

Study on Daniel

Chapter 4

Nebuchadnezzar's insanity – the frightening dream that could not be interpreted

King Nebuchadnezzar has another dream and he makes a general statement to all the people that he had summoned all his Wise men and astrologers again as in chapter two, but they could not interpret the dream. At last Daniel came in and he told him the interpretation of the dream.

The dream

As I lay in bed I saw visions in my head. I saw a tree in the midst of the earth and it was very tall. The tree grew and became strong and its branches reached up to heaven and it could be seen to the end of the earth. Its leaves were fair and its fruit abundant and it had food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it and the birds of the air dwelt in its branches and all flesh fed from it. As I watched a watcher, a holy one came down from heaven.

He cried aloud and said, "Hew down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. (The dream now changes in emphasis) Let **him** be wet with the dew of heaven, let **his** lot be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let **his** mind be changed from a man's and let a beast's mind be given to **him**; and let seven times pass over **him**."

The sentence is by decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the Holy ones to the end that the living may know that the most high rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will and sets over it the lowliest of men. Here ended the dream and Nebuchadnezzar now asks for an interpretation from Daniel.

Daniel is horrified and is reluctant to tell the king of the forthcoming tragedy as he doesn't know how the king will re-act. The king however, is eager to know the interpretation and tells Daniel not to be afraid but to come right out with it

The Interpretation

The tree symbolises the king and his kingdom, which have grown strong. His greatness has grown and reaches heaven and his dominions to the end of the earth. (The branches were the princes (Satraps) who governed the provinces, the leaves the soldiers, the fruits the revenues, the shadow the protection afforded to dependant states) The interpretation of the watcher is this -

You shall be driven from among men and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall eat grass like an ox and you shall be wet with the dew from heaven. Seven times shall pass over you until you come to know that the **most high rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he pleases**. The stump of the roots of the tree tell you that your kingdom will still be there for you once you acknowledge that heaven rules. Daniel then warned the king to stop sinning and to practice righteousness by showing mercy to the oppressed.

In Jim McGuigan's book he says –The Tree is the king and by transference the kingdom v 20 – 22 The fate of the tree (the king) is made clear. It will suffer a real set back and it will be brought low. The destiny of Nebuchadnezzar is the destiny of the kingdom yet the stump would be protected by a metal barrier (much as they protect young trees today in the parks) which indicates that the kingdom will be kept safe for Nebuchadnezzar though he is brought low Verses 23 – 26.

The message here must not be missed. It is of eternal significance and is world wide, and all embracing in scope! God will convince Nebuchadnezzar that God is the real ruler of the world.

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He will prove this by rendering Nebuchadnezzar incapable of ruling his kingdom yet keeping it for him during his time of humiliation.

God's message to Nebuchadnezzar is this, "I don't need you; I gave the kingdom to you. I can rule the world without one as brilliant and capable as you regard yourself to be! It was not your military ability that brought you to power but my will. I could hold this kingdom together though its ruler be an ox Nebuchadnezzar doesn't believe this of course so a demonstration is planned.

Twelve months later the king was walking on the roof of his palace and saying "Is this not the great Babylon which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence for me and for the glory of my majesty?" (One moment he was bragging and the next he was munching) while the words were still in his mouth there came a voice from heaven telling him that his kingdom had departed from him and he would be driven from among men and he would live as the beasts of the field and eat grass as the oxen.

His body would be wet with the dew and his hair would grow long as eagle's feathers and his nails like birds claw. *He is to endure his bestial state until seven times pass over him. Seven times signifies a period of time that God would decide would be sufficient for him to learn his lesson.*

God was patient, waiting twelve months before executing His sentence upon Nebuchadnezzar. His pride was punished as the king became a brute in the shape of a man.

Note

There is nothing incredible about BOANTHROPY or LYCANTHROPY (where an individual assumes himself to be a wild animal) R.K. Harrison in his introduction to the Old Testament, relates a personal encounter with just such a person. This patient in a British mental hospital ate only vegetation and drank only water. His health was excellent and the only physical abnormality noticed was the length of his hair and the thickened condition of his nails.

