

# INFLUENCING IN BABYLON

Devotional | February 12, 2023

GRACE  
FELLOWSHIP

**Discuss:** Who are some people whose lives you have influence in (e.g., family, friends, co-workers, classmates, etc.)? How do you use your influence to glorify God?

**Key Text:** Read *Daniel 3:1-30*

John Chrysostom, a committed Christian leader who lived about 400 years after Christ, was brought before the Roman emperor who threatened to banish him from the country if he did not renounce Christ. Chrysostom replied, "The whole world is my heavenly Father's land—you cannot banish me." The emperor said, "Then I will take away all your property." Chrysostom responded, "All my treasures are already in Heaven." The emperor threatened, "I'll send you to a place where you have no friend to speak to." Chrysostom countered, "I have a friend, Jesus Christ, who has promised to always be with me—He'll never leave me nor forsake me." Finally, the emperor said, "Then I'll take away your life!" Chrysostom answered, "You cannot. My life is hidden with God." Talk about a confident and resolved faith!

In today's lesson "Influencing in Babylon," we'll join Daniel's godly friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in their John Chrysostom-like resolve to stand for God even though it meant being cast into a fiery furnace.

## 1. Nebuchadnezzar builds a statue to glorify himself (3:1-7).

In Chapter 2, Daniel had told King Nebuchadnezzar that the head of gold in his dream represented him (2:38). In his megalomania, Nebuchadnezzar built a statue—gold from head to toe—of himself that was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide (3:1). He then summoned all his government leaders, including Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (note in Dan.1:7 that they were forced to go by Babylonian names instead of their Jewish names), to attend the dedication of the statue (3:2-3). When the musicians played, all who were present were to bow down and worship the statue as an open act of submission (3:4-5). This would acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar's supposed divine status and unify the kingdom religiously and politically. Anyone who refused to bow would be cast into a blazing furnace (3:6-7). The Babylonian people would not hesitate to bow down and worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image for two reasons: 1) They were accustomed to worshipping pagan gods, and 2) If they refused, they would be put to death. But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were present at the ceremony worshipped Yahweh, the one true God, and their conviction would not waver even under the threat of death.

**Discuss:** What kinds of idols does our culture worship today and how does the world compel us to follow them?

**Discuss:** What does the Bible say in these verses about idols and idolatry: 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5; 1 John 5:21?

**Discuss:** How would you advise a new Christian to stay strong in their faith and in their biblical convictions?

## 2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego resolve not to bow to the idol (3:8-23).

Perhaps because of jealousy or in an attempt to gain favor from the king, some political leaders reported to Nebuchadnezzar that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow (3:8-12). Nebuchadnezzar offered the three young men a second chance before passing any kind of judgment (3:13-15), but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had already resolved how they would respond if they ever faced the question of where their ultimate loyalty lay. They respectfully explained their position that God could rescue them if they were cast into the furnace, but even if God chose not to rescue them, their allegiance to Him would not falter (3:16-18). The king became so furious that he commanded that the furnace used for smelting metals and baking bricks be heated seven times more than usual—as hot as it could get—and ordered soldiers to bind the three young men and cast them into the furnace. The fire from the furnace was so intense that the soldiers were killed by the heat (3:19-23)!

**Discuss:** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not hesitate in making their decision – their minds were already made up (3:16). What are some advantages of deciding what you believe *before* you face a trial or temptation?

## 3. Christ appears in the fiery furnace to protect the young men (3:24-28).

When the Jewish men fell into the fire, it seemed their lives were over—there was no way to escape. But looking into the fire, an astonished Nebuchadnezzar saw two incredible things. First, the three men were still alive—in fact, they were walking around, unbound, in the blazing furnace (3:24-25a)! Second, another man had joined them in the fire, and the king recognized that this fourth man who was protecting the other three was a supernatural being (3:25b). Many Bible scholars interpret the phrase “*a son of the gods*” (3:25) as referring to Jesus Christ in a preincarnate appearance. God blessed the young men for their faithfulness with the presence of His Son who sustained them in the fiery furnace. At the king’s urging, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked out of the fire, not even smelling of smoke (3:26-28).

**Discuss:** What difference did God’s presence with His people make in these difficult situations: Genesis 39:23; Joshua 1:9; Psalm 23:4; Matthew 28:19-20; Hebrews 13:5?

## 4. A humbled Nebuchadnezzar issues a new decree: worship Yahweh (3:29-30).

King Nebuchadnezzar recognized that none of the Babylonian gods had this kind of power (3:29). Admitting that the God of the Jews was, indeed, the Most High of all the gods, Nebuchadnezzar imposed the death sentence upon anyone who spoke against God, and promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions of authority and influence (3:30).

**Discuss:** What inspires you most about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

### For Further Study:

Free online commentary on the Book of Daniel at [www.enduringword.com](http://www.enduringword.com)

*The Complete Book of Who’s Who in the Bible* by Philip Comfort and Walter Elwell

“What Can We Learn from Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego?” at [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)