

### The Fiery Furnace

#### Daniel 3:1-30

Daniel 3:1-12 - *"Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup> And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>3</sup> So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>4</sup> Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, <sup>5</sup> 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 gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; <sup>6</sup> and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."*

*<sup>7</sup> So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.*

*<sup>8</sup> Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. <sup>9</sup> They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! <sup>10</sup> You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; <sup>11</sup> and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. <sup>12</sup> There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."*

*<sup>13</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. <sup>14</sup> Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to 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? <sup>15</sup> 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?"*

*<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."*

*<sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. <sup>20</sup> And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. <sup>21</sup> Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. <sup>22</sup> Therefore, because the king's command was*

*urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. <sup>23</sup> And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

*<sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying 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."*

*<sup>25</sup> "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."<sup>26</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke,*

*saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then*

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. <sup>27</sup> And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.*

*<sup>28</sup> Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "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! <sup>29</sup> 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 pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this."*

*<sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon."*

## Background Notes

In Daniel 2, we had the record of a dream about "the times of the Gentiles" that God gave King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The times of the Gentiles is the time period of Gentile domination of Jerusalem, from the time of the Babylonian Empire all the way to the end times and the return of Christ. The Lord gave Daniel the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In the dream Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon represented the statue's head of gold.

In Daniel 3 Nebuchadnezzar, in his pride, set up an image on the plain of Dura, near Babylon, and demanded that everyone worship the image. The image was probably that of a man, and probably was the result of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of Daniel 2. In the dream Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire were only the head of gold, but in the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar the entire statue was made of gold. The implication is that proud Nebuchadnezzar didn't want to admit that there were other empires that would follow his great Babylon!

What we have here in Daniel 3 is the deification of man and the secular state, which is, of course, idolatry. This is the form that idolatry has taken throughout the times of the Gentiles. This same deification of man and the secular state will intensify during the Tribulation period of the last days when the Roman beast, with the number 666, sets himself up as god and demands worship.

Notice the emphasis on the number "6," the number of "man," in Nebuchadnezzar's image. (In biblical numerology, the number "6" often represents "man" and the willfulness of mankind, just as the number 3 often is representative of God.) Nebuchadnezzar's image was 6 cubits high and 6 cubits wide.

There are prophetic implications for the end times here in Daniel 3. Just as the three faithful Jewish men were called to go through the trial of the fiery furnace in Daniel's time, so in the last days there will be a godly remnant of faithful Jewish believers who will be called to go through the fiery furnace of the Tribulation period. The Tribulation period of time is also called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7).

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Faithful believers trust God even when they are not delivered from the fiery furnace.

Don't you just love the amazing answer the three faithful believers gave to Nebuchadnezzar? *"O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up" (v16-18).*

The world says, "Every man has his price!" -- but this is not true. Every man does **not** "have his price"! Some people will hold to their principles and their faith no matter what comes their way. They will not be "bought off" by bargaining for security or position or safety. Now let ask ourselves: How is your faith? How is my faith? Is it strong enough to say, "Even if God chooses not to deliver us from the fiery furnace, we will not compromise in our Christian faith and obedience!"?

Our fiery furnaces are not just the hard and painful times we may face in the course of our lives. No, the fiery furnace particularly pictures the trials we may face in reference to our faith. **That's** the fiery furnace! It could be hard and painful times of persecution. It could be the loss of a job or a contract because we will not compromise our Christian standards or testimony. It could be mockery or other kinds of put-downs because of our obedience to the Lord. It could be times of special temptation that God allows us to go through, in which we must struggle to remain faithful. Are we able to trust God during those times when, in His sovereignty, He chooses not to remove the fiery furnace – even when we have prayed for deliverance? Faithful believers are able to trust God even when they are not delivered from the fiery furnace.

### 2. Faithful believers come to know God in the midst of the fiery furnace.

In verse 15 Nebuchadnezzar posed the question, *"And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"* Well, Nebuchadnezzar got his answer! The one true **God** miraculously saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego out of the midst of the fire. Meanwhile, the men who submitted, the men who obeyed Nebuchadnezzar's command and threw the three faithful believers into the furnace – those men were burned alive!

When Nebuchadnezzar saw four figures in the fiery furnace, he said that the fourth figure was like "a son of the gods," or "like the Son of God" (depending on your translation). The plural "*gods*" is used here in the Aramaic language, the language that Daniel used in writing this portion of the book. Even though this Babylonian king (who was not a believer at this point) most likely said "a son of the gods," in reality, the fourth figure was most likely the Angel of the Lord Himself -- the pre-incarnate Son of God!

After the three faithful believers were miraculously delivered from death in the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar testified to the greatness of the God of Israel, and decreed that no one should speak anything offensive against the God of the Hebrews. Verse 29: *"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 pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this."* In addition, Nebuchadnezzar promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Although Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not delivered from going through the trial of being thrown into the fiery furnace, they were delivered **through** the fiery furnace experience. They came to know the Lord in an intimate way in the midst of the fiery furnace -- **in the midst of the fiery trial!** This will be true of the godly remnant of faithful Jews who will go through the fiery furnace of the future Tribulation period. Some of that godly remnant will suffer martyrdom, and some will be preserved alive to enter the Lord's glorious, earthly kingdom. However, in the midst of that fiery furnace, **all** those faithful end times believers will come to know the Lord in an intimate way.

The same is true for faithful believers today. In Hebrews 13:5, speaking of the Lord, we read, "...*He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."* Just as the three faithful believers of Daniel's time walked with the Angel of the Lord in the midst of the fiery furnace, faithful believers come to know God in the midst of the fiery furnace of severe trial.

## **Practical Application**

### **Have you experienced the *benefits* of the fiery furnace?**

*"Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. <sup>27</sup> And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them" (v26-27).*

What a testimony this event was to the Babylonians! The fire had no negative effect on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego -- not even a few minor burns! Not a hair was singed, their clothes were not burned -- and even the smell of fire was not on them! We all know that you can't even sit around a little campfire without picking up the smell of smoke, right? This was quite a miracle!

Only one thing was burned -- the ropes that bound them! Do you see the spiritual lesson and the practical application? When God allows us to pass through the fiery furnace, we not only come to know the Lord in a deeper way, but this world's entangling ropes are burned away. The ensnaring and binding ropes of this world that bound us and limited our service for the Lord are removed!

Through the fiery furnace we come to know what freedom is all about! Have you experienced the benefits of the fiery furnace?