

DANIEL 4

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S HUMILIATION

Babylon was a very great city. The Euphrates River ran through the midst of it, so that part of the city was on one side of the river, and part on the other. The walls around Babylon were 60 miles long; and they had 100 gates, all made of brass. Built up above the walls were high towers. The palace of King Nebuchadnezzar was of great size and glory; and near to his palace were the beautiful Hanging Gardens, thus called because they were raised high up in the air, on the sides of a hill. We do not read about them in the Bible; but in other books which tell us about him, we learn that Nebuchadnezzar made these gardens to please his wife. She had lived, while she was young, in a hilly country. When the king married her and brought her to Babylon (which stood on a wide and level plain), she longed for hills and woods like those in the land where she was born. So Nebuchadnezzar had this great artificial hill made, which was 400 feet high; and he planted its sides with trees and bushes and flowers. Steps led up to its top; and with a sophisticated pumping apparatus, water was drawn from the river that flowed through the city, to water the gardens that were planted upon the hill. From a distance, it looked like a mountain covered with woods.

This was the great metropolis in which Nebuchadnezzar lived and reigned as a mighty king indeed. But he forgot the Lord and thought only of his own riches and power. Consequently, God was displeased; and He sent a strange punishment upon the proud and haughty monarch. But after he had been punished, Nebuchadnezzar repented of his sins; and he sent to all the people of his kingdom, and to all the nations of the earth, a written account of what God had done to him. It is this written record that has been preserved here in the inspired Scriptures, so that we also may read it and learn the lessons that it teaches.

Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in his palace, with nothing to trouble him, when he had a dream that made him afraid. Apparently, however, he had forgotten the failure of the magicians and astrologers to interpret his dream of the great image; for once again, he called them all in and told them his dream. And once again, they could not interpret it – even though he was able to tell them the dream itself this time! But at last, Daniel came into his presence; and he repeated the dream to him. He had seen a tree that stood in the midst of a wide plain, and the height of it was great. The wild animals lay down under its shadow, the birds made their nests in its branches, and everything that lived came to it for food. But in his dream, the king saw a holy angel coming down from heaven. With a loud voice, the angel cried, “Hew down the tree, and cut off its branches; shake

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *Nebuchadnezzar records yet another dream that he had – verses 1-18*
- ❖ *Daniel interprets the dream for him – verses 19-27*
- ❖ *The dream is fulfilled, and the proud king becomes like an animal for seven years – verses 28-37*

off its leaves and scatter its fruit!” However, the heavenly messenger ordered that the stump of the tree should be left in the ground – where the dew would fall upon it and wet it, and where it would be among the wild beasts of the field – until seven years passed.

Having disclosed the scenes of this nighttime vision, the king pleaded with Daniel to reveal the interpretation to him. So Daniel spoke thus: “The tree which you saw, which grew and was strong – that tree is you, O king, who have grown great and full of power, and whose kingdom reaches to the end of the earth! And as you saw an angel coming down from heaven, and saying, ‘Cut down the tree and destroy it, yet leave the stump of its roots in the earth; and let it be wet with dew, and be with the wild beasts of the field, till seven years pass over it’ – this is the interpretation, O king; and this is what God has said shall be done to you: you shall not stay in your palace to be waited on by your servants and to live among men. But they shall drive you out to live with the beasts of the field; you shall eat grass like oxen, and lie upon the ground like them, and be wet with the dew – until you have learned that God rules over all the nations of the earth, and makes whomsoever he will to be king!”



All of Daniel’s words came true. By this dream, the proud king was given fair warning of what would be the outcome of his haughty conceit and arrogance; but he did not heed the warning. At the end of 12 months after this dream, he was walking in his magnificent palace in Babylon, with his heart filled with pride. He forgot that it was God Who had made him king; and he said, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built by my own power, and for my own honor and majesty?” In that very same hour, God took the king’s reason away from him, so that he was no longer fit to rule over his kingdom. He was driven out into the fields, where he ate grass like oxen. He slept upon the ground; and his body was wet with the dew until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws! But after seven years had run their course (570-563 BC), the king himself tells us that he then looked up to heaven, and his reason and right mind came back to him. He praised and honored Him Who lives forever, and Whose Kingdom shall have no end.

From this account of sudden humiliation that befell the haughty king, we learn that we ought to be watchful for the sudden judgments of God upon the enemies of His Christ; for although the great day of their ruin is deferred to that Day when the Lord will arise to punish the ungodly and to administer true judgment to the people, yet we may continually find instances in which the Lord stands up to avenge the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy (Ps. 12:5) upon the Christ-despising generation of our present day.

Lord, we repent of times when we have been guilty of the terrible sin of pride. Give us grace to be conformed more to the image of the meek and lowly Jesus! Amen.