



THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL

Lesson Number 14



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version, BBE=Bible in Basic English, DRA=Douay-Rheims KJV=King James Version, NKJV=New King James Version, NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible, NAU=New American Standard Bible 1995, NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version, NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version, RSV=Revised Standard Version, YLT=Young's Literal Translation.

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

THE SECOND DREAM AND ITS INTERPRETATION

^{4:10-28} Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. ¹¹ The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: ¹² The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. ¹³ I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; ¹⁴ He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: ¹⁵ Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: ¹⁶ Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him: and let seven times pass over him. ¹⁷ This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. ¹⁸ This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee. ¹⁹ Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. ²⁰ The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; ²¹ Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: ²² It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. ²³ And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; ²⁴ This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: ²⁵ That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. ²⁶ And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. ²⁷ Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity. ²⁸ All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. ^{KJV} (Daniel 4:10-28)

INTRODUCTION

OUTLINE

- ▶ A GREAT TREE IS SEEN (4:10-12)
- ▶ A WATCHER AND A HOLY ONE (4:13-14)
- ▶ LEAVE THE STUMP (4:15-16)
- ▶ IT IS BY DECREE (4:17)
- ▶ THIS IS MY DREAM (4:18)
- ▶ ASTONIED FOR ONE HOUR (4:19a)
- ▶ THE DREAM IS TO YOUR ENEMIES (4:19b)
- ▶ YOU ARE THE TREE (4:20-22)
- ▶ SEVEN YEARS WITH THE BEASTS (4:23-24)
- ▶ UNTIL YOU KNOW (4:25)
- ▶ THY KINGDOM SHALL BE SURE (4:26)
- ▶ BREAK OFF THY SINS (4:27)
- ▶ IT CAME TO PASS (4:28)

The Lord has dealt bountifully with “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” a term ascribed to him fifteen times in Scripture (2 Kgs 24:1,10,11; 25:1,8,22; 2 Chron 36:6; Jer 27:20; 38:3,11,14; 29:3; 34:1; 39:5; Dan 1:1). He had been set up by God as the ruler of the world, with all nations given to him, together with even the beasts of the field. As it is written, “For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also” (Jer 28:14). Nebuchadnezzar had not sought the Lord, and was a worshiper of false gods – yet God raised him to the political throne of the world. He was a heathen, over a heathen nation – yet God made him the most powerful ruler in the world. He had done nothing to deserve such honor, but was even among the “basest of men” – yet the Most High gave him the kingdoms of the world.

There is a strain of thought extant among theologians that affirms God has

no direct dealings with the nations and governments of the world. Thus, it is supposed, they are under no obligation to acknowledge the Lord in any way. These sophists concur among themselves that religion has no place in politics. Recently (June, 2002), a United States court determined the words “*under God*” could not be included in the pledge of allegiance. They determined this was an infringement upon religious freedom. Although the case is being brought to a higher court, the judgment has produced a wave of responses from various people. Sadly, many of them have come from professed Christians who actually concur with the judgment, declaring that such an acknowledgment is out of order.

The following quotation, in a correspondence received by myself, is representative of such objections. It is the expression of a professing Christian, and active member of a Christian Church in Indiana. “Much of the debate over the pledge of allegiance and ‘God’ being ruled unconstitutional was beset upon the notion of not whether God is unconstitutional, but rather shall we force someone who doesn’t believe as we do to accept our idealism. In the Bible, it speaks of choices and Jesus never stated that we should make another believe as we do or we will eventually cause more harm upon God’s law than the good that’s created through our love for one and another . . . Such idealisms and pretexts that make this nation feel that God Blessed America makes me quite ill. God never blessed America nor will he ever bless our nation. He gives His grace to those who have faith and do what is right even when evil extorts our liberties for so-called ‘safety.’”

While it is not my purpose to turn our attention to the questionable ruling, the above response represents a flawed form of reasoning that is altogether too common among those identified with Christ. **Whatever men may think of political liberties, they are never**

justification for a failure to recognize, and give due honor to, the God of heaven. Our text provides a most excellent example of this principle. Whether men are related to God through Christ or not, they are obligated to honor God. In fact, they will be judged if they do not. That is the postulate of Scripture.

- ▣ Prior to the Law, God dealt with the Gentile world because of their lack of response to Him. They were in God’s world, which witnessed to “*His eternal power and Godhead.*” Yet, because they “*glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful,*” and thus their “*foolish heart was darkened*” (Rom 1:20-21). **They were answerable to God!**
- ▣ Because the Gentiles misrepresented God by changing His glory into an image like “*corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted beasts, and creeping things,*” God gave them over to uncleanness (Rom 1:23). **They were answerable to God!**
- ▣ Because the Gentiles “*changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator,*” God gave them over to “*vile affections*” (Rom 1:25-26). **They were answerable to God!**
- ▣ Because the nations “*did not like to retain God in their knowledge,*” God gave them over to a “*reprobate mind*” (Rom 1:28). **They were answerable to God!**
- ▣ Although the world of Noah’s day did not have a written Law from God, yet all of the people except for eight were destroyed for displeasing the Lord by

WHATEVER MEN MAY THINK OF POLITICAL LIBERTIES, THEY ARE NEVER JUSTIFICATION FOR A FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE, AND GIVE DUE HONOR TO, THE GOD OF HEAVEN

their conduct (Gen 6:3-7). **They were answerable to God!**

- ▣ Sodom and Gomorrah were not Jewish cities, had no covenant with God, or written Law from Him. Yet they “*suffered the vengeance of eternal fire*” because they committed sins of a most reprehensible nature (Gen 19:23-25; Jude 1:7). **They were answerable to God!**
- ▣ The nations occupying the promised land before Israel had no covenant with God. They had no law from God.

not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD” (Jer 12:16-17). **They were answerable to God!**

- ▣ God spoke of non-Jewish nations that He determined to build and plant. If they did evil in His sight, He would withhold good from them. “*And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit*

There is also an erroneous view among professing Christians that the Law pertained ONLY to the Jews, having no application to any other nation. While it is true as a covenant, it pertained only to Israel, what it said pertained to all the world. As it is written, “*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God*” (Rom 3:19). If men doubt this is the truth, then the case of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon will clarify the matter for them. They also should learn the truth from the seven nations dispossessed of the land of Canaan. It is intolerable for those who bear the name of Christ to entertain such theological absurdities.

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A PERSON OR NATION THAT IS NOT ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD, AND OBLIGATED TO GIVE HIM HONOR! NO HUMAN LAW OR VIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS CAN NEGATE THIS.

THE RELEVANCE OF THIS

All of this is highly relevant to this text. A heathen king over a heathen empire is going to be judged by God for not responding correctly to the success he enjoyed. **This king has no covenant with God, no written Law from Him, and makes no pretense to be serving Him.** Yet God will not tolerate his conduct, for “*everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more*” (Luke 12:48). No person is excluded from this rule, whether king or vassal, nation or person! **There is no such thing as a person or nation that is not accountable to God, and obligated to give Him honor!** No human law or view of human rights can negate this.

Yet because of their conduct, they defiled the land, and God drove them out of it (Lev 18:24-25; Deut 7:1). **They were answerable to God!**

- ▣ Nineveh was not a Jewish city, had no covenant with God, and no written Law from Him. Yet God determined to overthrow the city because “*their wickedness*” came up before Him. They were spared only when they “*believed God,*” proclaimed a fast, and determined to change their ways. Although they were Gentiles, God “*saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not*” (Jonah 3:10). **They were answerable to God!**
- ▣ God held nations who had dealings with the Jews responsible for learning His ways, threatening them with judgment if they did not. “*And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will*

them” (Jer 18:9-10). **They were answerable to God!**

- ▣ “*Herod the king*” was a Roman official, ruling over the area occupied by the Jews. He was the ruler who “*stretched out his hand to vex certain of the church,*” and even “*killed James, the brother of John*” (Acts 12:1-2). He made a similar attempt to take Peter’s life, but his judgment was overturned by the Lord (Acts 12:3-19). In spite all of his atrocities against the church, God allowed him to remain as ruler. However, when, on a set occasion, he gave a great oration to the people, they gave a shout saying, “*It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.*” Because of this, “*immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory*” (Acts 12:21-23). **He was answerable to God!**

If it is true that God sets up kings, removes kings, and builds nations, then they are responsible to Him. Politics cannot remove this responsibility, nor can supposed human rights or governmental policies. Men owe God honor and thanksgiving!

