

Our God Is Able

There was an empire situated in south-west Asia in what today is in the area of what we refer to as Iraq. In the Old Testament, this empire is referred to as "Accad" or "Akkad". It is also referred to, and used a number of times, speaking of "the plains of Shinar", or "Shinar". At other times there are references in the Bible to people who live in the "land of the Chaldeans".

This empire was called Babylonia. It is in the area that at one time had in it what is referred to in the Bible as the garden of Eden. It is the area from which Abraham came, for it was from a very great city of this particular empire called Ur of the Chaldees that Abraham left.

On the north this empire was bordered by Assyria — to the east by the Persian hills, or as the Old Testament refers to it, Elam — on the west by the Arabian Desert and on the south by the Persian Gulf. This was the empire known as the Babylonian Empire.

It got its name from its capital city, the city of Babylon. This great city was situated in what is the geographical centre of the world, and there in its day it sat, as I heard someone say, "like a diamond on a couch of velvet".

This great city was surrounded with double walls of protection. Those walls were approximately seventeen miles long to border the city, and the outside wall was wide enough that two chariots could have a race on it going around the city.

In that great city a vain, yet fabulous and very great king called Nebuchadnezzar built what became known as one of the seven wonders of the world, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. He built this for his wife whose name was called Amytis. She was a Median princess whom he had married, and the Hanging Gardens, one of the seven wonders of the world, were built by Nebuchadnezzar for this beautiful queen.

In it, up to this time, have been located via archaeology fifty-three major temples to different gods within the border of that great city of Babylon. The greatest two temples are to Ishtar and to Marduk. Ishtar was the goddess of fertility. Marduk was the sun-god.

The record of some things that occurred in the times of this great empire of Babylon is written in the Book of Daniel. Daniel, the man of God, was a prophet living at that time, and things had occurred in the city of Jerusalem and in the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to the south. The Temple in Jerusalem had been ransacked. The best of their young manhood had been taken as slaves to Babylon. The most beautiful women had been taken as slaves to Babylon.

Daniel 3:1:

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar had, on his expeditions, gone out to the known world at that time — all the other empires, all the other kingdoms — and wherever he went he captured their gods and he brought their gods back to Babylon. He had the greatest collection of gods of any king that perhaps has ever lived. When he would capture these gods of those countries and bring them back, he set them up in the city of Babylon. He knew that he was bigger than any of the gods he had captured, because it just happens to be a law of logic that if you can capture a god then

you are bigger than that god. So finally Nebuchadnezzar had the most brilliant idea he could ever have. He said, "Since I captured all the gods — there are none left to capture, I have got them all — then I must be god." So he had this statue made out of pure gold sixty cubits high and he set it out there on the plain of Dura and he said, "There is your god!"

Then he did something else.

Verses 2-5:

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then an herald cried aloud [with might he heralded forth], To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up.

This is sort of remarkable that King Nebuchadnezzar figured this all out. He had seen that at these other gods people would fall down, they would worship them, so he decided that to this god that he had set up of himself, made out of pure gold, he would demand that whenever the things in verse 5 occurred

everybody would bow. Today some people look toward Mecca when they pray, some others toward Jerusalem — a few of us look to God.

Verse 6:

And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

That command had some heat in it! This was a declaration from the mighty king, Nebuchadnezzar. He had called in all the rulers from all those other countries that he had captured, he had brought them all back, and he said: "Fellows, I do not care where you live, if you are a thousand miles from here or five thousand. At that hour when these things occur, everybody down facing toward the statue that I had built on the plain of Dura."

Verses 7-11:

Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down *and* worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and [they] accused the Jews [Judaean].

They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.

Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image:

Our God Is Able

And whoso falleth not down and worshipping, *that* he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

Is that what the king had said? Yes, it is exactly what the king had said.

Verse 12:

[But you know, O King] There are certain Jews [Judaeans] whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon....

