

## NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND THE FIERY FURNACE

Compiled from notes by Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh and Religion Lessons

A long time after the Israelites had been led by Moses to build their beautiful Tabernacle, they were captured by an enemy nation called Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, made a big golden statue. Then he gathered together the satraps, administrators, governors, counselors, judges, treasurers, magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces so that he could dedicate the statue. "Dedication" means that he proclaimed the statue to be holy.

All the princes, governors, and rulers of the provinces came and stood before the statue. Then a herald cried out:

*To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace (Daniel 3:4-6).*

So when the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, psaltery, and all kinds of music, they fell down and worshiped the great golden image.

Some of the Chaldeans, or Babylonians, noticed that three young Jewish men—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—had not worshiped the image. These Babylonians hurried to the king and told him. He became very angry and ordered Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego to be brought before him. Then he asked them,

*Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands? (Daniel 3:14-15).*

But the three young men were not afraid. They told the king they would not worship the statue. They put their trust in the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar was full of anger. He commanded that the furnace be made seven times as hot as

usual. He commanded strong men to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in their clothes, and to throw them into the burning furnace.

But later the king was very surprised. He was watching the furnace, when he suddenly said to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?’ They answered and said to the king, ‘True, O King.’ ‘Look!’ he answered, ‘I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God’” (Daniel 3:24-25).

Then Nebuchadnezzar cried out, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here” (Daniel 3:26).

So the three young men came out of the middle of the fire. And all of the people came and looked with wonder, because the three men were not hurt. No part of them was even singed or injured in any way. Then the king said:

*Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in piece, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this (Daniel 3:28-29).*

These three men—Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego—were thrown into a fiery furnace. But they were not hurt, because they trusted in the Lord. If we will always try to do what is right, the Lord will protect us also from harm.

Sometimes, when people want to do something very badly, and then learn that it is wrong, they begin to get angry and frustrated. They become hot-headed or burn with anger toward those people who stop them from doing what they want or who get in the way. Like King Nebuchadnezzar, who heated up the furnace, their anger can spring up suddenly like a fire.

But anger cannot harm those who do what is right. We should not let the anger of others frighten us if we are obeying the Lord. For the anger will really harm the one who is angry. For example, in a sports game, if someone gets angry, he or she will probably lose to someone who remains calm and continues to play by the rules of the game.

## Family Talk

We should strive to be like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego—remaining calm and steadfast and obeying the Lord even in the face of great fiery anger. When you feel threatened by anger or some kind of harm, remember this verse from the Lord’s Word, “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6).