VIEWING HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

Human responsibility must be viewed within the greater light of God and His will. If “*all things are of God*” (2 Cor 5:18), and “*every good gift and every perfect gift is from above*” (James 1:17), then all men are obliged to acknowledge that condition. If the Lord “*made*” “*all nations,*” determining the “*times*” in which they exist, and the “*boundaries of their habitation*” (Acts 17:26), they are under obligation to honor Him. All of this is even more applicable in Christ than it was before Him. As it is written, “*Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*” (Acts 14:16), but now “*commands all men everywhere to*

repent” (Acts 17:17:30). Men had better take this requirement most seriously, for all will give account for their response.

Whatever view men take of political freedom, the most prominent place must be made for these

considerations. Further, with them in mind, the text before us will make sense to us, confirming the truth to our hearts.

A GREAT TREE IS SEEN

“4:10-28 Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and

behold,” or “I was looking, and behold,” describe the keen interest of the king.

THIS WAS NOT A DARTING DREAM THAT CAME INTO HIS MIND, THEN LEFT SWIFTLY. IT WAS RATHER ONE THAT CAPTURED NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S ATTENTION, EVEN THOUGH HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANT.

behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. ¹¹ The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: ¹² The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.”

Remember, this is Nebuchadnezzar’s proclamation to the nations of the world. From his viewpoint, he is relating how marvelously God has worked with him. From heaven’s viewpoint, God is declaring **His manner** among the nations of the world.

The first dream the king received from God had to be told to him by Daniel. He could not remember the dream in its entirety, or a single facet of it. Now, however, he recalls the dream of reference, and recounts it point by point.

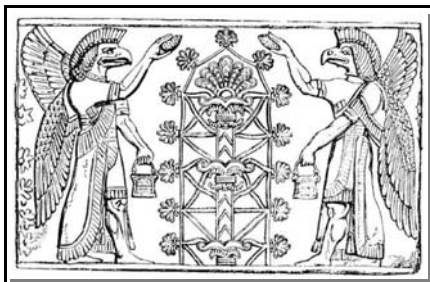
A TREE IN THE MIDST OF THE EARTH

“I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great.” First, the words *“I saw and*

This was not a darting dream that came into his mind, then left swiftly. It was rather one that captured Nebuchadnezzar’s attention, even though he did not understand what it meant.

Significant

This tree is an image of significance. It is the focus of attention – *“the midst of the earth.”* It is far reaching – *“the height thereof was great.”* This tree was to other trees what the great image of the king’s first dream was to other images. This was not a tree within a forest, but one which stood by itself. It demanded attention, for its height *“was great.”*



The above picture is a depiction of a sculpture that is in the Hall of Nisroch, an Assyrian god, at Nimroud., ^{BARNES} It shows a tree from which Nisroc (on both

sides of the tree) is picking fruit. This is the god in whose temple Sennacherib was killed by his own sons. As it is written, *“And it came to pass, as he [Sennacherib, 100 years before Nebuchadnezzar] was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword”* (2 Kgs 19:37; Isa 37:38). The Lord no doubt chose a symbol that would be of particular significance to Nebuchadnezzar, as he did when He showed the king a great image in his first dream.

THE TREE GREW AND WAS STRONG

“The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth.” Another version reads, *“The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth.”* ^{NIV}

Advancing and Dominant

This tree was not merely noted for its appearance. It was large at the first, its height being *“great.”* But it advanced, growing until it penetrated the very heavens, and could be seen throughout the whole earth. Thus, it was recognized in both heaven and earth.

Here was a tree that was strong and stable. The stormy winds and blast of desert heat had no effect upon it. By reaching into heaven, we note there were no other trees like it, either before or after its dominance. By being seen to the ends of the earth, we see that the eyes of all men were fastened upon this tree. It drew their attention because of its greatness.

ITS LEAVES AND FRUIT

“The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all.” Other versions read, *“Its leaves were lovely, Its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all,”* ^{NKJV} and *“Its leaves were*

beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all.”^{NIV}

Abundant Provisions

This tree was not like the fig tree Jesus cursed, that had “nothing but leaves” (Mark 11:13). It was a productive tree, not only bearing fruit, but “much” fruit that was a source of nourishment “for all.”

There was an attractiveness, or glory, to this tree. It was beautiful to look upon. It was not offensive like a thorn tree, or crude like an olive tree.

Here was a tree that produced an abundance of fruit, not only for those in its immediate vicinity, but around the

world. In a sense, it was a global tree.

SHADOW AND REFUGE

“ . . . the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.” Another version reads, “Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.”^{NIV}

Refuge and Care

Behold the utility of this tree. It was not merely impressive to look upon, but had sustaining fruit upon it. But there was even more to the tree than that. It was also a place of shelter for the beasts of the field from the heat. The birds of the

air found a place to dwell, building their nests in its thick boughs. And while the beasts found shelter under it, and the birds within its branches, they were able to feast on its rich supply of fruit.

A marvelous tree, indeed. Large, strong, high, increasing, visible, beautiful, fruitful, sheltering, and sustaining. It is no wonder the dream captured the king’s attention. God not only spoke to this king, but knew how to do so in such a way as to draw him into a consideration of visions he had in his head while he was upon his bed.

Again, we are introduced to the marvelous access God has to His own offspring. He can arrest their attention!

A WATCHER AND A HOLY ONE

“¹³ I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven;¹⁴ He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches.”

As the king considered the visions of his head, peering deeply into them, the peace and tranquility that seemed to surround this tree is suddenly interrupted. It all begins with the mandate of a heavenly personality. In the vision, it becomes apparent that heaven is superior to earth, and those in heaven are vastly superior to those upon the earth.

A WATCHER FROM HEAVEN

“I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven.” Other versions read, “an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven,”^{NASB} “a messenger [watchman], a holy one, coming down from heaven,”^{NIV} “there was a holy watcher, coming down from heaven,”^{NRSV} and “a sifter, even a holy one, from the heavens is coming down.”^{YLT}

What Is A “Watcher?”

A “watcher” is not a mere

spectator. The emphasis here is being a guardian, or one having the care of the tree. This is no doubt an angel – but not merely an angel. This angel is a custodian of the tree, like Michael the archangel is a keeper of Israel (Dan 10:21; 12:1).

A Holy One

This is the same messenger called a “watcher.” Whatever this “watcher” is

himself. This being apparently an angel, it blends perfectly with our Lord’s reference to “the holy angels” (Matt 25:31; Mk 8:38). John also referred to the “holy angels” in the Revelation (Rev 14:10).

It is to be understood that the closer a personality is to the Lord, the more holy they become. We also should note that unholy messengers are a

IT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE CLOSER A PERSONALITY IS TO THE LORD, THE MORE HOLY THEY BECOME. WE ALSO SHOULD NOTE THAT UNHOLY MESSENGERS ARE A REPROACH TO THE LORD – IF, INDEED, THERE BE SUCH A THING.

about to say will be just and right, for he is a “holy one.” Ordinarily, this term is applied to God Himself, the “Holy One.” It is thus used forty-eight times in Scripture (ex, 2 Kgs 19:22; Job 6:10; Psa 71:22; Isa 41:16; Jer 51:5; Ezek 39:17; Hos 11:9; Hab 1:12). It is also used in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 1:24; Acts 2:27; 3:14; 13:35; 1 John 2:20).

However, here it is used of a heavenly steward, and not of the Lord

reproach to the Lord – if, indeed, there be such a thing.

HEW DOWN THE TREE

“He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches . . .” Other versions read, “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,”^{NKJV} “Cut down the tree and trim off its branches,”^{NIV}

This “watcher and holy one” has

power to alter what is happening upon the earth. He has apparently been observing this tree, and is not pleased with what is happening. He therefore shouts an authoritative word that has come from heaven itself. The tree is to be suddenly and abruptly cut down. While the trunk is laying on the ground, all of its branches are to be cut off as well. This will be instantly carried out, for the word comes with unquestionable authority.

SHAKE OFF ITS LEAVES

“ . . . shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit . . . ” Other versions read, “Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit,”^{NKJV} “strip off its leaves, throw away its fruit,”^{NJB} and “let its leaves be taken off

and its fruit sent in every direction.”^{BBE}

Thus the beauty of the tree came to a grinding halt. Its fruit was no longer accessible, but was scattered, or thrown away. Now the tree was uncomely and unfruitful – nothing but a bare trunk, cut off from its roots, stripped of its leaves and fruit, and lying useless on the ground. This was the decree of the holy watcher from heaven. There is no chance that it will not be carried out to the finest detail.

