

Fiery Furnaces and Roaring Lions

Book of Daniel, from chapters 3 & 6

Nebuchadnezzar (*neb-yuh-kud-nez-er*), the king of Babylon, invaded Israel with his army and captured members of the royal family whom he took back to Babylon. These captives made Nebuchadnezzar angry because they refused to worship the Babylonian gods, preferring to worship their God of Israel. The king gave an order every time the people heard music, they were to fall down on their knees and worship the golden statue that the king had established. The king declared, “Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.”

Several men reported to the king that the Jews named Shadrach (*Shad-rak*), Meshach (*Mee-shak*), and Abednego (*Uh-behd-nih-goh*) were not following his order to fall on their knees and worship the golden statue when they heard music. They were called before the king, but they told him they could not do as he ordered. The king was so filled with rage that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than it usually was. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were tied up and thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. The flames were so hot that the men who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fire were killed by the heat.

But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked out of the furnace untouched. Their hair was not even singed, nor their clothes harmed. Nebuchadnezzar said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent an angel and delivered God’s servants who trust in God.” The king then ordered that no one was to speak against this God.

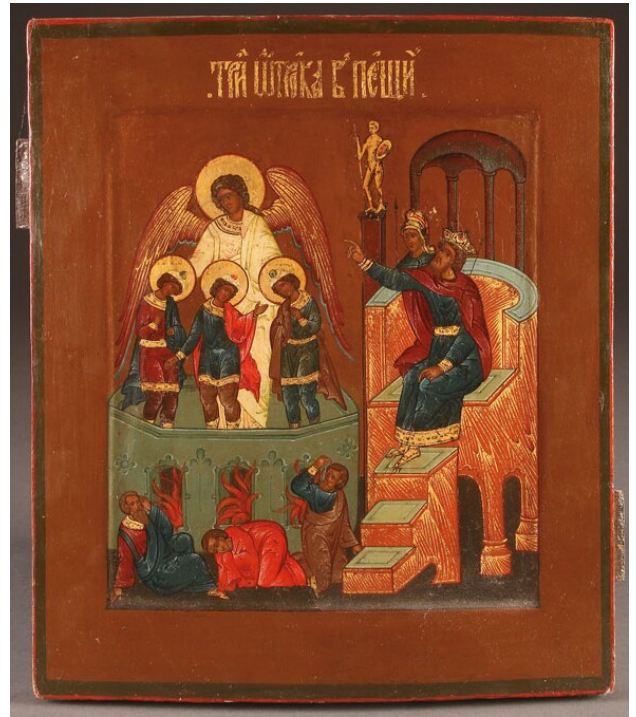


Years later, the lessons of the fiery furnace were forgotten, and Darius, the new king of Babylon, decreed that no one was to pray to any god or human, but only to King Darius for thirty days. Anyone who did not do so was to be cast into the lions’ den.

Daniel was a favorite of King Darius, and there were men in the kingdom who wanted to get Daniel into trouble and out of the way. These men spied on Daniel and saw him praying to the God of the Jews. They immediately ran and told the king, who was deeply troubled and torn about the matter. He tried to excuse Daniel, but the men reminded him that once a king commanded a law, the law could not be changed.

When Daniel was cast into the lions’ den, King Darius said, “May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you.” Then the entrance was sealed with a stone. The king went to his palace, but he was unable to eat or sleep. At the break of day, King Darius hurried to the den. He cried out to Daniel, and Daniel replied, “My God sent an angel and shut the lions’ mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before God. And also before you, O King, I have done no wrong.” The king was exceedingly glad. He ordered Daniel be taken out of the lions’ den, and the spies were cast into the den with lions whose mouths were no longer closed.

Left: *Daniel in the Lion’s Den*
Russian Icon, Source Unknown



Above: *The Three Youths in the Furnace*
Russian Icon, Source Unknown