The reason that he had set them over the province of Babylon is because of what the man of God, Daniel, had done. For in the 2nd chapter in verses 46-49 it says:

...the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him.

The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth *is*, that your God *is* a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.

Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise *men* of Babylon.

Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel *sat* in the gate of the king.

That was how three young, tremendous men — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — got to those prominent positions of

authority. But, you must remember that they were Judaeans. They had come from a land that at least at one time had heard about the one God, to worship the one God. They had remembered back in their minds, "I *am* the Lord thy God, which have brought thee [forth] out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And here they were in a land in positions of authority and power and this great leader had set up this statue of himself on the plain of Dura made out of pure gold, and he demanded that they worship that statue as god.

And so, after these commands were given, these three great men — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — whenever the music played, did not bow; they did not fall down on their faces to worship that god. Naturally there was a lot of jealousy, because whenever there are men of God standing for God's Word, all the unbelievers envy them, get jealous about them, want to defeat them, want to destroy them. They figured that the way to destroy them was to go back to the king, and they worked him very psychologically. They said: "You are the king, therefore O King, you live for ever. Look, King, you have got three great men here who are in responsible positions of authority, and those three fellows down there are not bowing when they are supposed to." And this really was something, because it says in chapter 3, verses 12-15:

...these men, O king, have not regarded thee...

In other words, "They did not pay attention to what you said. They did not believe it."

...they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar in *his* rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.

Our God Is Able

Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it true*, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, 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?

Boy, oh boy! Imagine that. Let us say that you are in a responsible position of authority, like the Attorney-General of a state, and you are called in, and you are set right down, and you look into the governor's eyes and the cabinet is present, and they say to you: "Listen, you have not obeyed our orders. You have not carried them out. Who do you think is going to deliver you? Who is going to set you free?" The king laid it right on them. He said: "Who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands? Nobody, because I am King Nebuchadnezzar. Nobody can violate my orders. You cannot do it. Nobody can touch me, don't you know that?"

It is sort of neat that these men were incarcerated and brought in — being men of that high authority and power. But, maybe I ought to take you into a psalm and show you something about these men and that time.

Psalms 137:1:
By the rivers of Babylon....

The rivers of Babylon were the Euphrates and Tigris. The Euphrates river went right through the centre of that great city of Babylon.

Verse 1:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

"When we remembered our homeland, when we remembered Jerusalem, when we remembered the worshipping of the true God..."

Verses 2 and 3:

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us [that is they laid heavy requirements upon us, they] *required of us* mirth, *saying*, Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion.

They did not really want to hear one of the songs of Zion. You see, they wanted to make fun of them: "Oh, so you came from Jerusalem. You were there where the man of God read the Word to you. Is that right? You were there singing the songs of Zion. And yet you have come over here in our place, and you hung your harps upon the willows. You are not singing any more. Come on, let us hear how you sing. We want to hear one of those great songs of life. Let's hear you."

They said:

Verse 4:

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in an unbeliever's land?"

Those men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were some of the greatest that all Israel had left of the Hebrew children — wonderful, committed men, men not only of spiritual conviction but men of ability. They were not placed as heads of State under Nebuchadnezzar because they graduated from kindergarten.

They were men of ability. They were trained; they were educated; they were highly qualified men.

And the king said: "Look, I got this report. I do not care how great *you* are, how important *you* are, / am King Nebuchadnezzar. Now, either you obey those orders that I issued or else you are going to get thrown into that fiery furnace. Who is- that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" That is what he yelled, according to Daniel 3:15.

"Who is that God you talk about? Who is that God that can deliver you? Look, I can get you killed any time I want. I can get you put out of your job. I can take anything away from you. / *am the head.*"

Nebuchadnezzar said to those men — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — "Where is your God? What God have you got that can protect you?"

Daniel 3:16 and 17:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter.

If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace....

The king had said to them, "Your God cannot do it." Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego turned around and said, "Our God is able." Now you have got a battle of minds.

