

Daniel 3:24-27

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King Nebuchadnezzar witnesses a miracle. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego are not killed by the fire. They are joined by an angel, and walk among the flames unburnt. The king calls the three out of the fire. Everyone gathered there sees the fire has not touched them.

Nebuchadnezzar has just overseen the execution of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; their crime was refusing to worship a golden idol made by the king. Their sentence is to be burned alive in a fiery furnace. In the process, the soldiers who escort the three Jews are themselves killed by the heat of the flames of the furnace.

Now, Nebuchadnezzar witnesses something impossible. Somehow, he is able to see into the mouth of the fiery furnace. However it was constructed, the furnace offers a clear view of all that is thrown into it. Nebuchadnezzar sees something he did not expect; he is *astounded* and stands *up in haste*. He questions his *high officials*, "*Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?*" He cannot believe what he sees, so he asks others who are viewing the event for their perspective and explanation. Only three men were thrown into the furnace to be executed. The officials confirm this, "*Certainly, O king.*" Nebuchadnezzar voices the reason for his amazement and confusion, "*Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the fire without harm.*" Where three men were thrown, a fourth person emerges. Incredibly, none of these men are dead. They are free from the ropes that bound them, and they walk about in their freedom. Stranger still, the fourth man, the stranger, has *the appearance like a son of the gods!*

Nebuchadnezzar, a polytheist (believer in many gods), describes what he sees from his perspective. He references multiple gods, not knowing the source of this intervention in the moment, only voicing what he witnesses. Soon enough he connects the dots. The fourth person he sees in the fire looks like a spiritual being, a son of a supernatural power. In verse 28 he clarifies what he means by "a son of the gods," saying that an *angel* was sent into the fire.

The king goes to the furnace to investigate and understand what is happening. He approaches *the door of the furnace*. The heat of the fire probably has died down at this point and is not a threat to close observers, where before its intensity had destroyed the soldiers who escorted the prisoners. It's also possible that the divine power preserving Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego has expanded to those who come close to see it, so that the glory of God can be revealed to the men who did not believe in His power to save His servants.

Not only the king, but the *satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the high officials* gather around to look at this miraculous event. Nebuchadnezzar, seeing that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are alive and well, asks them to leave the furnace, "*come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!*" In this phrase, the king acknowledges who has saved these men. The Most High God, the Power over all powers, even the proud Nebuchadnezzar and the many gods he worships. He tried to destroy Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and the Most High God of Israel preserved their lives.

The three Jews come out of the furnace, and everyone gathered there sees that not only are they alive—there is no evidence they were ever in a fire. The fire *had no effect on their bodies*, their *hair* is not even *singed*, their clothing is not *damaged*, and they do not even have *the smell of fire* or smoke on them. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are just as they were before they were thrown into the fire. The king's judgement could not touch any aspect of them; God kept them completely safe from the fire.

Throughout scripture, fire is used to depict God Himself as well as God's judgment. For example, God is described as "a consuming fire" ([Deut 4:24](#); [9:3](#); [Isaiah 29:6](#); [30:30](#); [Hebrews 12:29](#)). Later in Daniel, we will see that God's throne is surrounded by a river of fire, and the beast will be slain and given to that fire ([Daniel 7:10,11](#)). It could be that we are being given a picture of the contrast between the righteous redeemed who will dwell in the presence of a God of consuming fire as compared to the unredeemed, who will be consumed by the fire of God's presence.

Biblical Text:

²⁴ Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king." ²⁵ He said, "Look! I

see four men loosed *and* walking *about* in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of *the* gods!" ²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire. ²⁷ The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around *and* saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire *even* come upon them.