

# Swimming Upstream: When God's Way is the Hard Way

## Part 2 - The Fiery Furnace

### Last week

- Israel is taken captive by Babylon
- Daniel and his friends are chosen to advise the king
- As the Kings advisors, they were given the same food as the king
- The Kings food was not Kosher, eating it would mean to disobey God's law
- In order to honor God, Daniel and his friends only eat vegetables
- God honored their decision to honor him by preserving them physically and giving them success in the training they were receiving.
- They became some of the best advisors the king had

### Rack, Shack, & Benny - The Other Jewish Youths

#### Daniel 3:8-12

*8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. 9 They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. 11 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*

- King made a law that everyone had to bow and worship a golden image when the signal was played by the instruments.
- Those who did not were to be executed by throwing them into a fiery furnace.
- The Chaldeans were another culture that was conquered by Babylon.
- The Chaldeans come forward accusing the Jewish youths of disobeying the kings new law.

#### Exodus 20:1-5

*1 And God spoke all these words: 2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,*

- This is the first of the 10 commandments.
- To obey the king would be to break this commandment.

## **Rack, Shack, & Benny disobey the king**

### Daniel 3:13-15

*13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"*

- The King confronts them on the accusation.
- He knows his law goes against the God they worship.
- He challenges the reality/existence of God.

### Daniel 3:16-18

*16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*

- Rack, Shack, and Benny tell the king they will not worship his golden image.
- They are committed to God whether he will save them or not.
- Regardless of the outcome they are resolved to only worship God, and not the golden image.

## **The King Punishes the Jewish youths**

### Daniel 3:19-23

*19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. 22 Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.*

- The king in his fury overheated the furnace the made sure they were bound by the strongest men.
- The Bible is clear that they were bound and thrown in the fire while wearing all of their clothing. This will be key fact later.
- The flames were so hot it killed the men who threw them into the fire.

## **God Rescues from the fire**

### Daniel 3:24-25

*24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."*

- Most bible scholars think the fourth individual was either Jesus Christ or an angel.
- Regardless of who this fourth person was, they are a physical representation of God's presence and protection in the fiery furnace.
- The bible is clear to show that it is the king who notices the fourth person.

## The King Recognizes who the True God is

*Daniel 3:26-30*

*26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. 27 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them.*

- The fire did singe their hair or any of their clothes, they didn't even smell like smoke, demonstrating the comprehensiveness of God's protection.
- The king's order to overheat the furnace resulted in the death of his own soldiers, yet Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego were completely untouched by the fire
- This points to the challenge the king made against God in v.15, the Lord is able to protect his servants better than Nebuchadnezzar can protect his.

*28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.*

- The king recognizes "the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego" not his own.
- He acknowledges he has lost the challenge he has put forth against God.
- He promotes them, remember they were part of his advisors, showing he appreciates their integrity and commitment to their God.

# Discussion Questions

- Do you think God sometimes changes his mind on things he has said we should or should not do based on culture or popular opinion? Why or why not?
- Why do you think following God sometime requires us to make a hard decision?
- Why do you think Rack, Shack, and Benny made the decision to disobey the king and follow God?
- Do you think they thought they would die in the fiery furnace or do you think they knew they would be saved?
- Why is it significant they made the choice they did, despite not knowing what the outcome would be?
- In your own words, how would you describe the reaction of the king to the miracle God had done in the furnace?
- What if they died in the furnace, do you think they still made the right decision? Why or why not?
  - How would God be glorified if they died and had not been saved?
- Is it possible for someone to know or believe God is real and not worship him?
  - What evidence do you see that this is the case for king Nebuchadnezzar?
- What are some consequences people face today for choosing to worship God?
- Do you think God is worthy of our worship?
  - Is He worthy even when worshipping Him makes our life harder?
- Why is God's way always the right way despite the potential consequences?