"Where is your God that can deliver you?", Nebuchadnezzar had said. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said, "Our God...is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king."

Verse 18:

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.

Our God is able! Do you know what they were saying? "Our God is able, but if our believing is not big enough, we want to tell you something, O King, we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." That is commitment!

The king had said one thing: "Where is that God that will deliver you?" Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had said: "Our God is able to deliver us. But if not, if our believing is not big enough for our God to deliver us, we want to tell you something, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not going to bow down, and we are not going to worship your golden image." Can you see the rage he is in, the fury? Imagine, a governor saying that to a king. This is bigger! This is fantastic that those three men — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — were so committed in their hearts that they could confront the greatest king perhaps of all time, Nebuchadnezzar, and look him straight in the eyes and say to him: "Our God is able to deliver us.... Our God is able to deliver us.... Our God is able, but we will tell you something, if not, we are still not going to bow down and worship and serve your golden image." That is telling the king!

I can just imagine how they felt. They were human beings, and they knew that when they made their declaration their necks were on the block. They could have gotten out of it so easily by just compromising, couldn't they? They could have said: "O Nebuchadnezzar, you have been real good to us, you know. We are buddy-buddies, and you know from time to time you have been giving us bonuses and, you know, we did not mean any harm. But, we had a little problem: our people were there, and we wanted to keep them happy in our particular precinct; we want to take good care of them, and therefore we did not bow." They could have said: "We will do it, King, but maybe we can do it behind the door? Can we get in our private little office and then when the music sounds we would bow, and then the people will not see us? How about it, King?" They could have compromised, but they did not compromise. The

Our God Is Able

moment you compromise one iota on God's Word, you are done.

These men stood before that king and they said, "Our God is able, but if not, we are still not going to bow down and serve you." Then Nebuchadnezzar was really angry!

Verse 19:

Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego...

He was not just in a fury, he was full of it. You could just see the blood coming up in his face making him red. Even "the form of his visage was changed" — those blood veins stood out in his neck — "...was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego."

...*therefore* he spake, and [he] commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

That is a hot furnace! The king was so angry that anybody would have the audacity to defy him, King Nebuchadnezzar, who knew that he was god, that he said, "Fellows, throw the coal to the furnace." And, they heated it seven times as hot as it was wont to be heated. He must have brought it right up to that point where it was just ready to blow the valve loose. And then, do you know what else he did?

Verses 20 and 21:

And he commanded the most mighty men that *were* in his army [the most valiant men, the greatest men of war that he had in his whole army] to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, *and* to cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace.

Then these men were bound in their coats [mantles], their hosen, and their hats [turbans], and their *other* garments, and [they] were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

...Which had been heated seven times as hot as you ordinarily would put the fire in that furnace.

Verse 22:

Therefore because the king's commandment [or word] was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire [sparks of the fire coming out of that furnace] slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

The sparks of the fire coming out of that furnace slew those mighty men whom the king had ordered to throw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in.

Verse 23:

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

That is quite an experience! It is so far beyond my mind that I cannot understand it from an experiential point of view, but I believe it, because I believe the Word of God is the will of God, that it means what it says. I do not understand electricity either, but I use it.

Just imagine three men making that statement to that great king. That would make God sit up in heaven, because this does not happen on earth very often; it is usually compromise with government men — compromise.

These men refused to compromise! If I see this picture at all, when those three men — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — said to the king: "We may burn, but we are not going to bow, O

King. We may burn in your fiery furnace because we cannot get our believing up big enough — for our God is able to deliver us — but if not, we still are not going to bow, O King." God must have stood up in heaven, and taken a look down to earth. He must have said: "My goodness! I have not seen anybody believing like that down there for a while. Those are My boys down there saying to the king, 'You may throw us in, but we are not going to bow. You may burn us....'"