REMOVE THE BEASTS AND FOWLS

“ . . . let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches.” Other versions read, “Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its

branches”^{NIV} “let the beasts escape from under it, and the fowls from its branches,”^{DOUAY} and “let the beasts flee its shade, and the birds its branches.”^{NAB}

No longer would the beasts of the field find refuge under this once mighty tree. The birds could not nest and feed within its extensive branches. In fact, they would flee from it for fear of danger. It is as though they heard the sound of the felling axe, and felt the tremors of the tree losing its stability. Immediately, they fled from the tree. What was once for safety, now became a jeopardy. **Those who looked to it for protection, shelter, and food, now saw the tree as an undesirable haven. Therefore they left it with haste.**

LEAVE THE STUMP

“¹⁵ Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: ¹⁶ Let his heart be changed from man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given unto him: and let seven times pass over him.”

The details of this dream are most remarkable, to say nothing of Nebuchadnezzar’s recollection of them. Of course, we are not to understand he did this under his own power alone, although there was no doubt a great deal of effort

In his first dream, the dream itself, with all of its details, was directly revealed to Daniel by God. This time, however, God will make the dream known to Daniel through Nebuchadnezzar. The relating of the dream, therefore, must be exact and complete, else the inspired interpretation of it will not have the intended impact.

All Things Are of God

In all of this, we again see that “*all things are of God*” (2 Cor 5:18). This is a statement confirming that **everything having to do with Divine determinations are wrought through God.** This is stated more precisely in

intended for His glory,”^{NLT} and “*Everything there is comes from Him and is caused by Him and exists for Him.*”^{NJB}

I am careful to state this has particular regard to the fulfilment of God’s purposes. Notwithstanding, **there is nothing that occurs in the heavens, the earth, or under the earth, that is wholly without the involvement, judgment, and dominion of the mighty God of heaven.** Thus, even in Nebuchadnezzar telling what he had dreamed, the Lord is at work, ensuring that the report is precise in every detail.

NEVERTHELESS

“*Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth . . .*” At this point, a small ray of light penetrates the darkness of judgment. Although the “*watcher and holy one*” from heaven has ordered the large and productive tree to be cut down, its branches hacked off, and its fruit scattered, an element of mercy remains. **The tree is cut down, not uprooted!**

Leaving the Stump and Its Roots

God does not always leave the stump and roots. On one occasion Jesus declared, “*But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*” (Mat 15:13). Other versions read, “*pulled up by*

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on his part. The purpose of this dream does not allow for an uncertain remembrance of it. The facts of the dream cannot be obscured by broad generalities or private interpretations.

Romans 11:36. “*For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.*” Other versions read, “*For everything comes from Him; everything exists by His power and is*

the roots,"^{NIV} "taken up by the roots,"^{BBE} and "uprooted."^{NRSV} Elsewhere God spoke of "plucking up by the roots" (2 Chron 7:20). Ezekiel associated this kind of judgment with utter hopelessness (Ezek 17:9). Jude referred to reprobate teachers as those who "twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Jude 1:12).

However, leaving the roots means the judgment is not intended to be permanent. Some degree of recovery will be experienced.

A Thought

Without being unduly distracted, mention should be made of the hope of a remaining root. There are those who teach God is finished with Israel, and thus there is no hope for their recovery. These teachers say God's judgment against them in the destruction of Jerusalem meant He had utterly written them off. Thus, such people have come to actually despise the Jews, viewing them as pulled up by the roots. However, this is a wholly inaccurate representation of the mind of the Lord.

The Jewish root still remains!

That "root" is still "holy," and still nourishes prospering branches (Rom 11:16). In fact, Gentiles that are in Christ Jesus have been caused to partake of "the root and fatness of the olive tree," along with believing Jews (Rom 11:17). They are solemnly reminded that "the root" is bearing them (Rom 11:18).

If the tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was given hope by its remaining stump and roots, how much more is their hope for Israel in the continuance of its "root." Even the patriarch Job, without a Bible, and prior to the giving of the Law, said, "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant" (Job 14:7-9). It is not good for Job, living in such spiritually primitive times, to have a greater understanding of Divine manners than those living in the blazing light of the "Sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2)! More should be known in this day.

There is, then, hope for the tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, even though it has been suddenly and violently cut down. This is confirmed by the command to leave the stump with its roots.

A BAND OF IRON AND BRASS

"... even with a band of iron and brass..." Other versions read, "Bound with a band of iron and bronze,"^{NKJV} "But with a band of iron and bronze around it,"^{NASB} The idea is that the stump was left in the ground with a tight band of iron and brass around it.

At least two things are signified by this. **First**, the band would keep the root from deteriorating and splitting apart. It would hold it together for its future growth. **Second**, it would be a public signification that the stump should not be removed, but left in tact. While several

At least two things may be seen in this expression. **First**, this speaks of the protection of the stump and its roots. It would be kept alive by the drenching dew of heaven. Should there be a severe drought, or rain be withheld, the dew of heaven would sustain it.

Second, it declares a humbling experience, where protection from even the elements of nature would be withheld. The whole matter depicts utter helplessness and worthlessness.

A PORTION WITH THE BEASTS

"... and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth..." Other versions read, "And let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth,"^{NKJV} "And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth,"^{NASB} "and let him live with the animals among the

THE IDEA IS THAT THE STUMP AND ITS ROOT WILL NOT BE ENCLOSED IN A STRUCTURE, OR PROTECTED FROM THE ELEMENTS. IT WOULD REMAIN IN THE OPEN FIELD, SUBJECTED THE HARSH ELEMENTS OF NATURE.

other possibilities might well be surmised, it seems to me that the intention is to secure the root because it will once again flourish. In this case, an iron and bronze band denoted a hopeful future.

IN THE TENDER GRASS

"... in the tender grass of the field." Other versions read, "In the tender grass of the field,"^{NKJV} "In the new grass of the field,"^{NASB}

The idea is that the stump and its root will not be enclosed in a structure, or protected from the elements. It would remain in the open field, subjected the harsh elements of nature.

WET WITH DEW FROM HEAVEN

"and let it be wet with the dew of heaven..." Other versions read, "And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,"^{NASB} and "Let him be bathed with the dew of heaven."^{NRSV}

plants of the earth."^{NIV}

Suddenly, the imagery is changed from the stump of a tree to a person. Remember, we are reading the solemn words of "the watcher" concerning the judgment of the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream – a dream sent to him from heaven. Now we begin to sense the message is not about a tree at all. Rather, it is declaring God's judgment against a person.

This person will be dehumanized, so to speak, and caused to dwell in the grass of the field with irrational and unthinking beasts. He will have no choice in this matter, for this is a decree handed down from the "God of gods and Lord of kings." This person would be made to dwell in an environment unsuitable for one made in the image of God. Nevertheless, it would be appropriate for one who had conducted himself in a manner that aggravated the God of

heaven.

A BEASTS HEART

“Let his heart be changed from man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given unto him . . .” Other versions read, *“Let his mind be changed from that of a man, And let a beast’s mind be given to him,”* ^{NASB} *“Let his mind be changed from that of a human, and let the mind of an animal be given to him,”* ^{NRSV} and *“Let his mind be changed from the human; let him be given the sense of a beast.”* ^{NAB}

Once again, remember this is a

watcher and holy one from heaven!

This is something God decreed, and it provides us with some understanding about His nature.

SEVEN TIMES

“ . . . and let seven times pass over him.” “Seven times” stand for seven years. This precise period is also mentioned in verses 23, 25, and 32. Some versions read *“seven years.”* ^{NAB} Still others read, *“seven period of time.”* ^{NAS/NAU/NLT}

The judgment, then, would last for seven years. It was not to be a brief

“Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field.

Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches: To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit. Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. They also went down into hell with him unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen. To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezek 31:3-18).

THIS IS A DIVINE DECREE, NOT SIMPLY A DECLARING OF THINGS GOD SAW HAPPENING INDEPENDENT OF HIS OWN INFLUENCE. THIS DECREE IS A RESULT OF DIVINE RULE. IT IS AN EXAMPLE OF GOD PUTTING SOMEONE DOWN (PSA 75:7) AND BRINGING SOMEONE LOW

decreed from the *“watcher, a holy one from heaven.”* The use of the word *“heart,”* or *“mind,”* ^{NASB} speaks of the human nature. The idea is that the person being judged would cease to have normal human proclivities. It is as though the Divine imagery in this individual would be suspended for a season. In such a case, there would be no essential difference between him and the brute beasts of the field. He would no longer act like a man, or have the appetites of *“the offspring of God.”* He would give no stirring orations, accomplish any military exploits, or build great cities.