Nebuchadnezzar regains his sanity and acknowledges that God is sovereign

Read from Verse 34 – 37

Lessons from chapter 4

1. God is in control – no matter what
2. God's promises always come true
3. God will make the proud humble and the humble will be exalted

Chapter five

Belshazzar's feast and punishment for defying God

Between chapter four and five is anything up to 60 years. Belshazzar was actually co-regent with his father Nebonidus who give Belshazzar the authority to share his rule. Belshazzar gave a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine ordering that the vessels that had been taken from the temple by his father Nebuchadnezzar, be brought to him that the lords, their wives and their concubines might drink from them Belshazar was now using items that had been taken from the Temple, in a previous attack on Jerusalem, by Nebuchadnezzar for his own personal use.

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These were gold and silver goblets that had been used in the worship of the lord and had been consecrated to Him. As they drank they were all praising the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone – worshipping idols.

As they drank the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the King's palace. The king saw the hand and his colour left him, his limbs gave way and his knees knocked together.

Verse 7 the King does the same as Nebuchadnezzar did and sent for the Chaldeans, wise men and astrologers but none of them could read the writing or interpret what it meant. The queen hearing what had happened remembered that Daniel had been able to interpret dreams in the time of Belshazzar's father Nebuchadnezzar. He had been made chief of the magicians and given the name of Belteshazzar - so the king called for Daniel. The king offered Daniel gifts if he could interpret the writing, but Daniel refused them. He reminded Belshazzar what had happened to his father when he had been proud.

God had given him kingship, greatness and, glory, majesty and authority over all the nations but it had all been taken away from him and the king became as a beast. Belshazzar had not humbled his heart although he knew all this and had profaned the holy vessels of the lord and worshipped idols instead of the true God. So God had sent the hand to write and this is what it wrote:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL AND PARSIN

Interpreted this means;

MENE – God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end

TEKEL – You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting

PARSIN or PERES – your Kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians

Belshazzar ordered that Daniel be clothed in a robe of purple, a chain of gold was placed round his neck and a proclamation was made about him that he should be third ruler in the kingdom but that very night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king was slain and Darius the Mede received the kingdom (he was about 62 years old)

Chapter 5: 30 The Medo-Persians attacked the city of Babylon 16th October 539 BC – Cyrus entered Babylon)

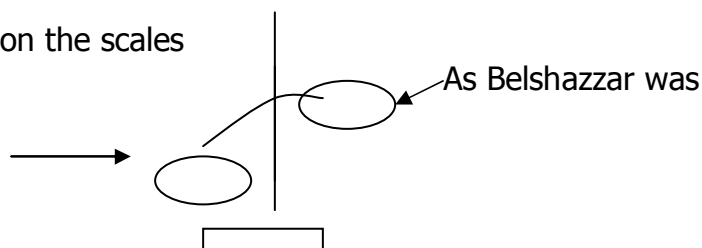
Daniel, by the end of **chapter 5** is around 80 years of age

Notes:

Mene, mene is repeated twice for emphasis. The days of Babylon were numbered meaning the empire would crumble into the dust.

Tekel meant he was too light on the scales

As God wanted him to be.



He did not measure up to God's standards.

Mene – Numbered

Mene – numbered (emphasis)

Parsin (Peres) – plural – divided

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Peres also means Persians

Perez (singular) kingdom divided and given to the Persians

Lessons from Chapter five

1. God is showing here His supreme authority and people just cannot do as they please.
2. People cannot find a true answer in the world or in other people – they have to look to God for their direction
3. God is showing that he also controls the rise and fall of empires

The Sovereignty of God

We are not accustomed to hearing our national leaders describe their sins in public that is why **Daniel 4** is such an unusual chapter. Nebuchadnezzar the great, proud, powerful king of Babylon, writes a letter to the world describing, in detail, how God humiliated him for 7 times then graciously restored them.

1. Think about the proudest person you know. *If you were in charge of humbling him or her – how would you go about it?*
2. If we accept **verse 17** as applicable today then must we conclude Adolph Hitler and Joseph Stalin came to power by Gods decree? Explain
3. What does the fact that God waited a full year between the announcement and its fulfilment tell us? **Verse 29**
4. **Chapter 5** – three times Daniel has recorded the failure of the wise men of Babylon to interpret the message of God. *What point is Daniel trying to make?*
5. How would you have re-acted if you had been at a banquet and seen a hand appear and write on a wall – **verse 5**?
6. How has this chapter demonstrated that 70 years of life under Babylonian influence, had not broken down Daniel's conviction?