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# Victory in Babylon

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# VICTORY IN BABYLON / LIFE OF GRANDPA

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# Victory in Babylon!

*Based on the true adventures of God's Children!  
God's miraculous care, protection, leading, guidance  
& help in difficult circumstances!*

Illustrated by Eman



For ages 7 years and up

## CAPTURED BY BABYLON!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Young Daniel stirred sleepily.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

"Who could be knocking at the door at this time of the morning?" yawned Daniel as he sleepily opened one eye. Outside it was still dark.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!  
BANG! "OPEN UP THIS DOOR OR WE'LL BATTER IT DOWN!" yelled a gruff voice with a foreign accent.

Suddenly Daniel was wide awake, his heart thumping. "Babylonians\*?" he gasped. "Uh-oh. What do they want with us?"

Downstairs he could hear the bolts to the big front door being opened, then more voices, followed by the tramp tramp of soldiers' heavy feet, first in the front entrance, then on the stairs, and finally stopping outside his bedroom door!

"Dear God, please protect me!" was all Daniel had time to pray before the door was kicked open and the rough bearded face of a Babylonian soldier peered in.

"He's in here!" the soldier yelled. Three more soldiers quickly piled into his bedroom, followed by a burly\* sergeant, who gruffly ordered Daniel to get out of bed.

"Stand over here, lad, and let's have a look at you!"

It was obviously useless to try to resist, so Daniel felt the wisest thing to do was to quietly obey. As he got out of bed and stood before the fearsome gaze of the Babylonian invaders, he was amazed at how peaceful and calm he felt inside. "I should be feeling scared," he thought, "but I'm not!" Then he realised, "The God Whom I love must be helping me! He will let nothing bad happen to me, so why should I be afraid of these men?"

Calmly Daniel looked into the eyes of the man who was looking him up and down and asked, "Excuse me, Sir, but what do you want with us? We have done nothing wrong! And why are you breaking into our house before dawn?"



"On the orders of the great King Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon and

*(Words followed by asterisks [\*] in the text are defined at the bottom of each page. Meanings given are only for the use of the word in the story, and do not cover every meaning of the word.)*

**Babylonians** — people who lived in Babylon

**burly** — with a strong heavy body



ruler of the World!" the sergeant snapped.

"He'll only rule as long as the God of Israel allows him to!" Daniel couldn't help but reply.

"Why you...!" One of the soldiers raised his hand to smite Daniel, but the sergeant stopped him.

"No!...I like this boy. He has courage, and is strong and smart! Just the kind we're looking for! Take him!"

At this point Daniel's mother, who had managed to push her way into the room, let out a sob.

"Take him? No, please! He is hardly more than a child!"

"Quiet, woman. I have my orders! You have five minutes to help the boy get ready. Make sure he has good sandals. It's a long march to Babylon!—900 miles!"

\*\*\*\*\*

As Daniel was hustled outside and marched down the narrow Jerusalem streets, the parting words of his mother still rang in his ears. "My son! The Lord our God will always be with you! Keep His commandments and His ways that we have taught you! And pray! Always, my son, remember to pray!"

Soon they came to a central square where the Babylonian army was assembling, getting ready for the long march back to Babylon. Daniel was taken over to join the rest of the Hebrew captives.

"Take good care of this one!" said the sergeant as he handed Daniel over to the captain of the prison guards. "He's a nobleman's\* son!"

Suddenly Daniel heard familiar voices calling him, "Daniel! Daniel! Over

here!"

"Hananiah!...Mishael!...And Azariah! So they got you too!"

"Ask if we can travel together!"

"Please, can we?" Daniel politely asked the captain. "The four of us are old friends, you see!"

The huge man hemmed and hawed for a moment, but then couldn't resist Daniel's winsome smile. "Well, alright then. I can't see any harm in that. But if I catch you boys misbehavin', I'll put a rod to your backs, you hear?!"

\*\*\*\*\*

The captain of the prison guards needn't have worried. The Hebrew children behaved themselves on the journey far better than any children he had ever seen! In fact, they didn't behave like children at all, but more like mature and responsible young men! Despite the hardships of the long march, they remained positive and cheerful, and were a big help and encouragement to their fellow-prisoners!

"I wish the little brats\* we have in Babylon could be half as well-behaved as you boys have been!" the captain complimented them as they camped for the night near the end of their journey.

"They would be if they had had the same upbringing\* as we have had!" smiled Daniel, who was always looking for an opportunity to be a witness. "And if they worshipped the same God!"

"That's enough talk about your God!" chided the captain. "Let me give you boys some advice! We too are a very religious people. In Babylon we worship many great gods! However, your Hebrew God isn't one of them! So if you

**nobleman** — someone who is from the nobility (usually the relatives of the king)

**brats** — naughty children

**upbringing** — training as one grows up

want to stay out of trouble and keep your young heads fastened to your shoulders, I'd forget your God, if I were you! He didn't stop us from carrying away the treasures from His Temple in Jerusalem, did He?—And from carrying you away as slaves! So which god is greater, huh?" taunted\* the captain triumphantly. "Your God or ours? Ha, ha!"

And with that, he lumbered\* off into the dark to check on some other prisoners.

For a moment the four Hebrew children sat discouraged, gazing silently into the camp fire. Then Mishael muttered despairingly, "But why did God allow this to happen to us, I wonder?"

"I don't know," replied Daniel. "But, you know what I was thinking?—How do you think Joseph felt when he was being carried away captive as a slave into Egypt? And how did Jochabed feel when Moses had to leave his family & go live in the Pharaoh's palace? Boy, it must have been hard for them! They just had to have faith that God had not forsaken them! But when we think of Moses & Joseph, what is the main thing we think of?—We think of how they were so used of God! Even though the trials & tests were so great, it was worth it, because God did so many mighty works through them!"

"Yes, that's right!" agreed Mishael, the light of faith brightening his handsome young face once again. "Although we cannot see it now, it could be that the Lord has some great work in store for us that will glorify His Name!"

"I believe it!" grinned Azariah.

"Me too!" echoed Hananiah.

"Dear Lord," prayed Daniel, "even though the way seems dark right now, please give us faith to trust that You are right here beside us, and leading us every step of our way. As You inspired King David to write 400 years ago, 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'—Psalm 27:10. We're Thy children, O Lord, and we know that You will be a Father to us, 'a very present help in trouble!'—Psalm 46:1. Protect us from the ungodly men of Babylon, their false religions, their evil influences and wicked ways! Help us be true to Thy ways and Thy Word no matter how we may have to suffer for it! Help us to be as shining lights in the midst of this dark and foreign land!"



The four boys then sang the 23rd Psalm together, with some of the other captives joining in. After this, with their spirits strengthened and comforted, they curled up beside the glowing campfire

taunted — teased in a mean way

lumbered — moved slowly

and drifted off into a peaceful sleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

There it was! Babylon! The first sight of the huge city took young Daniel's breath away! It was an awesome\* sight! The city's huge double walls seemed to dwarf\* the surrounding countryside. Daniel had already found out the city itself covered an area of six square miles, and the wall surrounding it was 14 miles long! The top of the wall was so wide that chariots with full teams of horses could race each other along the top!