This judgment involved the deprivation of reason. The person would be governed by the appetites of an irrational beast. He would act and behave like a beast, being both stupid and savage. The person would see himself as a beast, not a man. His memory would not serve him, and he would not be able to purpose, or engage in productive activity as other men.

Those who have stilted and foolish views of God need to pay close attention to the words of the

chastening, but one of significant duration. Let no man conceive of the Lord as one so tender and kind that He cannot impose severe judgment upon those with whom He is not well pleased.

NOT AN ANALYSIS, BUT AN EDICT!

I cannot leave this section without pointing out this is not a mere foretelling of something that was going to happen. **Rather, this is an edict that will be carried out, whether men consent to it or not.** This is a Divine decree, not simply a declaring of things God saw happening independent of His own influence. This decree is a result of Divine rule. It is an example of God putting someone down (Psa 75:7) and bringing someone low (1 Sam 2:7).

This is the outworking of God being *“Governor among the nations”* (Psa 22:28), the *“King of all the earth”* (Psa 47:7). The kingdom is His (Matt 6:13)!

A WORD FROM EZEKIEL

This dream is remarkably like a word delivered by Ezekiel. Because of its singular likeness to our text, I will provide the entirety of the Ezekiel passage.

The purpose of Ezekiel's word was to confirm Egypt would fall just like Assyria did. In both cases, the fall was the result of a Divine decree, not merely of natural deterioration in the kingdoms.

Kingdoms fall by Divine mandate, not by a natural political or social process. God is the Governor among the nations, not lifeless political or social processes. **Those in Christ must carefully avoid**

tracing the removal of empires to lifeless principles created and perpetrated by men. Whether speaking of individuals or nations, it is God with whom we have to do (Heb 4:13).

IT IS BY DECREE

“¹⁷ This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.”

This is God's explanation of the reason for the dream and its fulfillment. There was something in particular in which the king was being instructed. That same lesson was intended for *“all living.”*

In this explanation we will see how precisely the world is being governed, and how insignificant man is on his own. It will also become apparent that Divine purpose is behind the government of the world. **There are matters men are to learn, and the events of the world are so orchestrated as to make that learning possible.**

The things the Lord intends for men to learn are always pivotal. They are always at the heart of things, and no man can afford to overlook them or be ignorant of them. It will become apparent to you that the design of this revelation is almost totally unknown in the Christian world. This ought not be the case. Those who are in Christ should have a greater understanding of the truth here expounded than any person prior to Christ was capable of obtaining.

DECREE OF THE WATCHERS

“This matter is by the decree of the watchers . . . ” Other versions read, *“This decision is by the decree of the watchers,”* ^{NKJV} *“This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers,”* ^{NASB} and *“the sentence is rendered by decree of the watchers.”* ^{NRSV}

The Matter

The *“matter,” “decision,”* or *“sentence”* was the judgment against the tree in the dream. That tree, we will find, represented a person that had flourished in the earth. Thus judgment was caused to happen by a word – a *“decree.”* This was not a decision made by man.

The Decree

The one issuing the decree obviously had authority, and thus his word would be carried out to the most meticulous detail. **This was something that would be imposed upon a person, whether it was desired or not.** Free will had nothing whatsoever to

As I have suggested, the extent of the authority of these *“watchers”* is not fully delineated. However, they are astute observers of the affairs of men, particularly those within the provinces of their stewardship. They can act suddenly and decisively, causing things to take place among men, like the slaying of Herod (Acts 12:23). One of them stood in Balaam's way to slay him if he continued one (Num 22:22-27). Another came to superintend the destruction of Jericho (Josh 5:14-15).

How we should learn to reckon on the presence of holy angels! Solomon even

THIS WAS SOMETHING THAT WOULD BE IMPOSED UPON A PERSON, WHETHER IT WAS DESIRED OR NOT. FREE WILL HAD NOTHING WHATSOEVER TO DO WITH IT. IT WOULD BE IMPOSED JUSTLY, WITH DUE CAUSE, AND WITHOUT ANY HUMAN INTERFERENCE.

do with it. It would be imposed justly, with due cause, and without any human interference.

The Watchers

There are matters among men that are governed by angelic *“watchers”* or superintendents. The extent of their subordinate powers is not fully known. However, I am convinced it is infinitely larger in scope than is normally perceived.

It is to be understood that the *“decree of the watchers”* was in strict accord with the will of God. They were carrying out a Divine mandate, and had been duly empowered to do so.

warned us to speak with them in mind. *“Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?”* (Ecc 5:6).

DEMAND BY THE WORD

“. . . and the demand by the word of the holy ones . . . ” Other versions read, *“command of the holy ones,”* ^{NASB} *“the holy ones declare the verdict,”* ^{NIV} and *“by order of the holy ones.”* ^{NRSV}

This is a Hebraism – saying the same thing another way. The *“decree”* is the same as *“the demand,”* and *“the*

watchers” are the same as the “*holy ones*.” **These beings are so authoritative they make things happen with their word.** An angel in the book of Revelation declared the end of due time, and the commencement of the fulfillment of God’s judgment (Rev 10:5-6). Another angel decreed the measurement of the temple, the alter, and those who worshiped therein (Rev 11:1). Still another decreed the judgment of those who had shed the blood of the saints (Rev 16: 5-7).

A Conclusion

When the extensive involvement of God and His hosts among the affairs of men is seen, we will conduct our affairs with greater sobriety. With these things in mind, it is no wonder Paul wrote, “*For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels*.”^{NKJV} (1 Cor 11:10). Much of the frivolity, argumentation, and uncomely appearances within the

No less eight times the words “*for this cause*” (in the sense of our text) occur in Scripture. God raised Pharaoh up for a cause (Ex 9:16). Jesus came into the world for cause (John 12:27; 18:37). The Lord delivered the Gentiles over to vile affections for a cause (Rom 1:26). Many people in the Corinthian church became weak and sickly, and some even died, for a cause (1 Cor 11:30). God sends strong delusion upon certain people for a cause (2 Thess 2:11). It is a cause that has made Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament (Heb 9:15). It was for a Divine cause that the Gospel was preached to those who had died (1 Pet 4:6). God is still governing among men.

There are Divine intentions that are only known to us because they have been revealed. One of them is found in our text. But there are others.

- ☐ God overthrew the good counsel of Ahithophel “*to the intent*” He might

understanding of the Word and work of the Lord simply are not possible.

Therefore, a purely academic approach to the Word of God is anything but wise. To approach a Divine word or work with a hermeneutical principle in ones hand is an exercise in futility. Such a principle does not have the slightest clue about Divine causes, intentions, or purposes. One might even become an expert in historical backgrounds, contextual considerations, and expertise in the original language. But if the person does not know what God is doing, or the reason for it, all of those things are mere wisps of useless theological wind.

I challenge those who enter the sacred vestibule of God’s Word to unravel Nebuchadnezzar’s dream with their academic tools. Let them expound the tree, its branches, and its fruit for us. Let them step forth and comment on the beasts and fowls that benefitted from the tree. Using their academic tools, let them open to us the cutting down of the tree, the leaving of the stump, and the bands of iron and brass. And what of a beasts heart, and the dew of heaven, and the seven times? What law of hermeneutics can unravel these for us? What Hebrew scholar can open them for us? Is there a contextual expert that can tell us the meaning of these things?

I will tell you, they will all have to place their hand over their mouths. What they have regarded so highly is impotent in this matter. **They would never have concluded God’s purpose for this dream if He had not told it.** What is more, they would never have entertained the faintest idea of its meaning if God had not revealed it. It is an act of folly to elevate such men to places of theological prominence.

That the Living May Know

This judgment has occurred “*that the living may know*.” This is not a lesson for angels, but for men. It is not a lesson for men who have died, but for those who remain upon the earth. **This is something all who are alive need to know.** It is not an optional or inconsequential unit of knowledge, but an essential one. Here is something about the

THERE ARE DIVINE INTENTIONS THAT ARE ONLY KNOWN TO US BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN REVEALED. ONE OF THEM IS FOUND IN OUR TEXT. BUT THERE ARE OTHERS.

professed church would abruptly terminate if only a small portion of these things was seen.

THAT THE LIVING MAY KNOW

“*. . . to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.*”

The Principle of Divine Intention

Here is the purpose for the revelation. This is why the “*watchers*” gave their decree, and the “*holy ones*” commanded the word. **Everything God does has a purpose, and nothing is done without a just and righteous cause supporting it.** That is why the Lord said, “*. . . and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD*” (Ezek 14:23).

bring evil upon Absalom (2 Sam 17:14).

