

FOUR MEN IN THE FURNACE

Our God is able to deliver us.



THE STORY: DANIEL 3:1-12

MONDAY

King Nebuchadnezzar set up an image and demanded worship

King Nebuchadnezzar set up an image and demanded worship – King Nebuchadnezzar created a huge image (ninety feet tall and nine feet wide) of gold. He commanded the people of his kingdom to worship this god. They were to do so every time they heard the instruments play the music. This would have been an easy command for the people of Babylon to obey. They were polytheistic (believing in many gods). But for the Jews who lived there in captivity and believed in the one God, this would have been impossible. Doing

so meant breaking the first of the Ten Commandments. Three men were charged with violating the king's command and brought before the king. It is likely that this happened out of jealousy because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were given a special gifting from God far above the other wise men of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (Daniel 1:17-20). Later Daniel appointed them to leadership positions in Babylon (Daniel 2:49).

We do not have kings who set up tall statues for all of us to bow down to today. But there are many things which the culture around us worships, and we are also tempted to love them too much.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What are these idols that can draw us away from worshipping the Lord? *(Some people love their possessions more than God. A house can receive our worship if our hearts are occupied with it more than they are with the Lord. Money can capture our affections as well. For children, video games, sports teams, action figures, or any favorite toy can steal our affections away from God. Sometimes it can be wanting attention from others or wanting our own way. In that case, self is the idol. Parents, help here by drawing out your children and by discussing some of the idols in your own life first.)*

How do we know if something is an idol? *(Anything we love more than God is an idol. We can tell if we love something too much by how we respond when it is taken away. If we become angry and sin, we know it captured too strong a place in our heart.)*

PRAY:

Ask God to help you say "no" to false worship. Ask Him to help you worship the one true God.



Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship and trusted God for deliverance

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship and trusted God for deliverance – After refusing to worship the idol, the three young men were brought before the king. Rather than immediately bringing judgment, the king gave them an opportunity to avoid punishment by bowing down to the idol. Of course, not wanting to disobey God, they refused to do this. It is interesting to note their trust in God. They would trust God no matter what the consequences were (Daniel 3:17-18). These three men believed that God was able, but not required, to deliver them. Their defiance infuriated the king. He ordered them thrown into a large furnace. The men placed no demands upon God. Whether God delivered them or not, He was still God. They would not disobey the Lord's command to worship Him alone.

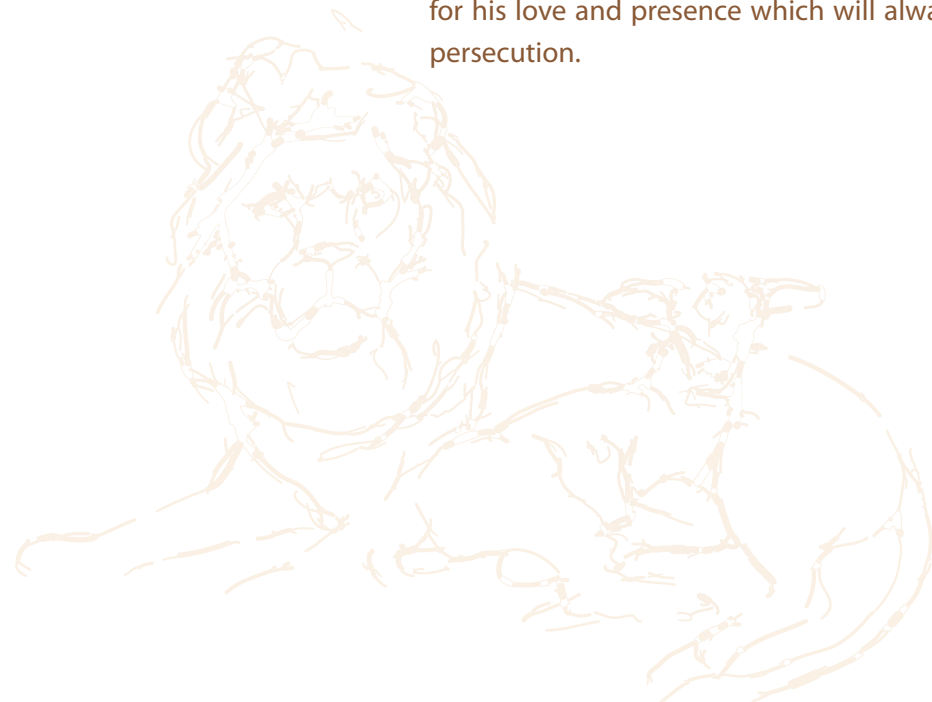
TALK ABOUT IT:

Does God always deliver His people from death in trials? (No. In Acts 7:59-60 we read that Stephen was stoned for his faith and was not spared death.)

What should we do so that we do not become afraid of persecution? (*We need to remember that those who trust in Christ cannot be separated from Christ. Even though Stephen died for what he believed, God was with him the whole way. If we trust the Lord, Jesus will never leave us or forsake us, even unto death. Parents, read Romans 8:35-39 to your children and encourage them to put their faith in Jesus.*)

PRAY:

Thank God for His power which is able to deliver us from all harm. Thank Him for his love and presence which will always be with us, even if we are not spared persecution.