The walls were decorated here and there with different coloured bricks, as well as with the fearsome faces of dragons and lions and bulls. As the prisoners were herded through the main "Ishtar" gate and into the actual city, Daniel was almost overwhelmed by the sheer size and magnificence of the mammoth buildings and temples, many of which were still under construction.

"As you can see," boasted one of the Babylonian guards, "our great King Nebuchadnezzar has as many ideas for new building projects as a dog has fleas! That great golden temple that you see up ahead is being built for Marduk, the great god who first built our city. And over there, to the northwest of the Royal Palace, is the Hanging Gardens! (*See Childcare Handbook 3, pages 118, 119.*) The king was concerned that one of his foreign wives might be missing the scenery of her home country, so he's having this made for her as a little surprise.—Thousands of slaves have been

working on the building of that one! So as you can see, there's plenty of work for you to do here in Babylon! Ha! Ha!"

Daniel and his three friends looked on with pity as they watched the huge teams of foreign slaves toiling under the sweltering\* sun. Like themselves, they had been captured by the Babylonians during their various conquests, and brought to Babylon to help make the city into the greatest ever built by Man!

After marching a mile or so into the city, they reached a detention centre\*. The prisoners were to be held here while waiting to be divided up and sent to various work assignments.

"What do you think they'll do with us?" asked Azariah, wondering if he'd be strong enough to carry huge rocks up to the top of the Hanging Gardens.

"I don't know," replied Daniel. "But I do know that God is with us, and that we have nothing to worry about!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah hadn't been in the detention centre for very long before the next exciting part of their adventure began!

"You four boys are to follow me!" ordered the captain of the guard.

"Where are you taking us?" asked Daniel.

"You'll see!"

For a few anxious minutes it looked as if they were heading for the construction site of the Hanging Gardens, but then to their relief and surprise they turned up the beautiful arched boulevard\* that led directly to the king's palace!

**awesome** — amazing, causing wonder

**dwarf** — cause things in comparison to seem small

**sweltering** — very hot

**detention centre** — a place to hold prisoners

**boulevard** — a broad street

"It looks like your God is with you after all," smiled the Captain, as he left them at the main gate.

The boys were then escorted by the palace guards into one of the outer buildings of the palace complex\*. Here they were brought before a Babylonian officer richly dressed in fine robes.

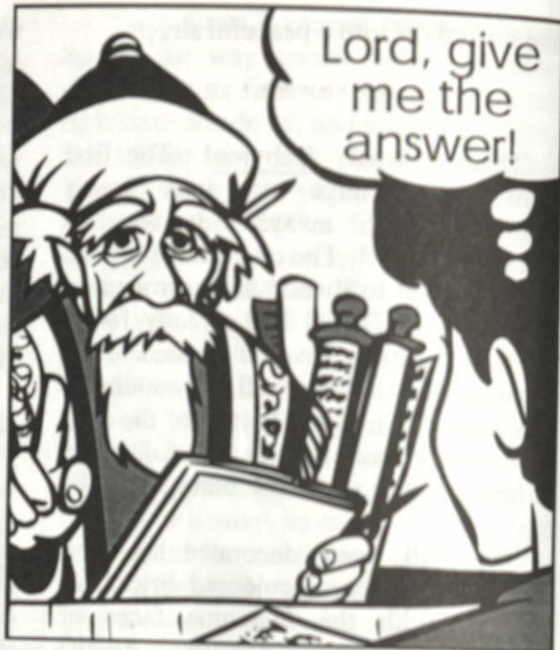
"Greetings!" he said, in a high voice. "I am Ashpenaz, Master of the king's eunuchs! King Nebuchadnezzar has decreed that any captives of the children of Israel who are of noble birth, should be given a chance to try out for positions in the king's court\*!"

"However, I want to warn you," Ashpenaz continued, "only the smartest and strongest can pass our tests! Please sit at these tables. The examinations will begin immediately."

Nervously Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah took their seats and were given parchments\* and writing instruments. "What kind of questions will they ask us?" they wondered. "And what will happen to us if we fail?"

"Well, dear friends," whispered Daniel, "we can only do our best, and then God will have to do the rest. Please, Lord," he prayed quietly, "give us wisdom and understanding so that we can answer these questions correctly. Make us a testimony of how much better trained Your children are, than the children of Babylon!"

The examinations were quite grueling\* and went on for days. Not only were they tested scholastically, but also their physical and mental health, and every aspect of their upbringing was closely examined. Some



of the questions were easy, and some more difficult. However, as they prayed and asked God to give them the right answers, they could feel His sweet Presence gently helping, leading and guiding them. A few times Daniel felt almost certain that he actually could hear the answer being whispered in his ear!

At the end of it all they waited nervously for Ashpenaz to announce the results.

"Well, boys, I have to admit, those responsible for bringing you up, your parents and your teachers, have done a wonderful job! I have never seen children who are as smart, healthy, mature and well-educated as you!... You have all made excellent grades!"

"GOD BE PRAISED!" Daniel and his friends couldn't help but leap up and down for joy!

"However," continued Ashpenaz,

**complex** — a group of buildings  
**court** — people assembled together to help the king

**parchments** — skins of a sheep or goat, dried & used like paper for writing on  
**grueling** — hard, exhausting

"these tests are only the beginning. Now you will be given three years of special training. During this time you will learn our Babylonian language and literature, and will study under our wise men. You will, of course, also be instructed in the ways of our religion. After that the king himself will choose those whom he feels are best qualified\* to be in his court.

Ashpenaz then showed them to a comfortable dormitory\* which they would be sharing with some of the Babylonian boys who had also been chosen for the training program. He also introduced them to Melzar, a court official who from now on would be directly responsible for their care.

"Oh, one more thing," Ashpenaz announced before leaving. "To help you feel more 'at home' in Babylon, I have given you each a Babylonian name!—Hananiah, you shall be called Shadrach, Mishael will be called Meshach, Azariah will be called Abednego, and you, Daniel, will be named Beltshazzar!"

\*\*\*\*\*

*(Note: From now on, we will refer to the four boys by the names we are most familiar with: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. However, you will notice that Daniel will occasionally be called Beltshazzar by the Babylonians.)*

That night, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego joyously met together at one end of the dormitory. They sang Psalms and praised God for the wonderful way that He was already working on their behalf! Even though a

**qualified** — suited or proven capable to do a certain job  
**dormitory** — a place where many people sleep  
**silhouettes** — outlines filled in with solid

couple of Babylonian boys came in and were snickering at them, they didn't care!

Before sleep, Daniel knelt before the open window to pray. Up above the silhouettes\* of strange heathen\* temples, the Moon shone, beautiful and serene\*. The same Moon that he loved to gaze at as he knelt before his bedroom window in Jerusalem!

He thought about his parents, and how much he missed them. He prayed that they weren't worried about him, and prayed that the Lord would help him not to think about his parents too much, but to trust the Lord to comfort their hearts about his being taken from them. "If only they knew the miracles that God is doing for us!" he thought.

How often he had remembered his mother's parting words to him, "My son! The Lord our God will always be with you!" And how true it was! Even though he was now far away from home in a strange and pagan\* land, he could feel the Lord as close to him as ever!

"O, God," Daniel prayed, "thank You for helping us make it this far! Please help us pass the new tests that lie ahead and stay faithful to You!"