- ☐ Jesus allowed Lazarus to die “*to the intent*” His disciples might believe (John 11:15).
- ☐ The record of the wayward Israelites was written “*to the intent*” we would not lust after evil things ads they did (1 Cor 10:11).
- ☐ God is bringing men into the fellowship of His mystery “*to the intent*” that now principalities and powers in heavenly realms might, by the church, learn of His manifold wisdom (Eph 3:9-10).

There are reasons that undergird all that God says and does. If these reasons, causes, or intentions, remain unknown, valid

Living God that men in the flesh are to know. That intention is why both the dream and its fulfillment took place.

This is a judgment, and *“the Lord is known by the judgment that He executeth”* (Psa 9:16). It is written that when men are *“confounded and troubled,”* it is *“that men may know”* God is *“over all the earth”* (Psa 83:17-18). Therefore, a disinterest in, or ignorance of, what the Lord has said and done is most serious, putting the individual at great disadvantage.

The Most High Ruleth

This is the matter that is to be known, grasped by the heart and mind: *“that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.”* Other versions read, *“is Ruiler over the realm of mankind,”*^{NASB} and *“is Sovereign over the kingdoms of men,”*^{NIV}

This certainly casts a whole new light on the saying, *“one nation under God.”* Whether men confess it or not, that is the truth. Whether they know it or not, this is the case. The text does not say God ought to rule the kingdoms of men, but that He does. He can overthrow them all at once as He did in the flood. He can take down one of them at a time as He did Egypt. He can bring down seven at a time as He did *“the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou”* (Deu 7:1).

God’s Kingdom (*“Thine is THE Kingdom”*) **includes the kingdoms of men** – all of them. His dominion is over all. As it is written, *“The LORD hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all”* (Psa 103:19).

However, this is not generally known, and those who have heard of it do not always acknowledge it. Therefore, the Lord has demonstrated this truth in history. Our text provides a case in point.

The Most High Gives Kingdoms to Whomever He Wills

Part of Divine dominion over all kingdoms involves giving them to

whomever He wills. Other versions read, *“bestows it on whom He wishes,”*^{NASB} *“gives them to anyone He wishes,”*^{NIV} and *“confers it on whom He pleases.”*^{NJB}

In this case, God can simply set one of His own choosing over the kingdom, or take it from one and give it to another as He did in the case of king Saul (1 Sam 15:28) and Solomon (1 Kgs 11:11).

Ultimately, the management of all the kingdoms of the world belongs to the Lord. This special revelation was given to Nebuchadnezzar in order that *“all the living”* might know this, or, more precisely, be persuaded of it.

The Most High Sets Even the Basest of Men over World Kingdoms

ULTIMATELY, THE MANAGEMENT OF ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD BELONGS TO THE LORD. THIS SPECIAL REVELATION WAS GIVEN TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR IN ORDER THAT *“ALL THE LIVING”* MIGHT KNOW THIS, OR, MORE PRECISELY, BE PERSUADED OF IT.

In the case of Saul, his successor was a better man than himself (1 Sam 15:28). However, God does not always do this. Sometimes He chooses to place *“the basest of men”* over the kingdoms of His own choosing. In the sense of being corrupt and defiled, Pharaoh was such a man (Ex 9:15). Ahab was another, who sold himself to do wickedness in the eyes of the Lord (1 Kgs 21:25). The Lord even caused *“the worst of the heathen”* to ride over His own people because of their sin (Ezek 7:24).

In the sense socially debased, like a pauper or a beggar, *“He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and he hath set the world upon them”* (1 Sam 2:8). Thus Joseph came from prison to the throne,

and David from the sheepcotes. God often chooses *“base things of the world, and things which are despised . . . to bring to nought things that are”* (1 Cor 1:28). That is true in the political realm, as well as that of His great salvation, as our text affirms.

If this is why God made these things known to Nebuchadnezzar, it is on the part of wisdom for us to learn what He is teaching. Here is a morsel of understanding that will sweeten the cup of life, and makes trouble more tolerable.

MY OWN TESTIMONY

The stated Divine intention is particularly meaningful to me. Apart from the instruction of my good father, now with the Lord, I was rarely, if ever,

exposed to teaching that affirmed the Sovereignty of God. In fact, I recall very little that was actually taught about God Himself, particularly in the capacity affirmed in this text. The general thrust of nearly all of the preaching and teaching I heard dealt with human responsibility. It did cover a wide range of things, from church polity and leadership, to the winning of souls, and the Lord’s Supper. Some few words were occasionally said about holiness, the role of women and elders, and a cursory view of the New Testament. But there was very little Deity in the focus of the preaching and teaching.

Consequently, when I began to read the Scriptures with a hearty appetite, unable to put them down, I suddenly realized there was a different emphasis in Scripture than I had heard. At once I saw the main Person in Scripture was God the Father, and Jesus Christ was the

appointed means to coming to Him and understanding Him. It seemed as though I saw the power and Sovereignty of God in every line of Scripture. It was so refreshing to my Spirit, and caused me to see salvation in a whole new light. Confidence and assurance became my portion, and joy unspeakable and full of glory flooded my soul.

I had seen something of the significance of this text, and was able to relate it to my own salvation. From that

day forward, I vowed I would speak more about God than man, more about blessing than duty, and more about God's will than man's will. This by no means suggested there was no such thing as duty, or that there was no place for the proper exposition of man's purpose and role in redemption. It certainly did not mean there was no such thing as human will. What it did mean is that what God commanded became more doable, as God worked in man "*both to do and to will of His good please*" (Phil 2:13).

I suppose I was not much different than others who had been subjected to an institutional emphasis and an academic approach to the Word of God. Such an approach is a thief and a robber, as some of us know all too well. The point to be seen in this text is that such approaches are wholly unjustified. If, during a dark era of the First Covenant, God worked in such a way as to make Himself better known to the living, what must we be able to know of Him now – now that Jesus has come?

THIS IS MY DREAM

"¹⁸ This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee." Remember, Nebuchadnezzar is proclaiming this to the nations throughout the whole world. In most precise detail he is recounting how the God of heaven has been working with him. He has told of the effects of his dream upon him and the inability of the wise men of Babylon to tell its meaning. He has also given a detailed

The first time Daniel came before him about a dream, the king asked, "*Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?*" (Dan 2:26). This time, however, the king does not ask Daniel if he is able. He simply tells him to declare the meaning of the dream. Surely, if Daniel could tell him the dream he had forgotten, he will have no trouble interpreting a dream he has remembered. The king has gained some confidence in his exposure to this man of God.

THE INABILITY OF THE WISE MEN

" . . . forasmuch as all the wise

Lord makes him confess with his mouth the futility of all the wise men in Babylon to give a solitary meaning to anything He has revealed. Like the idols the wise men worshiped, "*they are their own witnesses: they see not, nor know*" (Isa 44:9).

THOU ART ABLE

" , , , but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee." The king knows Daniel is no ordinary person. The resources he possessed were not natural, but supernatural. That is why he was able to tell and interpret his first dream, and he is confident he will be able to interpret this one also.

THE POWER

The power was found in the meaning of the dream, and not in the dream itself. **It does no good to receive a message from God, whether it is a word or a dream, if it is not understood.** Even Nebuchadnezzar knew this, although it remains unknown among many of our day. **Proper understanding is superior to legitimate experience.**

Those who seek religious experiences will also need an understanding of them. Experience is not an end of itself, as Israel, who experienced deliverance from Egypt, could well testify. Egypt also experienced many miracles, but learned nothing from them. If we do not learn from experience, it will hurt us.

One final word on this. God's Word is always superior to dreams. As it is

account of the dream itself. Now, he speaks to the man of God who is standing before him. He came in at the last, but he will immediately rise to the top position by reason of his response.

A TASK FOR DANIEL

" . . . Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof . . . "

men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation . . . " In identifying and interpreting the king's first dream, Daniel reminded the king that his wise men were powerless to give him any valid word about his dream. This time, Nebuchadnezzar tells Daniel "*the wise men*" of his kingdom were "*not able*" to interpret his dream. It is as though the

written, *“The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire?”*

saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer 23:28-29).

This very truth is confirmed in our

text. The dream itself, while most intriguing, amounted to confusion until the Word of the Lord was brought into the matter. The power is in God’s Word (Heb 4:12), not the king’s dream.

ASTONIED FOR ONE HOUR

“19a Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonied for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him.” The king is still relating his experience to the nations of the whole world – testifying of *“the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward”* him (Dan 4:2). He now tells of the immediate impact this dream had upon Daniel himself.

