

Fiery Furnace

Daniel 3

Based on NLT (2004)

Daniel 3:1-7

King Nebuchadnezzar made a *huge* gold statue... and set it up *in* Babylon. ...Then a herald shouted out, “People... listen to the king’s command! When you hear the sound of the ... musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar’s gold statue. Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people... bowed to the ground and worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Daniel 3:8-18

But *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Daniel’s friends, did not bow down to worship the statue. Upon hearing this...* Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true... that you refuse to ... worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue ...But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, ...If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us.... But even if he doesn’t... we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”

Daniel 3:19-22

Nebuchadnezzar was so furious ...He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. ...Then he ordered them *thrown* into the blazing furnace...fully dressed...*It was so hot that* the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in.

Daniel 3:23-27

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames. But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, “Didn’t we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?....I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!”

Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out!”

So *they* stepped out of the fire.... *and* not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn’t even smell of smoke!

Daniel 3:28-30

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king’s command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!” Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the *kingdom*.

Story Crafting

The author of Daniel lists the names of the instruments and positions of the government officials. For ease of re-telling, the lists are not included in this story.

Words/phrases to consider:

Herald – messenger, spokesman

Furnace – Some listeners may not know what a furnace is, so you may need to add a brief description. It was not built expressly for execution.

The fourth looks like a god – different translations use sons of a god, or divine being. The idea is that the king thought he was seeing a supernatural being.

Teaching this Story

What did you like about this story?

Was there something in this story that you did not understand?

What did you learn about “man” (human characters in the story)?

What did you learn about God/Jesus in this story?

What do you need to apply to your life from this story?

To initiate discussion about some of the challenges in a culture with other gods, you might ask questions like these:

1. What did Nebuchadnezzar order everyone to do?
2. Was anyone exempt?
3. Did everyone comply?
4. What was the punishment?
5. What did the three friends say about God when they had a chance to talk about him to the king?
6. How did God take care of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?
7. What was Nebuchadnezzar’s response upon seeing the power of God?