## CHAPTER TWO

# THE GREAT FOOD TRIAL!

The first test came in the dining hall the very next morning. In front of them

colour  
**heathen** — unbelievers in God  
**serene** — peaceful, calm, tranquil  
**pagan** — heathen, idolatrous, not believing in God

lay a huge spread of all kinds of expensive foods and luscious\* looking sweets and dainties\*. Daniel and his three friends had never seen so much food at one time on one table.—And this was only breakfast!

"Eat all you want!" beamed Melzar, generously waving his hand towards the huge table. "Compliments of the king himself!—Who has ordered that from now on you should all be fed with food from his very own table!"

Greedily, the rest of the youths who were part of the training program ran to their places and began to dig in. At first they were too busy stuffing themselves to notice that the four Hebrew children were quietly sitting in their places with their heads bowed in prayer.

"Well, what do you think?" Daniel asked after they had finished praying for guidance in this tricky situation.

"Well, I am hungry, and those sweets especially look very tempting," sighed Meshach, "but if we eat these strange Babylonian foods we'll be breaking the health rules that God gave us by Moses."

"I agree," said Shadrach. "If we eat everything the Babylonians eat, and do everything the Babylonians do, it won't be long before we'll be Babylonians! We committed ourselves to live by the laws of our God, so let's obey and do it, no matter what the cost!"

"Yes," agreed Abednego. "If we stand by God, He will surely stand by us!"

Just then Melzar came over to see what was going on.

"Is something the matter, boys? Aren't you hungry? Eat up!" he said heartily, slapping Meshach on the back. "Eat up, before all the finest dainties are

gone! Here...why don't you try these oysters stewed in pig's blood? They're delightful! They were sanctified by our great god Marduk only this morning...."

"Excuse me, Sir...." Daniel interrupted respectfully, "but would you mind if we had a word with you in private...."

"Why...er...yes, of course," agreed Melzar, wondering what on Earth could be the matter. Daniel, Shadrach and Melzar walked together over to the other side of the dining hall.

"What???" choked Melzar, scarcely believing his ears, after Daniel had explained their request. "No one has ever even dreamed of doing such a thing! Come with me! I will take you to see Ashpenaz!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Ashpenaz had a special liking for Daniel. Over the years he had been in charge of the training of many young men, but none had ever behaved themselves so well as Daniel and his three Hebrew friends!

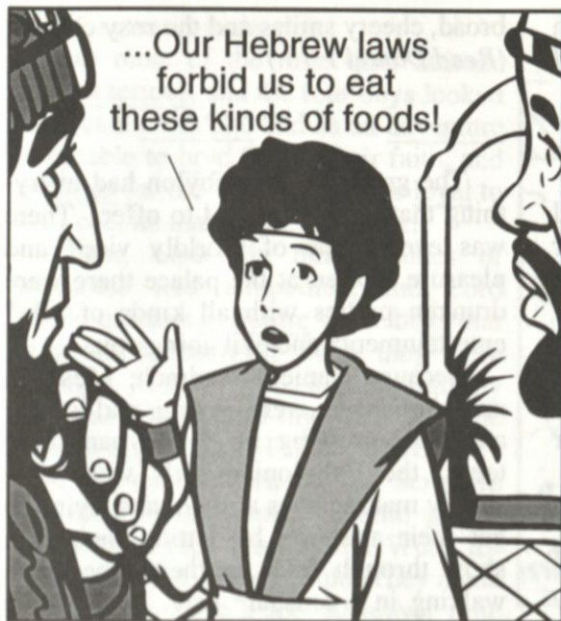
"After a little time of retraining they will make excellent Babylonians!" he thought. Just then Melzar and Daniel were shown in.

"Ah, Belteshazzar!" he beamed. "I was just thinking of you! Tell me, are you excited about your upcoming studies? Do you and your friends have everything you need?"

"Oh yes indeed, Sir! We want to thank you for how kind you have been! You have given us the very best of everything—and now even food from the king's table! However, our Hebrew laws forbid us to eat these kinds of foods.— And for a very good reason, we don't

**luscious** — very nice to taste

**dainties** — something supposedly delicious to eat



...Our Hebrew laws forbid us to eat these kinds of foods!

believe they are healthful! So we hope that you won't be offended if we ask you to please just serve us plain food and water!"

Ashpenaz was silent for a moment. He couldn't help but admire the young Hebrew's conviction. If Daniel's religion had anything to do with what a fine boy he had grown up to be, then there must be something good about it, even if some of its rules did seem crazy to a Babylonian.

"Beltshazzar," Ashpenaz patiently explained, "I would be happy to grant your request if I could. But what will happen when King Nebuchadnezzar sees that you four boys don't look as strong and healthy as the rest of the students, and then finds out that I have disobeyed his royal command?—I'd lose my head! And you wouldn't want that to happen, would you? So I'm sure that your God won't mind if you compromise your beliefs just a little. Now please go back and try eating the king's food for a few days—and I'll bet you'll soon develop a

taste for it!"

Daniel returned with Melzar to the dining hall and sat down beside Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were still sitting quietly in front of their empty plates. Desperately he prayed about what to do next.

Some of the other boys were taunting them. "What's wrong with the king's food? Is it not good enough for you? What kind of God do you serve that won't let you eat from a king's table?"

These Babylonian boys knew that they were competing with Daniel and his friends for a position in the king's court, and they were already jealous of them. So they took every opportunity they could to make fun of them and try to put them down. However, rather than getting upset at them, Daniel and his friends pitied them and prayed for them. They knew that the Godly way in which they had been raised in Jerusalem was far superior to all the weirdness and devilry that these boys had been raised with in Babylon. Suddenly, in answer to his prayer, an idea flashed into Daniel's mind, which he just knew had come directly from the Lord! It would solve the problem of their diet, and at the same time be a witness to these heathen boys of the power of the one true God!

The room fell silent as Daniel excitedly stood up!

"Melzar, I'd like to propose a test! My friends and I will eat and drink nothing but pulse\* and water for ten days! At the end of that time, you yourself can be the judge of who looks healthier—we—or these other young men! If we win, then let us eat our own food. But if they win, then we will eat yours!"

"Very well!" consented Melzar,

pulse — peas, beans & lentils

happy for a solution that would put an end to the matter. "Then let the trial begin!"

broad, cheery smiles and the rosy cheeks!  
(*Read Daniel 1:15.*)

\*\*\*\*\*

From day one of the ten-day trial period, Melzar carefully watched the four Hebrew children to see if he could see any signs of their health weakening.

"No one can keep up with our rigorous schedule of study and exercise on a diet of pulse and water," he chuckled. "Those poor boys and their God are going to be put to shame!"

However, to his growing astonishment, instead of getting weaker, the four boys only seemed to look stronger day by day! Not only did they look stronger, they were stronger! They could run faster, jump higher, throw further, and after sports they still seemed to have plenty of energy, while the others were huffing and puffing for breath! In their studies they were still bright and alert during the evening classes, while the other boys were yawning and having trouble keeping awake.

Not only that, but some of the Babylonian boys were starting to report sick with serious tummyaches and other problems. Others began to look a little pudgy and white-faced, and were developing acne and pimples, and some had begun to complain of toothaches.

