

# Are You Standing or Bowing?

Saturday, 7/18/20 at 4:00 | Sunday, 7/19/20 at 9:00

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: When our government says, “Jump,” do you reply, “How high?” Let’s keep things in the proper perspective: God has established our nation (Rom. 13), *so we should normally obey the commands of our government*, but, EVEN MORE IMPORTANT, is to *obey God* (Acts 5). Today we focus on the true story of three men who ♦disobeyed their king and ♦were thrown into a fiery furnace!

- Previous History:** In 605 BC, the Babylonians ♦took control of Judah and ♦brought certain exceptional youth back to Babylon, *to be trained for service to the king*. Why? They “could advise the king regarding the governance of their home territory and their conquered countrymen” (TLSB, 1397). Some of those youth included Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
- Worship the Idol or Burn:** <sup>1</sup> King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was [90 feet]... <sup>2</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather [all of the important people in his kingdom]... to come to the dedication of the image... <sup>3</sup> ...they stood before the image... <sup>4</sup> And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, <sup>5</sup> that when you hear the sound of... every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image... <sup>6</sup> And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” // The image was probably of the

Babylonian god named Marduk; he was ▶ also called Bel – *which means lord*, ▶ often depicted as a man, and ▶ the god of Nebuchadnezzar. Based on the command and the threat, Nebuchadnezzar felt strongly about everyone worshipping his god. Also, at that time: **“Burning was an ancient method of execution”** (cf Lv 20:14; 21:9).

3. **Standing For God:** <sup>7</sup> Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard... every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image... <sup>8</sup> Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans [*an ancient name for the Babylonians*] came forward and maliciously accused the Jews [*with the intent to do them harm*]. <sup>9</sup> They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar... <sup>12</sup> “There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” // Fear and peer pressure; *those are powerful motivators*. When they are used, *most people will give in; what about you?* Try to imagine being there: As everyone else is bowing, would you keep standing? Do you fear God more than peer pressure / criticism / suffering / death?
4. **Great Faith and Courage:** <sup>13</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought... <sup>14</sup> Nebuchadnezzar... said to them, “Is it true... that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? [*I will give you a second chance!*] <sup>15</sup> Now if you are ready when you hear... every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you

out of my hands?” <sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar... <sup>17</sup> If [we are cast into the furnace], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us... <sup>18</sup> But if not, ...we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

// Nebuchadnezzar was arrogant; he believed he and his god were greater, so he said, “...who is the god who will deliver you...?” implying that no such god existed! Now, think about the great faith and courage of S, M, and A; they said: Our God **Is GOD**, our God **CAN deliver us**, we **KNOW He can!** If He does – good; if not – we are willing to die... **BECAUSE WE WILL NOT SERVE OR WORSHIP YOUR GOD!!** What do you love more, your life or your God?

5. **Fury, Heat, Death:** <sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury... He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. <sup>20</sup> And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.... <sup>22</sup> Because the king’s order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those [mighty] men who took up [S, M, and A]. <sup>23</sup> And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace. // 7X hotter; mighty men binding, carrying, and dying from the intense heat, and S, M, and A falling into the furnace!
6. **God’s Protection:** <sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” <sup>25</sup> He answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of

the gods." <sup>26</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then [S, M, and A] came out from the fire. <sup>27</sup> And [all the leaders] gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. // Note the dramatic reversal with the king, *as he called them servants of the MOST HIGH GOD!* And note God's TOTAL rescue –  
◆no singed hair, ◆no burned clothes, and ◆no smell of fire!  
***That total rescue points to our total rescue through Jesus!***

7. **The King's Reaction:** <sup>28</sup> Nebuchadnezzar... said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. <sup>29</sup> Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of [S, M, and A] shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." <sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted [S, M, and A] in the province of **Babylon**. // Their actions showed ◆their trust in God, ◆their allegiance to God, and ◆their love for God! No matter what, **they stood with God**; *let us do the same!*

**Let Us Pray:** Father in heaven, since You have saved us through Jesus, let us fear no person or thing in this world, and let us stand with You and upon Your word – *no matter what!*

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