Where is Jesus?

In the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, there is an obvious answer to “Where is Jesus?” The Son of God was with them in the fire as the fourth person. This story shows us a glimpse of a greater deliverance that would save all believers from the fires of hell. God delivered these men from the flames so that not even their clothing was singed!

Though not mentioned by name in Hebrews 11:34, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego certainly “quenched the violence of fire.” These three men are a part of the “great cloud of witnesses” that the book of Hebrews says should motivate us to “fix our eyes on Jesus” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

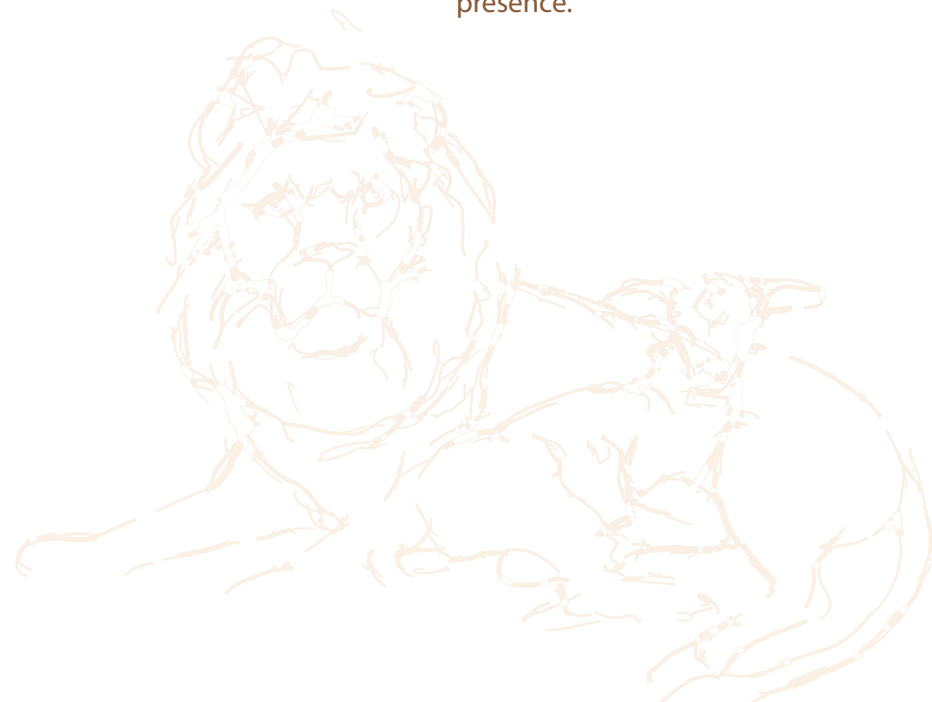
TALK ABOUT IT:

Why would God come down to be with these men in the fire? *(God loves to dwell with His people. These faithful men honored the Lord with their refusal to worship false gods and found the Lord could not resist visiting them. Furthermore, God in his mercy must have wanted Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians to realize that the God of captive Israel was the true and living God.)*

Does God dwell with us today in our trials? *(Yes. Though Jesus went to be with His Father in heaven, the Holy Spirit of God was sent to us and lives in the heart of every believer. If we trust in the Lord we are assured of this - God is with us in every trial!)*

PRAY:

Ask God to help us to remember that, just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, God the Holy Spirit is with us in our trials. We can draw real comfort from His presence.





God delivered His people

God delivered His people – The fire was so hot that the soldiers who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace were consumed by the flames. At this point the king observed and reported that there were four men walking in the fire - unbound and unharmed! The three men were called out from the fire by the king. The king called them “servants of the Most High God.” Nebuchadnezzar, in awe of what he saw, issued a proclamation that anyone speaking against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would be torn limb from limb. What a radical transformation! In the end the king promoted these men.

God used events like this to protect His people while in captivity. Later, when the exiles returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, it was obvious that the Levites had kept up their traditions. It says they took up their places for worship. The courage of Daniel and these three men in the furnace gave all of Israel courage. God protected and gave favor to them during their seventy year captivity in Babylon.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How did God’s deliverance affect the king? *(The king was astonished and proclaimed that no one could speak against their God.)*

How did this help the Jews while in captivity? *(If no one could speak anything against their God, then they would be safe to worship and pray to God while they were there.)*

PRAY:

Thank God for the way He works all things together for our good.





On the road to Emmaus.

Israel would have understood salvation as victory over their enemies and peace in the land. Here, however, God Himself becomes the psalmist's salvation: "...you have become my salvation" (Psalm 118:21b). This is a direct foreshadowing to when Christ became our salvation through his death on the cross.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How does God become our salvation? (*God became our salvation when Christ died on the cross for our sins. See 1 Corinthians 5:21.*)

Did the psalmist understand that Jesus was the ultimate expression of salvation from God? (*No. The psalmist didn't understand the specifics of God's plan, but he understood that salvation was by the hand and mercy of God. This faith demonstrated trust in God's plan to send the Messiah.*)

Pray:

Thank God for becoming our salvation and taking our sins upon Himself.