By the end of the 10 days there was no question in anybody's minds as to who were the winners!—The four Hebrew boys with the bright eyes, the

\*\*\*\*\*

The great city of Babylon had everything that the World had to offer. There was every type of worldly vice\* and pleasure. Often at the palace there were drunken parties with all kinds of vile\* entertainment\* and evil goings-on.

Because Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were young and strong and now growing up to be handsome teens, the Babylonian girls were constantly making eyes at them and trying to get their attention by letting their legs show through folds in their robes, and walking in a sensual\* way. They were beautiful, yes, but it was a different kind of beauty than the lovely sweet-spirited Hebrew girls they had grown up with in Jerusalem. It was a cold and shallow, worldly kind of beauty.

The Lord gave Daniel and his friends discernment\* so that they could see that these girls' interest in them was purely selfish, and that they were a temptation sent by the Enemy to try to get them distracted from the ways of the Lord and from the extremely important mission that He was counting on them to fulfill!

Even more disgusting were the Sodomites\* and perverts\* who would often smile at them with a sickening "come hither" look in their eyes.

"It's going to take a miracle for us to be able to keep our minds and hearts pure while living in this evil cesspool!" Daniel

**vice** — wicked practice

**vile** — evil

**entertainment** — a show; a public performance

**sensual** — of the senses, or in a sexy way

**discernment** — insight; understanding of something that is not so clear

**Sodomites** — men who, against God's laws, practice sex with other men

**perverts** — bad people with corrupted minds



would sometimes despair.

But most of the time their attitude was victorious, and the four boys looked on it as a challenge and as an adventure to be able to hold fast to their faith, and stand up for their beliefs, and be loyal to the Lord, no matter what the cost!

Often, especially during times of weakness and temptation, the Lord would quicken Scripture to the boys that they had memorised when they were younger. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" was one of their favourites.—Psalm 119:105.

They wrote down all the Scripture that they could remember onto parchments, and then read God's Word together as often as they could. They made it a habit to have a special prayer time with the Lord at least three times a day. And as they were faithful day by day to pray and read and obey God's Word and to do what they could do to stay close to the Lord, then the Lord was faithful to strengthen and uphold them and protect them from all the evil influences that surrounded them.

The Lord even gave them extra encouragement and guidance by speaking to them directly through visions and dreams, and He gave Daniel the gift of being able to interpret\* them.

And so the three years of testing and training quickly passed, and at last the great day came when Ashpenaz announced that they should get dressed in their best robes—the time had come for them to be presented before the king!

"I'm feeling really nervous!" confessed Abednego, as they waited for their turn to be summoned into the Great Throne Room.

"M..Me too!" stammered Meshach, his legs feeling all wobbly around the



knees.

"My mind's gone completely blank! I feel like everything I've learned has been erased!" worried Shadrach.

"Don't worry," Daniel encouraged them, "if this is the Lord's plan for us, to be in the king's court, and so be able to influence him with the ways of the true God, then God Himself will be with us to give us wisdom and courage, just as He has been for these past years! Our parents must have been praying for us, as we have for them. Thank the Lord for taking care of us!"

\*\*\*\*\*

"BELTESHAZZAR! SHADRACH! MESHACH! ABEDNEGO!" boomed the voice of the king's herald. "KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR, KING OF BABYLON AND OF ALL THE WORLD, SUMMONS YOU THIS DAY TO STAND BEFORE HIM!" With a final whispered prayer, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stepped into the Great Throne Room.

interpret — give the meaning

It was the largest room the boys had ever seen!—And the most lavishly\* decorated! Huge pillars of pure white marble supported a giant golden roof covered with beautiful carvings of ivory and silver.

Along the walls hung gorgeous woven tapestries\* showing the stories of past Babylonian kings and conquests\*. On the far side of the room, covered with all kinds of sparkling precious jewels and stones, was the king's throne. It was raised up on a huge golden platform, and on both sides were gigantic black idols of the most powerful Babylonian gods. Their ugly faces seemed to glare down at the four Hebrew boys as if to say, "This kingdom is ours! How dare you intrude\* upon it!"

Here and there, whispering and muttering together, stood small groups of colourfully dressed magicians, seers\*, astrologers\* and holy men. These were the king's "wise men", whom he kept on hand as advisers or to perform some enchantment\*.

As Ashpenaz led the four children of Israel up the long rich red velvet-looking carpet towards the king's throne, the whispering suddenly ceased, as the wise men stared curiously at the young Hebrews.

"GET OUT!" Nebuchadnezzar suddenly roared at his wise men. "I wish to talk to these young men alone!"

The king's wise men, knowing how unpredictable\* and dangerous the king's

temper could be, scurried out as fast they could.

"Wise men? Huh! Every king should have good advisers, and I've been cursed with a bunch of crackpots\* and manpleasers\*, full of meaningless proverbs and cheap magicians' tricks! Ashpenaz, I've been counting on your training program to raise up new blood!"

"I trust that you will not be disappointed, O king! These four young Hebrew boys are the last left for you to interview."

"Very well, let them approach!"

Normally it was a fearful experience for anyone to stand in the presence of the mighty king of Babylon. It was usually done with much bowing and trembling. However, as Ashpenaz watched King Nebuchadnezzar commune with the four boys, he was amazed at how relaxed and natural they seemed. Rather than showing fear of the king, they were friendly and outgoing towards him, showing a genuine interest in him and sympathy for the heavy responsibilities he had to bear!

As the four boys answered the various questions the king asked them, Ashpenaz oftentimes could overhear the king exclaiming in astonishment, "Really? I never knew that!" or, "Why has nobody else ever told me that?" or, "Great thunderbolts! You're right!"

After an hour or so of lively and deep discussion, the king was ready to make his decision.

**lavishly** — expensively, extravagantly, luxuriously, richly  
**tapestries** — picture made by sewing thread in material  
**conquests** — battles that have been won  
**intrude** — come in when not welcome  
**seers** — prophets  
**astrologers** — those who study how the

stars & planets affect people's lives  
**enchantment** — a magical spell  
**unpredictable** — unexpected, can't be foretold  
**crackpots** — people who are thought to be crazy or have crazy ideas  
**manpleasers** — those who do or say things just to try to impress others

"I have chosen these four—Beltshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—to serve as my advisers! You are to be commended\*, Ashpenaz, for your good training program."

Ashpenaz could plainly see that the king was delighted with the boys, and he could see that the boys were delighted too! "There is none to equal them, O king!" he proudly agreed.

The king's wise men were then ushered\* back in, and the king announced that from now on these four young men would be serving with them.

"But wisdom comes with age, O king," the chief magician tried to advise him. "These are hardly more than children!"

"I don't care about their age!" thundered the king! "In all matters of wisdom and understanding, I have found them ten times better than all of YOU!" (Read Daniel 1:20.)

### CHAPTER THREE

## THE FORGOTTEN DREAM!

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Daniel stirred sleepily.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

"OPEN UP IN THE NAME OF KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR!"

Daniel yawned as he awoke from his mid-day nap. His eyes widened as he heard voices and soldier boots downstairs! Then for the second time in his young life, Babylonian soldiers piled into his room! This time they were led

by Arioch, captain of the king's guard.

"I'm sorry, but you and your three Hebrew friends are under arrest! The king has ordered that you be put to death!"

"But why? What have we done?" asked Daniel in astonishment.