ASTONIED

“Daniel . . . was astonied for one hour.” Other versions read, *“was astonished for a time,”*^{NKJV} *“was appalled for a while,”*^{NASB} *“was greatly perplexed for a time,”*^{NIV} *“was severely distressed for a while,”*^{NRSV} *“was dismayed for a moment,”*^{RSV} *“was at a loss for a time,”*^{BBE} *“was amazed about one hour,”*^{Septuagint} *“was overcome for a time,”*^{NLT} *“was confused for a time and upset.”*^{NJB}

It should be obvious that the word *“astonied”* is an unusually strong word. This word literally means “stunned,” or “make amazed, be astonied, astonished, bring into desolation, be destitute, destroy, make waste, and wonder.”^{STRONGS}

The idea is that upon hearing the dream all of Daniel’s natural wisdom dried up, and his natural mind became an arid desert. There was nothing natural in him that could decipher this dream. Of himself, he had no more power than the wise men of Babylon. It was his God that made the difference, not his mind or natural endowments.

The blast that caused this astonishment had a twofold impact on the prophet. **First**, it dealt with matters far beyond any mortal capability, as explained above. **Second**, the severity of the judgment that was proclaimed was staggering. It was not that it was staggering to think God could do such a thing, but that such swift and immediate judgment would

fall upon a single individual. **Holy men of God cannot become so accustomed to Divine judgment that they simply shrug it off.**

Those who imagine no evil thing comes from the Lord need to sit in Nebuchadrezzar’s classroom. In fact, it would be good to have that Babylonian in some convention workshops to straighten out the stunted thinking of some professing Christians.

Some Contemporary Nonsense

There is a great deal of talk among certain religious circles that when people suffer trouble, it did not come from God. It is not unusual to hear teachers say,

The word *“hour”* does not always mean sixty minutes – although often it does (*“third hour”* – Mark 15:25, *“sixth hour”* – Matt 27:45, etc). Often, as in this text, it refers to a limited period of time. Some expressions that confirm this are, *“the hour is come”* (Mark 14:41), *“the hour is coming”* (John 5:25), and *“this is your hour”* (Lk 22:53).

Thus, for a brief period of time, Daniel was silent, crushed with the weight of the word he had just heard, and impressed with its severity. This was a decree from heaven. It was not something that could be negotiated, as Moses did with God concerning Israel (Ex 32:11-12; Num 14:13-20). There are some Divine

THOSE WHO IMAGINE NO EVIL THING COMES FROM THE LORD NEED TO SIT IN NEBUCHADREZZAR’S CLASSROOM. IN FACT, IT WOULD BE GOOD TO HAVE THAT BABYLONIAN IN SOME CONVENTION WORKSHOPS TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE STUNTED THINKING OF SOME PROFESSING CHRISTIANS.

“God did not do that, the devil did.” But what will they say to Paul with a thorn? Or the Corinthians, many of whom were weak and sickly, and some died? What kind of word would they give to Ananias and Sapphira? Or Job, who would tell them, *“What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”* If in this saying Job did not sin *“with his lips”* (Job 2:10), what will be charged against those who have taught God’s people to disassociate trouble from God?

“An Hour”

judgments that cannot be reversed, and for which no intercession can be effective (Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11). It was just such a judgment against Jerusalem that moved the Lord Jesus to tears as He looked upon that city, where God has placed His name (Lk 19:41-44).

Daniel also sensed his own inability, yet knew this spoke of a most sever judgment. It was all difficult for his spirit to bear – but he bore it by faith *“for an hour.”* He was not crushed beneath its weight, but rose to minister in behalf of his God.

A Note on Sensitivity

Something should be said about spiritual sensitivity – about being touched to the core of our being with the revelations of the Almighty. On another occasion, after receiving a revelation from God, Daniel “fainted, and was sick certain days” (Dan 8:27). Of that occasion he said, “Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart” (Dan 7:28).

On another occasion he confessed, “Therefore I was left alone, and saw this

When Ezra heard about abominations being committed among the Israelites he said, “And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.” (Ezra 9:3).

David said, “My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments” (Psa 119:120).

Jeremiah said, “Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome,

my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (Rev 10:9-11).

Enough cannot be said about the necessity of a generation of sensitive hearts who tremble at the Word of the Lord, and are effected by the message they are given to proclaim.

TROUBLING THOUGHTS

“. . . and his thoughts troubled him.” Other versions read, “his thoughts alarmed him,”^{NASB} “his thoughts terrified him,”^{NIV} and “aghast at the meaning of the dream.”^{NLT} We do not know precisely when Daniel received a understanding of this dream. It may have been as it was being related to him, or as he thought upon it during that perplexing hour. At any rate, when it became clear to him what God was saying in the king’s dream, it was very “troubling” to him. This was not troubling in the sense of refusing to believe, but in the sense Mary was “troubled” when told she heard a holy angel say, “Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28-29).

A Telling Sign

A confrontation with the mighty God of heaven will dissolve casualness and indifference. If there is one telling sign of the spiritual poverty of our times, it is the indifferent and unaffected spirit that is found in the churches. We know that vast numbers of professed Christians remain completely unaware of God because of the way they conduct their lives. Their penchant for brevity, religious froth, and entertainment testify to the deadness of their spirit. It is a most serious situation. Casual souls have either not seen anything, or have seen it and are ignorant of what it was.

SOMETHING SHOULD BE SAID ABOUT SPIRITUAL SENSITIVITY — ABOUT BEING TOUCHED TO THE CORE OF OUR BEING WITH THE REVELATIONS OF THE ALMIGHTY.

great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength” (Dan 10:8). Later he confessed, “O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me” (Dan 10:16-17).

After receiving a revelation of the coming Babylonian captivity, Habakkuk was duly impressed and sensitive. He said, “When I heard, my belly trembled: my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops” (Hab 3:16).

because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness” (Jer 23:9).

Ezekiel testified, “So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me” (Ezek 3:14).

When John the beloved heard the voice of the Lord on Patmos, and turned to see him, he said, “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.” (Rev 1:17). When recounting how he was called to testify before the nations in his old age, he wrote, “And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in

THE DREAM IS TO YOUR ENEMIES

“^{19b} The king spake, and said, Belshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them

that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.” The troubled spirit of Daniel is as evident to Nebuchadnezzar as Nehemiah’s sadness was to Artaxerxes

(Neh 2:1-2). As in the case of Nehemiah, this indicates this was not Daniel’s normal manner. **He did not carry about the look of perplexity and weight that some are wont to do.**

God Reveals A Judgment Against the King He Called “My Servant,” by Given O. Blakely

Those who carry their feelings about on their shirt sleeves for all to see, do themselves a great disservice. They become incapable of reflecting something momentous. It is highly unlikely that such people will ever be asked to give an answer for the hope that is within them (1 Pet 3:15). They seem to be troubled and in a crisis all of the time. It was not so with Daniel. He was therefore able to minister in the name of the Lord when he was duly impressed with something.

DO NOT LET IT TROUBLE YOU

“Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. It is at once apparent that the king does not see what Daniel sees. Daniel is troubled because of what he sees. Not only does he see it, it relates to the one before whom he stands, and he obliged by his faith to tell it. It was the import of the dream that now troubled Daniel. **He took no delight in the rendering of harsh judgment from the Lord.**

I do not doubt that the king thought Daniel was troubled at the thought of what the king might do to him. But nothing could be further from the truth. Daniel did not live in the fear of the

king, but in the fear of the Lord, which *“is clean, enduring forever”* (Psa 19:9).

FOR YOUR ENEMIES

“My lord, the dream be to them

Other versions clarify this. *“My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!”*^{NKJV} *“My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you, and its*

IN HIS DEEP RESPECT FOR THE KING, WHOM HE KNEW GOD HAD SET UP, HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED HIS ENEMIES RECEIVE SUCH A JUDGMENT RATHER THAN NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.” The wording here is a bit clumsy, leaving the surface impression that the word was not for the king at all. We know from the following verses, however, that this word was, indeed, for Nebuchadnezzar. The judgment of which it speaks would happen to him, and him alone. What, then, do these words mean?

This was an expression of Daniel’s personal desire. From a human point of view, he wished this spoke of judgment against the king’s enemies instead of him.

interpretation to your adversaries!”^{NASB} and *“Oh, how I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies, my lord, and not to you!”*^{NLT} This was another way of saying, *“O king, live forever”* (6:11). In his deep respect for the king, whom he knew God had set up, he would have preferred his enemies receive such a judgment rather than Nebuchadnezzar.

Yet, he rises above personal feelings, and declares the word of the Lord. That word will be against Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel will speak it.

