

# The Fiery Furnace

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow to the king's golden statue and are thrown into a blazing furnace. God delivers them unharmed, not even the smell of smoke upon them.

Daniel 3:1-30

CHARACTERS: Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar, The Fourth Man

THEMES: Courage, Faithfulness unto death, God's deliverance, Worship, Standing alone

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KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR MADE an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in Babylon. He summoned all his officials to come to its dedication. A herald proclaimed, 'As soon as you hear the music, you must fall down and worship the image. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.'

When the music sounded, all the people fell down and worshiped—except three young Hebrews. Some astrologers came to the king and denounced them: 'O king, you issued a decree that everyone must worship the golden image. But there are some Jews whom you have set over the province—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—who pay no attention to you. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image you have set up.'

Nebuchadnezzar was furious. He summoned the three men and gave them one more chance: 'Is it true that you do not serve my gods or worship the image? If you are ready to fall down and worship when you hear the music, very good. But if you do not worship, you will be thrown into the blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?'

Their answer has echoed through the centuries: 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from your hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'

Even if He does not. Their faith was not conditional on deliverance. They would obey regardless of outcome.

Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. The strongest soldiers in his army bound Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and threw them into the blazing furnace. The furnace was so hot that the flames killed the soldiers who threw them in.

But then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement. 'Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?' he asked his advisers.

'Certainly, O king,' they replied.

'Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods!'

Nebuchadnezzar approached the opening of the furnace and shouted, 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!'

They walked out of the fire. The officials crowded around them and saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

Nebuchadnezzar 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 defied the king's command and were

willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.' He promoted them in the province of Babylon.

The God they served walked with them through the fire. And He walks with His people still.

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