"You're one of his wise men, aren't you? My orders are to put to death every wise man in Babylon! Alright, men, take him!"

"Wait!" pleaded Daniel, who was desperately praying for wisdom on how to handle this situation. "Why did the king hastily make such a harsh decree\*?"

"Because he's so mad! He's fed up with the lot of you! A bunch of manpleasers, phoney tricksters and charlatans\* he called you!"

"Look, Arioch, my friends and I have barely begun our service as wise men, and we were not even in court this morning!—So please at least tell me what happened!"

"Well, apparently the king had a dream last night that disturbed him deeply, and he called his oldest, most senior advisers to interpret it. The only problem was he couldn't remember the dream! He promised them that if they could remember the dream for him, and tell him what it means, then they would receive gifts and rewards and great honour! But if they couldn't, then they would be killed!—That's how desperate the king is to know the meaning of the dream!"

"I see," said Daniel thoughtfully, beginning to sense that this could be one of the Lord's set-ups. "So what did the wise men tell him?"

"They insisted that there was not a

commended — praised

ushered — led

decree — a law or pronouncement

charlatan — a fake, a swindler, an imposter

man on Earth who could do what the king asked! No king, however great and mighty had ever asked such a thing of a magician, enchanter\* or astrologer! They protested that what the king was asking was much too difficult, and that no one could reveal the dream to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men! This put the king into such a rage, that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon—and I'm sorry, young Belteshazzar, but that includes you!"

"Wait!" insisted Daniel, as the guards came forward once again to take him. "Arioch, please allow me to speak to the king! I want him to know that the God whom I serve is able to show me his dream and to interpret it for him!" (Read Daniel 2:14-16.)

\*\*\*\*\*

The king was still sulking and fuming as Daniel was escorted in.

"What good are wise men if they're not wise enough to tell me what I want to know!" he bellowed\*, slamming his wine goblet down in frustration. "Well, Arioch? Is it done?"

"Er...not quite, O king," said Arioch, a little nervously. "There is here one of the captives of Judah who says that he is able to tell the king what his dream means!"

"Please give me time and I will tell you what you dreamed!" requested Daniel.

"Time? Why should I give you time?!" shouted the king. "I've already asked all of the magicians, enchanters and astrologers, and they couldn't help me, so how can you?"

"O king, I have only just heard of this



matter!" explained Daniel.

The king's countenance softened a little as he recognised Daniel as being one of the four Hebrew boys that had so impressed him. "Oh, very well then!" he said reluctantly. "You have until tomorrow at this hour.—But not one minute more!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Daniel rushed back to his house to tell Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego the good news!

"But Daniel!" exclaimed Meshach. "No man on Earth can do what you have promised to do!"

"You're right! No man can do it, but God can! And we will ask Him to give us the answer! We must pray desperately that He will reveal this mystery to us! He has to do it, otherwise tomorrow at this time we will be executed along with the rest of the wise men of Babylon!"

**enchanter** — someone who uses magic

**bellowed** — shouted powerfully

After this the four of them got on their hands and knees and cried out to the Lord with all their hearts in desperate prayer!

\*\*\*\*\*

Daniel had a hard time getting to sleep that night. Restlessly he tossed to and fro, trying not to worry about whether and when the Lord was going to show him the dream. Even after managing to get to sleep, he kept waking up again and then trying desperately to remember whether he had dreamed anything during the short time that he had been asleep!

"Oh, God," he finally prayed, "please help me to relax and trust that You know what You're doing even if You don't reveal the king's dream!"

No sooner had Daniel surrendered himself to the Will of God whatever it might be, when suddenly he saw it!—A brilliant, shining vision appeared, glowing amidst the surrounding darkness of the night! Daniel gasped in wonder as the astonishing\* vision unfolded\* and the mystery of its meaning became clear!

As the vision faded, Daniel shouted for joy, and praised and worshipped God for His wonderful and unending faithfulness!

"I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, Who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee! For Thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter!"—Dan.2:23.

\*\*\*\*\*

"So what was it?" asked Nebuchadnezzar a little sceptically\*, as Daniel excitedly appeared before him early the

next morning. "Remember, you need to tell me both the dream and the interpretation!"

Daniel rejoiced at this opportunity that God had given him to testify of His greatness and power!

"There is not a wise man, seer, enchanter, or magician on this Earth who is able to explain to the king this mystery! However, there is a God in Heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has revealed this mystery to me, not because I am any wiser than other men, but so that you, O king, may understand the meaning of your dream, and know what will happen in days to come!" (*Read Daniel 2:19-30.*)

King Nebuchadnezzar sat upright in his throne, his interest aroused. He was amazed by the authority and quiet assurance with which young Daniel spoke. Looking at his scribe, he said, "Don't miss one word of what he says!"

"Go on," he said softly.

"You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue— an enormous, dazzling, awesome-looking statue! The head of the statue was made of pure gold! Its chest and arms were made of silver!— Its belly and thighs of brass!—Its legs were made of iron!—And its feet were partly made of iron and partly of clay!"

"Y..Yes!" stammered Nebuchadnezzar, his eyes almost bugging out in astonishment as the vision started coming back to him! "Yes, I remember that was it exactly! But then something happened...."

"While you were watching," Daniel continued, "a Rock was cut out of a Mountain, but not by human hands! It struck the statue on its feet of iron and

astonishing — amazing, shocking  
unfolded — developed

sceptically — doubtfully, unbelievably

clay and smashed them! At the same time the whole statue crumbled to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor\* in the Summer! The wind swept the chaff away without leaving a trace!—But the Rock that struck the statue became a huge Mountain and filled the whole Earth!"

Nebuchadnezzar sat speechless as Daniel continued, "This was the dream, and now this is the interpretation that God gave me for the king!"

"You, O king, are the king of all kings! The God of Heaven has given you great power and might and glory! He has made you ruler of all Mankind, as well as the beasts of the field and the birds of the air! Wherever they live He has made you ruler of all! You are that head of gold!"

"Excellent! Excellent!" exclaimed the king, his chest swelling with pride. "Please tell me more!"

"After you, another kingdom will arise, represented by the breast and arms of silver, not as great a kingdom as yours, of course!—After that, a third kingdom, one of brass, will rule over the whole Earth!—And finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron!—And just as iron breaks and smashes everything in pieces, so this kingdom will crush and break all others!"

"And what about the feet and the toes...and the Rock...?" the king asked breathlessly, leaning forward on the edge of his throne.

"Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of clay and partly of iron, so this final kingdom will be a divided



kingdom! It will be partly strong and partly weak! The people of this kingdom will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay!—And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed! And the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever!—This is the meaning of the vision of the Rock cut out of a Mountain, but not by human hands— the Rock that broke the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold to pieces!" (Read Daniel 2:44.)

The king looked deep in thought again as Daniel concluded, "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future! I can assure you that the dream is true and the interpretation is correct!"

There was a long silence as King

**threshing floor** — an area where grain is separated from the rest of the plant

The story continues on page 19. ⇨

## KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM —DANIEL 2

King Nebuchadnezzar's dream was one of the most amazing prophecies ever given to Man! In this astonishing vision, each of the different parts of this "great, bright, terrible" image symbolises a different Empire that God predicted would rule the World! This is how the dream came true!

