

The Fiery Furnace

Daniel 3:1-30

MEMORY VERSE

DANIEL 3:28

“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Prior to class do some research on the persecuted church. Here are a few great organizations with a lot of information:

Voice of the Martyrs (www.persecution.com), Open Doors (www.opendoorsusa.org), and Gospel for Asia (www.gfa.org).

Choose a story about a persecuted Christian to share with your class.

You will also need paper and markers.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Strength in Numbers

Gather children into a group and choose one child to be the “caller.” Designate a “safety zone” at one end of your classroom. Explain to the children that you will choose one child to be the “caller.” Their job will be to shout a number between 2 and 5. The rest of the group will need to get into groups of whatever that number is before the “caller” can tag them. The “caller” will try to tag a child before they either get into a group or safety zone. If a child is left out of a group they can get back to the safety zone before being tagged.

Whoever is tagged is the next “caller.” Play for 5 – 10 minutes until the children are tired. Use this game to introduce today’s story. Talk about how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego went through a difficult trial, but not only did they have each other for

encouragement, but Jesus also came to help them in the fire. We need each other and Jesus to help us get through difficult times in our lives.

LESSON TIME!

We have been studying about how the Jewish people have been in captivity in Babylon. Babylon was the nation that had taken over the whole world at that time and King Nebuchadnezzar was a very powerful man.

If you were here last week you learned about a dream he had that only Daniel could interpret for him. That dream was about different kingdoms of the world and how eventually they would all fall apart. This week we are going to look at King Nebuchadnezzar and how he behaved for a while after that dream. We are going to learn that God showed King Nebuchadnezzar again, in another way that He is the One True God and that **God wants us to worship and trust in Him alone.**

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.

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.

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.

Then a herald cried aloud: "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 gold 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."

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.

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews.

They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever!

"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;

"and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

"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."

These verses find King Nebuchadnezzar making a statue. He wanted the people to come and worship. Worship what? An image of gold that he invented. He made a willful decision not to worship the God of Daniel that he had praised in chapter 2. He decided not to believe the vision and interpretation that he had received. Now instead he has made a 90 foot high image, possibly of himself. He wanted people to think he was the greatest man on earth.

Then he invited all the governors, mayors and other VIP's to come to a BIG party. Sometimes the images are created to show the power of the one who made it. And sometimes the beauty of the object can take your breath away. So here is this big party with all this great music and all these important people dressed up and there is Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego right there among them. They were important officials in King Nebuchadnezzar's court and were expected to be there.

Here they are among thousands of people bowing down to this image, but they refuse to bow down. Picture yourself being invited to stand on the platform with the President of the US, in a field in the middle of a football or baseball stadium. The music is playing over the loudspeakers and everyone in the stadium is asked to salute the President at the same time. And everyone does, except you! The TV camera shows a close-up of you on the big screen just standing there. Would you be embarrassed? Humiliated? Would you be afraid of the President getting mad at you? What if it was a law that you had to salute and you didn't? Would it be scary to be taken to jail?

The Bible tells us that we need to respect the President, but this is just an example of perhaps how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego must have felt when everyone else was worshipping this statue. Sometimes there is a lot a pressure to go along with the crowd, isn't there? But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew they would be breaking the first two commandments if they did bow down. They knew and believed that **God wants us to worship and trust in Him alone.**

DANIEL 3:13-23

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.

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?

"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?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

"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.

"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."

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.

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.

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.

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.

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

In verse 13 we read that the king was furious. Could it be that he was embarrassed by the behavior of three of his VIP's? In verse 15 we read that he was willing to give them a second chance. But verses 16-18 give us an idea of the faith, courage and strength of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They basically said, "O King, we don't need any more time to think about this issue. We don't need a second chance. Our decision is non-negotiable. We decided a

long time ago to worship the One, True God and Him only. We will not choose to break the first two commandments by letting anything else be more important to us than the Lord God. And we will not worship any image that man has made.” **God wants us to worship and trust in Him alone.**

In verse 17 they said, “We have confidence in the power and ability of our God to rescue us from your hand, from any plans you might have for us. Our God is able.”

In verse 18 they were saying, “We don’t know for sure what plans God has for us. It might not be part of God’s plan to rescue us. But we want what He wants for us. So even if He chooses not to deliver us out of the fire, we choose His lordship over us today. We give our life to Him to do what He wills. We know that **God wants us to worship and trust in Him alone.** What faith! Their words remind us of what Paul said in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Their faith is also mentioned in Hebrews 11:33, 34.

