

The Fiery Furnace

Three young Hebrews refuse to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. Thrown into a blazing furnace, they are joined by a fourth figure—and emerge unharmed.

Daniel 3:1-30

CHARACTERS: Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar, The Son of God

THEMES: Faithfulness under pressure, God's protection, Courage

KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR MADE an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He summoned all the officials to come to the dedication. A herald cried aloud: 'When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.'

Therefore, when the music played, all the peoples fell down and worshiped the image of gold.

At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. They reminded the king of his decree and then accused Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: 'These men pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They do not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned the three men. 'Is it true that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold? If you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?'

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied, 'King 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 Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'

Nebuchadnezzar was furious. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers to tie up the three men and throw them in. The furnace was so hot that the flames killed the soldiers who threw them in.

Then Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement. 'Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire? 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 blazing furnace and shouted, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out!'

They came out, and everyone crowded around them. 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.

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, '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.'