### THE "HEAD OF FINE GOLD"!

—Daniel 2:32

Daniel himself told King Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou art this head of gold!"—Daniel 2:38.

The Lord considered Nebuchadnezzar the best king of all the World Empires, because he proclaimed God as the most high God above all other gods (see Daniel 2:47), & he commanded all of his people to respect and honour the Lord! (See Daniel 3:29.) He later even got saved! (See Daniel 4:37.)

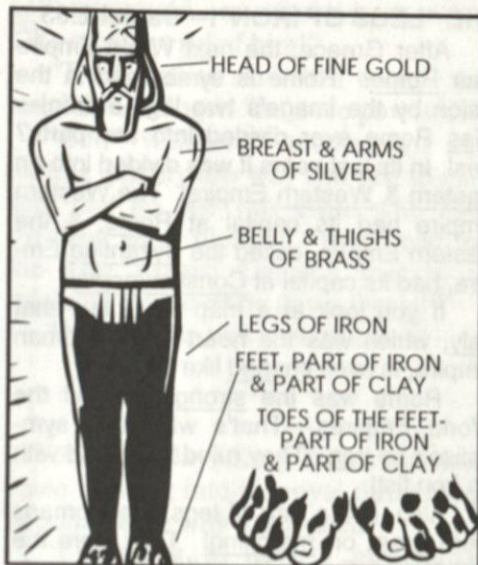
Also, the great kingdom of Babylon was known as the "golden city" in ancient times, and is even called that in the Bible! (See Isaiah 14:4.)

Another amazing thing about this dream is that even the different parts of the image's body are symbolic\*! Like the head, the Babylonians were great thinkers, and were very clever & smart! They knew astronomy, astrology, & they were scientists & very wise men.

### THE "BREAST AND ARMS OF SILVER"!

—Daniel 2:32

Just as the image had two arms, so the next World Empire was ruled by an alliance\* of two kingdoms, the Medes and the Persians. We know from history, as well as the Bible, that the dual kingdom of Medo-Persia followed Babylon, conquering it in 538 B.C.! (See Daniel 5:30-31; Jeremiah 51:11,28.)



Also, it is interesting that the Medes and the Persians were very clever with their hands, being experts at handicrafts\* & with building!

### THE "BELLY AND THIGHS OF BRASS"!

—Daniel 2:32

In a later Chapter, Daniel prophesies that Greece will be the conqueror of Medo-Persia. (See Daniel 8:21,22.) History tells us that this was fulfilled in 333 B.C.!—219 years after the prophecy was given!

The Greeks, whom the Lord likened to the belly of the image, really liked to eat & feast and stuff their bellies with fine food! They also made lots of beautiful statues of the human body which are famous for their nude bellies and thighs!

The Greeks were also very interested in philosophy\*, religion & spiritual things.—And it is believed by almost all religions that the physical seat of the spirit is in the belly. As Jesus Himself said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (This spoke He of the Spirit.)"—John 7:38,39.

**symbolic** — representing  
**alliance** — union

**handicrafts** — articles made by hand  
**philosophy** — love of wisdom & search for it

### THE "LEGS OF IRON"—Daniel 2:33

After Greece, the next World Empire was Rome! Rome is symbolised in the vision by the image's two legs of iron!—Was Rome ever divided into two parts? Yes! In its last years it was divided into an Eastern & Western Empire! The Western Empire had its capital at Rome, & the Eastern Empire, called the Byzantine Empire, had its capital at Constantinople.

If you look at a map you'll see that Italy, which was the heart of the Roman Empire, is even shaped like a leg!

Rome was the strongest of all the World Empires.—That's why it is symbolised by iron. They ruled the World with an iron fist!

Also, like a pair of legs, the Romans were great on marching! They were the first World Empire to build paved roads and big stone highways, so the Roman legions could march quickly to conquer any country that would rebel or cause them any trouble.

What is the longest part of the image?—The legs! And of all those Empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece & Rome—which of those Empires ruled the longest?—Rome!—For nearly 1000 years!

### THE "FEET, PART OF IRON AND PART OF CLAY"—Daniel 2:33

"Iron" & "clay" represent the two types of governments the World has known since the fall of Rome: Dictatorships & democracies.

Government by the people, called "democracy", is a "clay" government. They are a weaker form of government than dictatorships, in which the country is usually ruled by a military dictator, often called a "strongman" or "iron man".

Since the fall of Rome, the World has been divided into various other Empires. There have been other strong Empires, such as the British, French, Spanish and Portuguese Empires, but since Rome no one Empire has been strong enough to

(If you wish to study Daniel Chapter 2 in more detail, see "Daniel 2" in "Treasures", Page 102. Also MLs 343, 975, 2168, 2172.)

rule the whole known World of its time.

### THE "TOES OF THE FEET WERE PART OF IRON, & PART OF CLAY"—Daniel 2:42

The 10 toes of the image symbolise 10 of the leading nations of the World who unite together under the Antichrist to help him form Man's final World Empire!

These 10 nations will be a mixture of "iron" countries (dictatorships), and "clay" countries (democracies), but for a short time the Antichrist is going to make them pretty much all iron, uniting them all with his iron hand! (See also Daniel 7:24 and Revelation 17:12-13.)

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: & the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces & consume all these kingdoms, & it shall stand forever."—Daniel 2:44.

Do you remember in Nebuchadnezzar's dream how a "Stone was cut out of the Mountain without hands" and that it smote\* the image on the toes, and it smashed the whole image to pieces?—Daniel 2:34,35. The "Stone" or Rock is Jesus, and God was the Mountain that Jesus was "cut out of"! (Matthew 21:42-44; 1 Peter 2:6)

In the end of the days of these last 10 kings, when the Antichrist has finally united them, then Jesus will come & will destroy all Man's kingdoms. He will crush them & just sweep them all away to where there's no government of Man left any more at all! (See Revelation 17:12-14.) Jesus' Kingdom will then "fill the whole Earth", instead of all these Empires of Man! This "great Mountain that filled the whole Earth" (Daniel 2:35) is Christ's Kingdom on Earth during the Millennium! (See Micah 4:1-3; Revelation 19:11-21.)

smote — hit



Nebuchadnezzar pondered\* all that had been told him. Arioch, who well knew how unpredictable the king's reactions to things could be, held his breath. Then at last the king rose slowly from his throne, and descended to where Daniel was standing. Then those present in the court let out a great gasp of astonishment as they watched the unthinkable happen! The great and mighty king Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon and the whole World, sank slowly down to his knees before Daniel, and then lay prostrate\* before him on the floor!

"Surely your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries," the great ruler acknowledged, "for you were able to reveal this secret!"

King Nebuchadnezzar then announced, "You, O Belteshazzar, shall be the ruler of the entire province of Babylon!—And over all the wise men whose lives you saved this day!"

#### CHAPTER FOUR

## TRIAL BY FIRE!

The wise men's thankfulness to Daniel for saving them from the wrath of the king did not last long!—It soon turned to bitter jealousy, especially when they heard the news that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had also been promoted by the king to important government positions at Daniel's request!

"It is almost unbelievable that the king would put this young foreigner over

us!" murmured one of oldest magicians. "We must get rid of him!"

"That's easier said than done," muttered an astrologer, "he's too powerful!"