YOU ARE THE TREE

“²⁰ The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; ²¹ Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: ²² It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.”

The faith of the prophet rises to its full height as he now addresses the king. **He will speak the Word of the Lord, even if it is bitter in his belly.**

In this, he takes his place beside Ezekiel and John who had precisely the

same experience: they spoke a message that was bitter in their belly, bringing personal discomfort of soul.

Ezekiel said of the book he was given to it, *“And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe”* (Ezek 2:10). When the Spirit carried him away, Ezekiel said, *“So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me”* (Ezek 3:14).

John was also given a book to eat, or a message to tell. Here is what he said of the event. *“And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly*

bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (Rev 10:9-11).

You will never find a prophet or Apostle growing so accustomed to foretelling punishment that he can speak easily about it. Jeremiah wept, his eyes overflowing with rivers of tears, because of the grievous things he had to declare (Jer 9:1). Now, with sorrow of heart, Daniel must announce a Divine judgment against the king.

LEAVING NO DOUBT

Daniel leaves no doubt about this. He recounts the dream point by point,

leaving nothing out. **Nebuchadnezzar must not get the impression that only a part of this dream applies to him, or that it is the announcement of a principle which may or may not apply to him.** Thus Daniel declares the tree, with its growth, strength, and height. He recalls how it was visible to all who were in the earth. Its leaves were pleasant to look upon, and its fruit was abundant. It provided nourishment for all. The beasts of the field remained under it, protected by its shade and nourished by its food. The birds of the air also found a

habitation there, making it their home.

IT IS YOU

“It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.” This, then, was a vivid picture of the unparalleled prosperity and success of Nebuchadnezzar. He himself was the prosperous tree. As has already been declared, **God Almighty had put him in that position, giving him all of his power, and handing over to him the**

kingdoms of the world. That is the singular reason for his growth, strength, greatness, and influence.

In this awful announcement, we see that while Daniel respected the king, he feared the Lord. Thus he was compelled to tell him all the truth. I must also remind you once again that this is Nebuchadnezzar’s proclamation to the world. **By declaring these details, he is showing his demise was not owing to a dreadful curse placed upon him by an angry Daniel.**

SEVEN YEARS WITH THE BEASTS

“²³ And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; ²⁴ This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king.”

- ▶ **Divine Intervention.** A watcher and holy one came down from heaven.
- ▶ **Benefits terminated.** The watcher said to hew down the tree and destroy it.
- ▶ **Hope remains.** The stump with its roots were to remain in the earth.
- ▶ **Protection.** A band of iron and brass were to be placed around the stump.
- ▶ **Isolation.** The stump was to remain in the open field, in the tender grass.

for seven years.

THIS IS THE DECREE

“This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king.” Remember, this is a “decree,” not merely something the Omniscient God saw coming in the future. God is not a prognosticator or a fortune teller, but the “Governor among the nations.” He elevates men to places of rulership, and puts them down – all at His will, and without consultation with men.

The dream, then, is the announcement of a judgment God has determined upon Nebuchadnezzar. It is as sure as the judgment pronounced upon Adam and Eve (Gen 3:16-19), the world of Noah’s day (6:3; 6:17), and Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:13). It was as certain as the judgment of Tyre (Isa 23:1), the Babylonian captivity (Isa 39:6), and the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk 19:43-44).

What is determined in heaven cannot be thwarted by those on earth. Nor, indeed can it be diverted by Satan and his hosts.

Divine determinations are not always made known to men. Nevertheless, epochal changes among men, whether the establishment or demise of powers, are to be traced back to heaven. In every sense, it is God with whom men have to do (Heb 4:13)!

THE DREAM, THEN, IS THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A JUDGMENT GOD HAS DETERMINED UPON NEBUCHADNEZZAR. IT IS AS SURE AS THE JUDGMENT PRONOUNCED UPON ADAM AND EVE

Again, Daniel recounts every detail of the dream, leaving nothing out. The king must not get the impression this is a contrived message, or that Daniel is speaking of some vague generalities. The point is to bring understanding to the king and world. Thus he mentions what the king himself had seen. Allow me to briefly recount those things once again.

- ▶ **Sustenance.** The dew of heaven would drench the stump.
- ▶ **Humiliation.** The person represented by this tree would have his portion with the beasts of the field.
- ▶ **Duration.** The judgment would last

UNTIL YOU KNOW

“²⁵ That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.”

If you have ever been tempted to think God has no dealings with the heathen, forever put that imagination away from you. **There are no nations or men that are not answerable to God, or of whom God does not take account.** Nebuchadnezzar was not in covenant with God, yet was accountable to Him. He was not a worshiper of God, yet was judged by Him. I say these things because some affirm the First Covenant indicated God had no dealings with anyone other than Israel. Such sophists declare the Law was for no one except Israel – even though the Spirit says it was given that *“every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God”* (Rom 3:19). Such reasoning has no place among people of faith. Here is a heavenly decree passed against a Babylonian king who had other gods, and made no pretense of being subject to God.

DRIVEN FROM MEN

“That they shall drive thee from men . . .” Other versions read, *“You will be driven away from people,”* ^{NIV} *“they shall cast thee out from among men,”* ^{DOUAY} and *“You will be driven from human society.”* ^{NLT} God would make Nebuchadnezzar unsuitable to dwell among men – like the Gadarene demoniac (Matt 8:28). The king would be, so to speak, dehumanized – **by God!** His presence would be so intolerable he would be driven from society like a wild and unruly beast.

The thought has occurred to me that men have reason to be thankful this is not the normal manner in which God works. Notwithstanding, the record has been given to us in order that we might know this option is at His disposal.

MADE TO EAT GRASS

“ . . . and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven . . .” Note the finality of this judgment. This is not something that might happen – it **WILL** take place. There was coming a time when Nebuchadnezzar would no longer eat the dainties of the king’s table, partaking of royal fare (Dan 1:5). Instead, he would graze with the oxen, competing for the grass of the field.

You see with what extreme shame God can judge a person. It would have been severe enough, in some people’s eyes,

God with respect, heartily embracing it. God can cause them to feed on the withering grass of lies, and then condemn them because they did so. If men doubt this, they are standing in a jeopardy far more serious than the judgment that is being pronounced upon Nebuchadnezzar.

The dew of heaven would settle upon the humiliated Nebuchadnezzar. There would be no shelter for him during the cool of the night or the blast of the noon day sun.

SEVEN TIMES

“ . . . and seven times shall pass over thee . . .” This judgment was not a

IF YOU HAVE EVER BEEN TEMPTED TO THINK GOD HAS NO DEALINGS WITH THE HEATHEN, FOREVER PUT THAT IMAGINATION AWAY FROM YOU. THERE ARE NO NATIONS OR MEN THAT ARE NOT ANSWERABLE TO GOD, OR OF WHOM GOD DOES NOT TAKE ACCOUNT.

to have the kingdom taken from Nebuchadnezzar, like it was ripped from king Saul. But this king would be **MADE** to eat grass, whether he thought such a thing possible or not. God could so change his appetite that he actually craved grass, and thought it to be his proper food.

Right here, it would be beneficial to mention how God can send such strong delusion to people that they will believe a lie. In truth, the Spirit witnesses that the Lord does, in fact, do this wherever men do not receive a love for the truth. *“And for this cause [because they received not the love of the truth, v 11] God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (2 Th 2:12).

Men do well to treat the truth of

brief one. It would not last for three days, like the blindness of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:9). It would not last three days like the grievous pestilence God sent upon Israel when David numbered them (2 Sam 24:10-15). It would not even last three years and six months like the drought of Elijah’s day (James 5:17). This would last seven long years. Seven years he would not have the mind of a man, but one of a beast. Seven years he would eat the grass of the field. Seven years he would have no place among men. Seven years he would be drenched with the dew of heaven.

Truly, *“the way of transgressors is hard”* (Prov 13:15), and *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God”* (Heb 10:31). This is an aspect of the fear of the Lord that is scarcely known among the churches of our land.

UNTIL YOU KNOW

“ . . . till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.” From one point of view, the duration of this judgment would be seven years. From another, it would be **until** he knew something of critical importance. “. . . until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.”^{NASB} Other versions read, “until you acknowledge,”^{NIV} “until you have learned,”^{NRSV} and “til you are certain.”^{BBE} Both of these objectives will be met.

One might well ask, “How important is it that a person learns this?” This would be an appropriate question to ask Nebuchadnezzar. I am quite sure he would tell you it was not an optional bit of Bible knowledge. **Yet, I fear there are multitudes in the church who presently know even less about this matter than Nebuchadnezzar learned in a field of grass!** I can tell you that in all of my Christian education, I heard precious little on this subject. Those who did speak about it were generally viewed as “Calvinists,” and their

thoughts were forthwith dismissed as worthless.

