

The three men in the fiery furnace



Daniel 3

King Nebuchadnezzar had a huge, golden, statue erected and ordered all his subjects to worship this idol. Daniel's three friends did not obey this command. They chose rather to die than bow down to this idol. The enraged king had them arrested. As punishment he had them cast into a fiery furnace. In the firm conviction that God's ways are right and just, these three youths surrendered themselves to God's will. The Lord was with them in the form of an angel. They remained totally unharmed. God saw this faith and rewarded it.

The children experience what power, confidence and steadfastness is kindled
by complete trust in God.

The children learn to know God as their saviour in direst need.

Some time has elapsed and now there is great excitement in Babylon. The mighty King Nebuchadnezzar has instructed a golden image be fashioned, and erected. It is 30 metres high and three metres wide. Today it will be unveiled. The most important subjects of his kingdom, princes, rulers and royal servants, have been invited to this great feast. Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, are also among those invited. Daniel cannot be present.

All are assembled before the enormous, shining idol. Nebuchadnezzar is standing next to the statue, smiling proudly. A herald proclaims loudly: "Hear ye the command of our King Nebuchadnezzar! As soon as you hear music playing, kneel down and worship this golden image! Whosoever does not do so, will be condemned to die in the fiery furnace."

Then the music resounds and everyone kneels down before the golden image. Nebuchadnezzar's face shows his great satisfaction. Suddenly some servants get up and walk over to their king. "Great king, you have commanded that the golden idol be worshipped. There are three princes, however,

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who do not kneel, nor do they worship the image."

1

Nebuchadnezzar's expression becomes ominous: "What?" he snaps at those standing around: "My command is not obeyed? Bring those three culprits to me at once!"

The three men are brought before Nebuchadnezzar.

"You do not worship my idol? I now give you one last chance to obey my command, otherwise you know my punishment. The fire will consume you. No one will be able to save you; I am the mightiest here." Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego look at Nebuchadnezzar calmly but resolutely: "King, we do not wish to argue with you. We know that you can have us thrown into the furnace, but if it is God's will, he will save us. And even if he should not do so, we still will not worship the golden idol. We worship only our God, who has created heaven and earth." The complete and utter trust which these young men have in their God, causes Nebuchadnezzar's face to flush with anger.

"Guards!" he roars furiously: "Bind these traitors, heat the furnace seven times more than usual and cast them into the fire."

A murmur goes up from the crowd.

The three men are cast into the furnace. Triumphantly

God is close to his own – Daniel

Nebuchadnezzar watches the proceedings. But then, suddenly, he cannot believe his own eyes.

“Did we not cast three men... Look... I see four men walking around in the fire. They are praising and glorifying their God. The fourth looks like an angel.”

2

Hurriedly Nebuchadnezzar gets up and calls: “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the most high God, come forth! Your God has protected and saved you.”

The three men step out of the furnace. The angel is no longer with them. He has protected these three young men. To the utter astonishment of Nebuchadnezzar and all the people gathered there, the three youths are unscathed. Not even a hair on their head was singed, and no smell of fire



King Nebuchadnezzar had Daniel's three friends cast into the fiery furnace. An angel of the Lord protected them.

clung to them. Nebuchadnezzar is overwhelmed.

He stands before the multitude and proclaims: “Praised be the great God. He has sent an angel and saved those who trust in him and worship no other God. There is no other God who can save so miraculously!”

3



King Nebuchadnezzar did not trust his own eyes. He called: “There is no other God who can save so miraculously!”

- 1** We encourage the children to put forth their suppositions as to why Daniel's three friends did not kneel down, and what they believe could happen next.
- 2** We look at the pictures with the children, and describe them. With the following request we make the angel, as symbol of protection against harm and danger, the focal point of the picture-analysis: Tell us something about the fourth man in the picture!
- 3** We look at the picture of the fiery furnace once more.
In the narrative the three men are miraculously saved from a fiery death. The children will undoubtedly find numerous dangers from which the angels preserved them.