"But," whispered another, his eyes darting quickly this way and that to make sure that no one was close who could overhear their plotting, "if we can turn the king against Daniel's friends, we might be able to bring down Daniel!"

Their chance was soon to come!

\*\*\*\*\*

One fine day, King Nebuchadnezzar came bursting into his royal throne room bubbling over with a new idea!

"I'm going to have a giant image made!" he proudly announced. "Something like the one I saw in my dream! Only this image will be even greater! It will be all gold! I want it to be 90 feet high, and 9 feet wide and set up on the plain of Dura for all to see!"

"And what would be the purpose of this great image, O king" inquired Daniel, who was present in court.

"To worship it, of course!"

"But are there not enough gods already in Babylon?" Daniel tactfully\* suggested.

"Enough gods? How can we ever have enough gods? The more gods we have to bless us the better! Don't be so narrow-minded, my dear Daniel. Now please summon\* my chief craftsmen! I want them to start work on this immediately!"

Daniel sighed. Although the king had acknowledged and respected the true God, because of his pride, he still wanted

**pondered** — thought on  
**prostrate, to lie** — to lie face down flat on the floor

**tactfully** — to say something without offending or hurting the other person  
**summon** — call to come

this image of himself built to be worshipped.

\*\*\*\*\*

And so, on the orders of King Nebuchadnezzar, a great golden image was soon erected\* on the plains of Dura in the province of Babylon. When it was finished, the king invited princes and governors, captains and judges, treasurers and counsellors, sheriffs and all the rulers of the provinces, to the grand opening ceremony and dedication of the image!— This included Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but not Daniel, who couldn't attend as the king had sent him on other business that day.

When the huge crowd had finished assembling in front of the great image, the king's herald\* stepped forward and loudly proclaimed:

"HEAR THE DECREE OF THE KING!—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 MUSIC, YE SHALL FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP THE GOLDEN IMAGE THAT NEBUCHADNEZZAR THE KING HATH SET UP!"

Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego looked at each other with concern, but there was even worse to come! The herald continued,

"AND WHOSO FALLETH NOT DOWN AND WORSHIPPETH, SHALL THE SAME HOUR BE

erected — built  
herald — one who makes announcements  
sackbut — ancient musical instrument like a trombone

CAST INTO THE MIDST OF A BURNING FIERY FURNACE!"

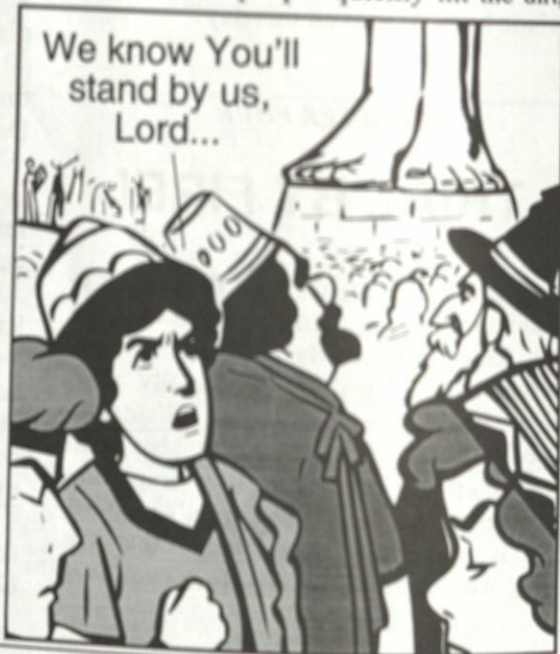
"Uh-oh. What shall we do?" whispered Meshach to the other two. "We can't bow down and worship that abomination\*!"

"We could try to quietly leave and hope that nobody notices!" suggested Shadrach.

"No chance of that!" replied Abednego. "Look!—The musicians are picking up their instruments!"

"O God," Meshach desperately prayed, "we know that You'll stand by us, Lord, as we make this stand for You! Please use this situation for Thy Glory!"

Suddenly a blast of cornets, flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries, and all kinds of other musical instruments rang out over the sandy plains of Dura. Not wishing to be fuel for the king's furnace, thousands of people quickly hit the dirt,



psaltry — musical stringed instrument  
dulcimer — a type of bagpipe  
abomination — something vile or evil

and obediently grovelled\* before the great golden image!—All, that is, except Meshach, Abednego and Shadrach, who remained defiantly\* on their feet!

As the last notes of the music died away, the huge crowd of idolaters\* rose once again to their feet.

"Praise God," whispered Shadrach, "because everybody else had their heads bowed to the ground, I don't think anybody noticed we were still standing up!"

However, they were wrong!

\*\*\*\*\*

"We've got them!" cackled one of the magicians, as the jealous advisers eagerly rushed back to the palace to report what they had seen to the king!

"We couldn't have set a better trap for them if we had planned it ourselves!" said another gleefully\*. "The king will be furious to know that these Hebrews will worship only their one God!"

"I can hardly wait to tell on them!" snickered another. "They're as good as dead!"

By the time Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego arrived back at the city, there were armed guards waiting for them at the gate.

"The king is furious," warned Arioch, as they were marched towards the palace. "You're going to have to do some fast talking to get out of this one alive!—And I'm afraid your friend Daniel isn't around to help you!"

"Well, it's going to take a miracle!" replied Meshach, amazed at how

courageous he was feeling. "But our God is a God of miracles, as you have already seen, Arioch!"

"Yes," agreed Shadrach, "I believe that God allowed us to be brought here to Babylon for such an hour as this!"

"Even if it is His Will that we die for our faith," Abednego whispered to the others, "it will be a tremendous testimony that we would rather die than worship other gods!—So whether we live or die, God will be glorified!"

Now that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego found themselves in a situation where they might actually be martyred\* for their faith, they were encouraged to find that they weren't scared of dying at all! After all, what could be more wonderful than to go this very day to Heaven to be with the Lord? But somehow they felt that the Lord had something else in mind, something special that He wanted to do with them this day! All of them could feel the Presence of the Lord right there with them, and a few times they even felt as if a fourth Prisoner was walking alongside them!

As they came closer and closer to the palace and the confrontation\* with the king, it seemed as if their faith grew stronger and stronger, and their handsome faces shone bolder and brighter, until by the time they were marched into the king's judgement hall they felt as if there were no power on Earth that could stop them!

\*\*\*\*\*

King Nebuchadnezzar was still boil-

**grovelled** — lay face down before something or someone; be overly submissive

**defiantly** — refusing to obey, opposing force or authority

**idolaters** — idol worshippers

**gleefully** — delightedly

**martyred** — to be killed rather than give up their faith in God

**confrontation** — face-to-face meeting

ing mad as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were brought before him.

"Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego," he roared, "that in spite of all the favour I have bestowed upon you, that you refuse to serve our gods, and to bow down and worship my golden image?"

"It is definitely so, your Magnificence," piped up one of the jealous wise men. "We saw them standing there with our own eyes!—Even after hearing your commandment that anyone who does not fall down and worship the image will be thrown into the midst of a burning fiery furnace!"

The king brooded\* silently for a few seconds, trying to control his anger. He remembered how impressed he had been with the young Hebrews at their first meeting. They were smart and intelligent and some of the most talented boys he had ever seen. He needed such leadership in Babylon.

