Son of God. ²⁶ 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.”*

We then read what the king declared, which I happen to think is amazing. Nebuchadnezzar declared, *“...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.”*

Yes, God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. There was a fourth “man” in the furnace with them. Nebuchadnezzar declared that this fourth man was *“like the Son of God.”* This “fourth man,” I believe, **was** the Son of God, Jesus. He was with them in the midst of their trial, in the midst of their most difficult situation. We see that they could have escaped and ran away, yet they did not. They chose to go all the way and when they did, we see that the Son of God, Jesus, was with them. Yes, He was with them and He saw them through.

This is not just “a story” but rather it is an **actual account** of an event that took place in history. I truly believe that. I pray that you all believe that as well. It was not just a “story” but it was an actual account of something that actually took place. We sometimes place this most

true account in the annals of “children’s stories” that they learn in Sunday School or in their “religion” courses. We have relegated it to that. It is great that the children learn this...but...

We must all realize that this is a true account of an event that took place and it is found within our Bible. It is a true account of the courage concerning three men of faith who simply believed God and would not change their mind even when they were faced with a most horrible death – being burned alive. It is an account that every believer must never forget.

We are coming to the time, if not already there, when our faith in the one true God is being challenged. There are many throughout the world who are facing death because they are standing firm in their faith of God, the Father, the Son, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. There are many, many martyrs who are being put to death because of their faith in the one true God.

The time of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is found within the Old Testament when many who believed in the coming of the Messiah were put to death. These three men’s lives were spared by God so that it could be a witnessing tool to Nebuchadnezzar and all of the Babylonians, as well as to us today. If we read the life of Nebuchadnezzar, we see a man who struggled throughout his life with the reality of the God of the Hebrews.

Did Nebuchadnezzar ever truly accept this God or did he not? I believe we will find out when we all finally do get to heaven. Will he be there or will he not. We will see. However, what we do know is that God was witnessing to him throughout his life. There are many more aspects of his life found in the book of Daniel. We see that this man, who had conquered the Children of Israel, had many more times of having experiences with the God of the Children of Israel.

We see that the devil had “set up” these true believers, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who truly had unwavering faith in the Living God. However, it was their faith and loyalty in the one true God that saw them through. They did not truly know what was going to happen to them when they went into the fiery furnace. However, they had the courage and the faith to stand firmly concerning their trust and belief in the one true God.

That brings us to today. Are we ready to go through the difficult times that may be ahead? Will we possibly let down our guard when the world tells that we must do things their way just to allow our families to survive? Or...will we go into the wilderness areas as it tells us in book of Revelation and truly separate ourselves from those in this world that do not truly believe.

Will we be willing to go into the “fiery furnace” or will we yield and bow down and worship the “image,” or the Antichrist that the Word is very explicit in letting us know will be coming on the scene – very soon. The only difference that the true believer has today is the fact that if you truly know and have Jesus as your Savior and Lord, no matter what happens to you, you will always be with Him. He will always be with you.

The Holy Spirit is also now within you to lead and guide you in this journey. You may be “set up” by the enemy but the truth is that Jesus and the Holy Spirit is always right there with you and they will **NEVER** leave you nor forsake you.