

GOLD STATUE AND FIERY FURNACE

Daniel 3:1-30

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: King Nebuchadnezzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Key-location: Province of Babylon

Key-repetitions:

- Statue: Nebuchadnezzar had made a gold statue (Dan 3:1); government officials came to dedicate the statue (Dan 3:2-3); everyone worshiped the statue when the band played (Dan 3:4-7); astrologers accused the three Jews of not worshiping the gold statue (Dan 3:8-12); the king gave the Jews a second chance to worship the statue (Dan 3:13-15); the three Jews said they would never worship the king's gold statue (Dan 3:16-18).
- Decree/order: all government officials were summoned to the dedication of the statue (Dan 3:2); the master of ceremonies proclaimed for all to fall on their knees and worship the gold statue (Dan 3:4-5); the king ordered the three Jews a second time to worship his statue (Dan 3:13-15); the king ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal and for the three Jews to be tied up and thrown into the furnace (Dan 3:19-20); the king ordered the three Jews to come out of the furnace (Dan 3:26); the king ordered that anyone who says anything against the God of the three Jews be cut into pieces (Dan 3:29).
- Tie: the king commanded soldiers to tie up the three Jews and throw them into the furnace (Dan 3:20); the three Jews were tied up and thrown into the furnace (Dan 3:23); the king asked if they did not tie up the three Jews and throw them in to the furnace; yet, he saw four men in the fire who were not tied up (Dan 3:25).

Key-attitudes:

- King Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance.
- The astrologers' cruelty.
- The three Jews' courage.
- King Nebuchadnezzar's astonishment when he saw four men walking in the furnace.

Initial-situation:

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Judah and brought back youths from the royal family to live in Babylon.

Daniel and three of his friends were chosen for training. After the training, they entered the king's service. Daniel became ruler over the province of Babylon and was in charge of all its wise advisors. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were appointed to administrative posts.

Initial-problem:

King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue and he summoned all the important leaders in the province to come to the dedication of the statue.

Final-situation:

King Nebuchadnezzar promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to higher positions in the province of Babylon.

BIBLE STORY

King Nebuchadnezzar ordered his craftsmen to make a gold statue. It was ninety feet high and nine feet thick. He set the statue up near the city of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar summoned all government officials in the province to come to the dedication of the statue.

The master of ceremonies loudly proclaimed, "Attention, everyone! As soon as you hear the musical instruments, fall to your knees and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar set up. Whoever does not fall to his knees and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

The people heard the band and all people groups of every language and nationality fell to their knees and worshiped King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue (Dan 3:1-7).

Some astrologers accused the Jews to King Nebuchadnezzar, "Your Majesty, live forever! Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are Jews whom you set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, and they ignore you. They neither serve your gods nor worship the gold statue you set up."

In a fit of rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar asked, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you neither serve my gods nor worship the gold statue I set up? I'll give you a second chance. When you hear the music, fall to your knees and worship my statue. If you don't worship it, you'll be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then no god will rescue you from my power!"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, if we're thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to rescue us from it. But, even if he doesn't, we'll never serve your gods nor worship your gold statue."

Nebuchadnezzar's face turned red with anger. The king ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal. The king commanded some of his strongest soldiers, "Tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace!" The three men were fully dressed when they were tied up and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king was in such a hurry and the fire so hot that the flames killed the soldiers who threw the three Jewish men into the blazing furnace (Dan 3:8-23).

King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in surprise and shouted, "Didn't we tie up and throw three men into the fire? Look! I see four men walking around in the fire. They're not tied up. They're unharmed. The fourth man looks like a son of the gods."

Nebuchadnezzar approached the door of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come here!"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked out of the fire. Government leaders crowded around the three men and saw that the fire had not harmed them. Not a hair singed, not a scorch mark on their clothes, and they didn't smell of smoke.

Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted him! They disobeyed the king's command. They risked their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I decree that anyone of any nation or language who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be cut into pieces. No other god can rescue like this."

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to higher positions in the province of Babylon (Dan 3:24-30).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego respond to the king's request to worship his gold statue?
2. Why was Nebuchadnezzar angry with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?
3. When should Christians refuse to obey a law?
4. What happened to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace?
5. Why was the rope that tied the three youths the only thing that was burned?
6. When are Christians called to take a stand, no matter the cost?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **People who do not worship the one living God often find their gods unsatisfying and constantly seek new gods.** Babylon was already full of idols, yet, the king established another idol (Dan 3:1).
2. **People who are responsible for government-sponsored religion will consider people who faithfully serve the Lord their enemies.** Daniel's three companions refused to worship the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar set up; therefore, they were condemned to die (Dan 3:6-20).
3. **The person who is faithful to God, has as his priority a commitment to serve God, no matter the cost.** Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not worship the king's statue. They did not know if God would save them from the blazing furnace, though they knew that he could save them (Dan 3:16-18). The greatest surprise is not that they were unharmed by the fire, but that they entered the furnace without knowing if God would protect them.

4. **If the government establishes laws that require its citizens to disobey God, citizens who believe in God should not conform to those laws.** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to obey the law that required them to bow and worship Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue (Dan 3:9-18), because God commanded his people not to worship any God but him and to not bow down and worship idols (Ex 20:3-5).
5. **People cannot bind God's servants when God wants them free.** The three young men were untouched by the fire. Only the rope that bound them was burned (Dan 3:27). The power available to God's servants is the same that delivered the three men from the fire and raised Christ from the dead (Eph 1:18-20).
6. **Those who faithfully walk with God will experience intimate communion with him when they suffer tribulation and persecution.** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in the furnace and they walked with an angel, or possibly they experienced a visit from Jesus before his birth (Dan 3:24-25).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Role-playing Pantomime:

The storyteller informs listeners that he will tell the Bible story one time. Then he will repeat the story with two volunteers standing in front pantomiming the action as the storyteller narrates the story a second time.

- One volunteer will pantomime the actions dealing with the three Jewish men.
- The second volunteer will pantomime actions dealing with King Nebuchadnezzar.