"Listen," he said, deciding to give them one more chance. "I have shown respect for your God, so why can't you show some respect for ours? After all I've done for you, can't you do this for me? Where's your gratitude? If the next time you hear the sound of the musical instruments you fall down and worship the image which I have made, then very good!—But if you still refuse to worship my image, then into the furnace you will go!—And tell me, what God can save you from that?"

"O Nebuchadnezzar," Meshach stepped forward boldly, the power of God shining in his eyes, "we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter! Even if we are thrown into the

blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and rescue us from your hand, O king!"

"That's right!" agreed Shadrach and Abednego enthusiastically. "But if not, we want you to know that even if He doesn't rescue us, O king, that we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image you have set up!" (Read *Daniel 3:16-18*.)

Arioch winced\*. No one had ever stood up to the king and defied him to his face like this before! He held his breath as the proud king sat stupefied\* for a few moments in a state of shock, his face turning rapidly from red to crimson to purple, before exploding in a thunderous roar!

**"THROW THEM IN! THROW THEM IN IMMEDIATELY! BIND THEM WITH ROPES! USE THE STRONGEST MEN IN MY ARMY! AND HEAT THE FURNACE SEVEN TIMES HOTTER THAN IT HAS EVER BEEN HEATED BEFORE! AND I WANT IT DONE NOW, DO YOU HEAR? NOW!"**

\*\*\*\*\*

"Ouch!" exclaimed Abednego, as he landed with a thump on the furnace's brick floor. "Ooof!" he exclaimed again, as Shadrach landed on top of him, followed closely behind by Meshach! Shouts and screams could be heard above the roar of the blazing inferno\* into which they had just been thrown. The fire was so hot and the flames so fierce, that the soldiers couldn't get close enough to the opening of the furnace to throw them in without themselves getting caught on fire! Then they realised...

**brooded** — worried anxiously  
**wincing** — moved back as though in pain

**stupefied** — too shocked to speak  
**inferno** — very hot fire

"Hey, we're in the furnace, but we're not getting burned!" yelled Shadrach in amazement over the noise of the flames.

"This is incredible!" shouted Meshach. "We're in the middle of a white hot fire, but we're not feeling the flames!"

"And look! The ropes! They've fallen off us!" exclaimed Abednego. "PRAISE GOD! THIS IS A MIRACLE! PRAISE GOD! PRAISE GOD!"

"MY DEAR FAITHFUL CHILDREN," said a Voice as soothing as a cool and gentle breeze on a Summer day. To their astonishment they then realised that a fourth Person was with them in the flames!—

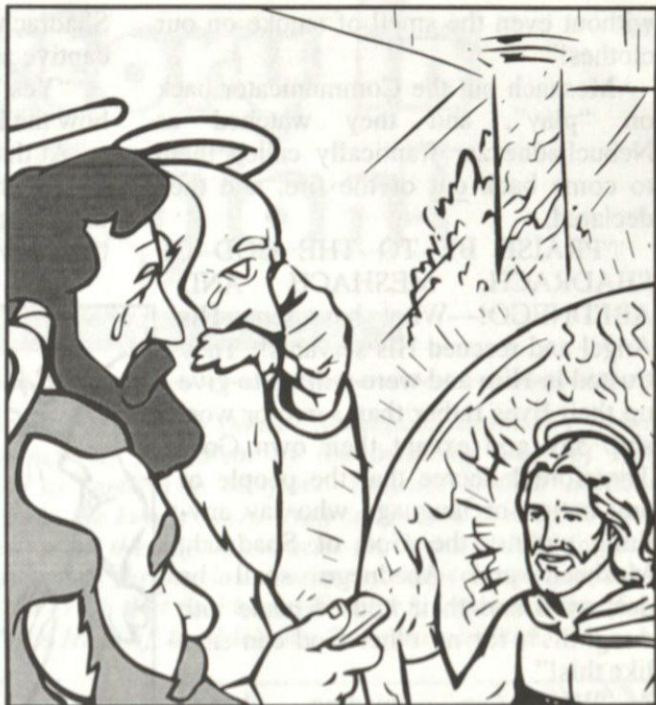
A Person with a face so pure, so lovely, so powerful, so radiant, so full of love and peace and comfort and tenderness, that they knew that this was.....

\*\*\*\*\*

*(Scene changes to present day in Heaven.)*

"Jesus!" whispered Meshach, his voice quivering with emotion. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were watching the scene from the Spirit World. Meshach put the 3-D Heavenly Communicator on "pause". "Let's just look at Him for a little while!" he suggested. Abednego and Shadrach agreed, tears welling up in their eyes as they gazed at His dear face.

They had been in Heaven now for over two and a half thousand years!—But they could never watch the history of their adventures in Babylon without being overcome with emotion at that



wonderful moment, the most precious in their earthly lives, when Jesus, the Son of God, had appeared to them in Person to comfort them and deliver them from their fiery trial! They couldn't help but weep as they remembered the priceless Words of love and encouragement that He had given to each of them, reminding them that He was always that close to each one of His children, and especially during their times of need! What a marvellous, glorious, wonderful time of sweet and Heavenly fellowship that had been!

"Would you like to stop there, or go on?" asked Meshach after they had stopped to meditate upon and appreciate all that the Lord had done for them.

"Let's at least watch the expression on Nebuchadnezzar's face when he saw us and the Lord walking around in the fire!" laughed Abednego. "It was priceless!"

"Boy, was he shaking in his boots! They all were! It was such an outstanding miracle when we walked out of there

without even the smell of smoke on our clothes!"

Meshach put the Communicator back on "play", and they watched as Nebuchadnezzar frantically called them to come back out of the fire, and then declared,

"PRAISE BE TO THE GOD OF SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO!—Who has sent His Angel and rescued His servants! They trusted in Him and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God! Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shall be destroyed and their houses made into dunghills\*, for no other God can save like this!"

"What an amazing change Nebuchadnezzar had!" smiled Meshach, shaking his head in amazement as the king's face faded within the crystal 3-D globe of the blue and gold Heavenly Communicator. "Now he's such a sweet, funny and gentle old Saint. You'd never recognise him as being the same person! Maybe later we can watch the story of how he got saved!" (NOTE: For the rest of the story of Nebuchadnezzar, and its happy ending, see "The Insane King!" in the Good Thots, pg. 278.)

"Well, I think it's almost time for the Council Meeting!" said Abednego. "We were asked to mainly review the lessons we learned during the early days of our captivity in Babylon, while we were still children and teens."

"Yes, Joseph told me that he's been asked to do the same thing!" remarked

Shadrach. "Remember, he was also taken captive as a boy!"

"Yes," added Meshach, "and look how the Lord used him!"

At that moment Daniel, who was now one of the Lord's closest counsellors in the Courts of Heaven, appeared within the Communicator!



"Greetings, my dear old friends!" he smiled. "You are requested to fly over to the main Council Chamber in the Royal Palace right away! The Lord is ready to start the meeting!"

"This is so exciting!" said Shadrach, as they quickly got ready to leave. "A council meeting with the Lord Himself!—I wonder what it's all about?"

"I hear it has something to do with the Children of David and Endtime events on Earth!" were Meshach's last words as the three of them vanished from sight!

dunghills — piles of manure

TO BE CONTINUED!...