And do you know what God decided up in heaven at that moment? "If you do not bow you will not burn." That was a decision of the hierarchy — God. They had said to the king, "You may burn us, but we will not bow." God said, "If you do not bow, you will not burn." Those were the orders from Headquarters.

But, the old king got them, tied them all up and threw them in the fiery furnace. The fellows who threw them in burnt.

Verse 24:

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished...

The king was absolutely amazed!

...and [he] rose up in haste, *and* [he] spake, and [he] said unto his counsellors [to his top brass], Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire [the fiery furnace]? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

"We did it." And he said, "But fellows, look..."

Verse 25:

...I see four men loose, walking [walking, WALKING!] in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Glory! Isn't that fantastic! The men who threw them in burnt to a crisp. Some little period of time afterwards, somebody said, "O King, King, King, come and take a look, take a look!" And the king stood back there and he looked in that fiery furnace, and he said, "Did we not throw three in there?" And all the fellows said: "We sure did, King. We sure did." But the king said: "How come then I see four in there? We only threw three in! I see four, and they are not burnt to a crisp!" And the king said, "The fourth is like the Son of God."

Verse 26:

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, *and* spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come *hither*....

This was the same king who had said, "I am God"! These were the same men who had looked him in the face and said, "You may burn us, but we are not going to bow"! They were the same men who said to him: "Our God is able to deliver us but if not, we are not going to bow."

Now he sees them there beautiful, perfect, with not even a smell of smoke on them. He looked and he said, "Well, that God you serve has got to be bigger than I am. You must be serving the one and only true God."

Verses 26 and 27:

...come forth, and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth [out] of the midst of the fire.

And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men,

1. It does not say, "It is the Son of God"; it says, "like the Son of God". Sons of God in Job and in other places were angels. Michael is the top angel that is responsible to fight for the Lord's believers.

upon whose bodies the fire had no power [it had not hurt them], nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

I want to tell you something, that has got to be something, because sitting around a fire many of us have had a little smell of smoke on us. These men were thrown in the hottest fire that perhaps has ever been made, but they were not hurt; there was not even a smell of smoke on them. You talk about our God being able to deliver! Most of our commitment and our believing today is small compared to what theirs was.

Verse 28:

Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed *be* the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, 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.

You are not a servant of God; you are a son of God when you are born again. Can you for one moment believe that God would do less for His sons than He would for His servants? No! But we have been so talked out of the power of God, we have lived so long in a world of unbelief where men of authority and power without God have ruled, that we as sons live far below par — more so than even God's servants in the Old Testament.

God has not changed. Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son. He is the same, yesterday, today and for ever. God has not changed, and Christ is seated at the right hand of God making intercession for the saints. That is better than having the governor to intercede for me. That is better than to have any high-ranking government official interceding. It is God being interceded to by the Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, in your behalf and in mine.

Verse 28:

...and have changed the king's word...

They sure did change the king's word. The king had said, "If you do not bow, you will burn." They changed it. He threw them in to burn. They had not bowed; they did not burn.

...and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

Now the king was going to make another decree, typical king.

Verse 29:

Therefore I make a [new] decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, 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.

So, immediately the king wrote a new decree. Before this he had said, "I am king — I am God." Now, after Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had proven something to him, he said, "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort."

It took one of the great pagan kings of all time to tell that truth. Today, many times, born-again believers do not believe what that great unbelieving king said in that day: "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort," the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

These were men who had gone into captivity and refused to sing the song of Zion, men who had hung their harps on a willow because, "How can we sing the songs of Zion in an unbeliever's land?" Men who had hazarded their lives for the integrity and accuracy of that one true God. When the king had said, "You have got to fall down and bow to my golden image,"

Our God Is Able

they had said: "King, we will not do it. We may die, but if we die, we are going to die believing in our one God." And finally, the king said, "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort."

Verse 30:

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon.

Let us say with that same greatness again today: "Our God is able and our God is willing to deliver us, but if my believing is not big enough, I still am not going to bow."