Did their stand for the Lord cause the king to admire their courage? No way! They were bound hand and foot and thrown into that fire! A fire heated up seven times hotter than normal. A burning hot furnace that burned and killed the soldiers who had to throw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in there. Talk about a trial by fire.

Standing Up for Jesus Today

This is a great lesson to share with the children about the reality and needs of the persecuted church. Prior to class do some research on the persecuted church. Here are a few great organizations with a lot of information: Voice of the Martyrs (www.persecution.com), Open Doors (www.opendoorsusa.org), and

Gospel for Asia (www.gfa.org). Through these websites or other materials find a story to share with the children concerning modern day persecution of the church. Voice of the Martyrs puts out a great map showing the countries in the world where there is persecution for being a Christian.

Ask the children what they think it would be like for them if they weren't free to worship the Lord. How would that change their lives or their family's lives? Ask them to search their hearts to see if they could stand up in the face of persecution or even death for serving Jesus, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in our story today.

Choose a country that is currently lacking freedom to worship. Have the children pray together for that nation that the Lord would soften the leader's hearts towards His people and allow them to worship freely. As a reminder for the children to pray give each child a blank sheet of paper and markers; have them draw the shape of the country they prayed for and color it in. Write the name of the country below the drawing. Also have them draw and color the nation's flag. At the bottom of the sheet have them write the verse, Hebrews 13:3 – "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also." Have the children take their drawings home and remember to pray for the people of that country often.

DANIEL 3:24-30

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."

"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."

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.

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.

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!

"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."

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

King Nebuchadnezzar was amazed! He jumped out of his chair. How could there be four men? Who was the fourth man? (Allow for answers.) It was the Lord Himself. The king called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego out of the furnace. That sounds funny,

doesn't it? To ask a person who is supposed to be burning up to come back out of the fire.

The king and all those officials crowded around them. Did you notice only one thing was burned up in that fire? What was it? (Lead the class to the realization that Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego were thrown into the furnace being bound. Next they were walking around. The fire only burned their bindings.) What a miracle! They didn't even smell like smoke. How many men were in the furnace walking around? How many came out? That shows us that the Lord meets us in the middle of our trials. He gets closer to us; He gives us the grace to endure the trial.

The Lord had quite a plan for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, didn't He? He didn't deliver them from the fire; he delivered them in the fire. Sometimes trials are like that. You see when we walk with the Lord in an uncompromising way; we will have fiery trials. In this country we are only mocked or laughed at for loving the Lord Jesus; in other countries Christians are beaten, thrown in jail or have their churches or homes burned down.

In the Bible, God uses fire to represent many ideas that He wants us to know about Him. He is the God of the burning bush who spoke to Moses. He can walk around in the fire and not get burned and He tells us that fiery trials are needed in our lives to help us grow our faith (1 Peter 1:3-9, 4:12-14). Fire is something that is used to make gold and silver cleaner and more pure. Fire is used to make steel stronger. So a fiery trial, a situation in our life that makes us feel hot or uncomfortable in our minds or hearts, can be used by God to make us freer, cleaner, more pure and stronger in our hearts and minds than ever before.

Notice that because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't worship what the rest of the people were worshipping, King Nebuchadnezzar recognized how great their God was to rescue them. Then he praised their God and gave Him glory. He admitted

no other god can “save this way.” Maybe after seeing how great God was King Nebuchadnezzar will make Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s God his God someday.

When we are in a difficult time, a trial in our lives when others see how God has delivered us perhaps they will turn to God. Everything in our lives has a purpose for God’s glory. We just need to trust in Him that everything is always for the best in our lives.

One more thing to notice is verse 30. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were promoted after this. You know, sometimes God first puts us through trials where we have to suffer before He puts us in places where He wants our light to shine. So don’t be afraid of the hard places in life that you have to go through. Remember He’ll be right there with you; staying close to you, helping you. He will be teaching you all along the way that **God wants us to worship and trust in Him alone.**

Clay Charades

Just for a fun time have children form trios and choose one person to be the sculptor while the other two are the clay. Challenge children to think of something related to the fruit of the Spirit or another biblical theme. Then have the sculptor pose – or sculpt – the clay into that shape. For example, one person helping another who has fallen down might represent kindness. Let the rest of the class guess what’s been sculpted.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to only worship the one true God. Also to be uncompromising and stand up for their faith in the Lord when no one else is standing up. Even if it means that others won’t like us very much. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.