Better to thrust your fingers into your ears when people like that spew their theological venom on you. **I am sure Nebuchadnezzar will publically judge them on the day of judgment.** It will be similar to the Queen of Sheba, who will speak to those who did not extend themselves to hear the truth of the Gospel, or Nineveh, who repented after hearing one negative sermon (Matt 12:41-42). It is better to learn from this text!

THY KINGDOM SHALL BE SURE

“ ²⁶And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.” The judgment of the king is harsh, but it is mingled with mercy. The words of Habakkuk the prophet come to mind. “O

shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mat 23:39). Thank God for His mercy!

LEAVE THE STUMP AND THE ROOTS

“And whereas they commanded to

Another king would not be set up in his place. When restored to him, the kingdom would be firm and stable.

AFTER YOU KNOW

“ . . . after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.” This was the limiting factor. As soon as this was known, as God intended for it to be known, the judgment would cease. Seeing it took seven years for this to be learned, it is apparent that acknowledging this was attended with considerable difficulty.

Now, Nebuchadnezzar would not actually learn this in the field, for there he had the heart of a beast, not that of a man. **However, God knew when sufficient time had passed so that, given his right mind, the king would instantly confess the heavens rule.** At that precise moment, he would again receive his right mind.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S KINGDOM WOULD NOT FALL APART DURING HIS ABSENCE. FURTHER, IT WOULD EVENTUALLY BE RESTORED TO HIM. THE LORD WOULD NOT INSTANTLY SLAY NEBUCHADNEZZAR AS HE DID HEROD. NOR WOULD HE PERMANENTLY DEPOSE HIM AS HE DID SAUL. THE KING WOULD NOT DIE FROM THIS JUDGMENT LIKE ASA, AND HIS KINGDOM WOULD NOT DEGENERATE TO A UNRECOVERABLE STATE.

Once again, I want to draw to your attention how little the matter Nebuchadnezzar was required to know, is acknowledged in our time. **Every** time you hear someone say they are angry with God, you are hearing a confession that this truth is not known. When some soul asks “Where was God?” when this or that happened, you have heard the expression of someone who does not know “*the heavens do rule.*” Every person who refuses to obey God, balks at His commandments, or rejects His direction, does not know “*the heavens do rule.*” That is a most serious condition!

LORD . . . in wrath remember mercy” (Hab 3:2). Here, the mercy of God is made known. The judgment, while lengthy, would have a merciful conclusion. This too is an aspect of Divine judgment that is often made known. The Babylonian captivity lasted seventy years, and then it ended (Dan 9:2-3). After being judged by God, Manasseh had his kingdom restored (2 Chron 33:13). Of the fierce judgment of Jerusalem Jesus said, “*Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*” (Luke 21:24). And again, “*For I say unto you, Ye*

leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee . . .” Here is the meaning of the stump remaining in the ground, banded with iron and brass, and sustained by the dew of heaven. Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom would not fall apart during his absence. Further, it would eventually be restored to him. The Lord would not instantly slay Nebuchadnezzar as He did Herod. Nor would He permanently depose him as He did Saul. The king would not die from this judgment like Asa, and his kingdom would not degenerate to an unrecoverable state.

God Reveals A Judgment Against the King He Called “My Servant,” by Given O. Blakely

It is possible to so effectively learn from this text that we never again doubt the fact that *“the heavens to rule.”* They do not

monitor, they rule! They do not suggest, they rule! They do not merely observe, they rule! That rule can be for us or against us. It

can be to establish us or to bring us down. In view of this, *“Humble yourselves in the sight of God”* (James 4:10).

BREAK OFF THY SINS

“27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.”

Now, in the true spirit of a prophet, Daniel pleads with the king. He exhorts him to receive what he says to him. He urges him to cease sinning by devoting himself to righteousness. He even holds out a word of hope. Daniel knows how to *“handle the Word of truth”* (2 Tim 2:15). He knows how to apply the message, using it as a basis for godly pleading. There are surely valuable lessons to be learned in his words.

ACCEPT THE COUNSEL

“Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee” Other versions read, *“let my advice be acceptable to you,”* ^{NKJV} and *“may my advice be pleasing to you.”* ^{NASB}

This is Daniel’s personal advice to the king. It is not included in the interpretation of the dream, but is the spiritually logical conclusion to it. Daniel knows how to use the Word of God. He has understanding of the implications of Divine judgment, and knows what results they should produce. He now pleads for the king to accept what he is about to say. He is speaking out of a genuine concern for the king, as well as a profound love for God.

The art of pleading with people after a godly manner is not common in our time. Salesmanship seems to have upstaged exhortation, admonition, and reasoning. You may recall that Paul *“reasoned”* with Felix *“of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come”* (Acts 24:25). Joshua pressed the people to make a decision. If it did not seem appropriate to them to serve the God of Abraham, then he pressed them to choose that very

day which idol they would serve. *“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”* (Josh 24:15). Elijah did the same thing, asking the people why they hesitated between two opinions. *“How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.”* (1 Ki 18:21).

There is room for decided improvement in this area. **Too often men and women are left to drown in**

told one blind man He healed, *“sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee”* (John 5:14). He said to the woman taken in adultery, *“Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more”* (John 8:11). Weak believers in Ephesus who were stealing were admonished, *“steal no more”* (Eph 4:28).

Refraining from sin requires spiritual violence: *“break off thy sins,”* or *“break away now from your sins.”* The church of our day needs to hear admonitions like this frequently and in power. If Nebuchadnezzar was not justified in continuing in sin, how much more is this true of those living in the great day of salvation.

TOO OFTEN MEN AND WOMEN ARE LEFT TO DROWN IN THEIR OWN SURMISING, RATHER THAN BEING URGED TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT. IT IS PROPER TO MOVE PEOPLE TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT.

their own surmising, rather than being urged to do what is right. It is proper to move people to do what is right. Our text is an excellent example of this.

BREAK OFF YOUR SINS

“ . . . and break off thy sins” Other versions read, *“break away now from your sins,”* ^{NASB} *“Renounce your sins,”* ^{NIV} *“atone for your sins,”* ^{NRSV} and *“stop sinning.”* ^{NLT}

The words are strong, and thus they should be. No person living in sin ought to be left comfortable in it. The church is told, *“Awake to righteousness, and sin not”* (1 Cor 15:34). *“Be angry, and sin not”* (Eph 4:26). *“I write unto you that ye sin not”* (1 John 2:1). Jesus

BY RIGHTEOUSNESS

“ . . . by righteousness, and thine iniquities” The way to separate from sin involves more than simply refraining from transgression. There is to be a corresponding involvement in and commitment to righteousness. Thus Daniel calls upon Nebuchadnezzar to quit sinning by giving himself to righteousness. He more precisely states how to accomplish this in the next phrase.

SHOWING MERCY TO THE POOR

“ . . . by showing mercy to the poor” Other versions read, *“by being kind to the oppressed,”* ^{NIV} and *“by pitying the poor.”* ^{YLT} The indications are that the great architectural wonders of Babylon were built by poor and oppressed people –

like Egypt used the poor Israelites to build “*Pitham and Raamses*” (Ex 1:11).

We know from Scripture that God

and following dealings with His people. Nebuchadnezzar’s sins could be broken off by him showing mercy and kindness toward the poor. We should not be

tranquility might very well occur.

This is precisely what God did for Solomon, even though he was not worthy of such consideration. After telling Solomon the kingdom was doing to be taken from him, the Lord added, “*Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father’s sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son*” (1 Ki 11:12).

A similar thing happened to Hezekiah, who did conduct himself more honorably in the closing of his life than Solomon. When told of the Babylonian captivity, it was made clear to Hezekiah that it would not occur in his days. He responded, “*Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?*” (2 Ki 20:19).

Thus Daniel urges Nebuchadnezzar to change the way in which he lived, thereby opening the door for a few more tranquil and peaceful years. This is a marvelous display of mercy!

We should learn from this that God is not eager to judge, and will make provision for men to change their ways. The Lord even said to Cain, “*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?*” (Gen 4:7). Let all take these things to heart.

THUS DANIEL URGES NEBUCHADBEZZAR TO CHANGE THE WAY IN WHICH HE LIVED, THEREBY OPENING THE DOOR FOR A FEW MORE TRANQUIL AND PEACEFUL YEARS. THIS IS A MARVELOUS DISPLAY OF MERCY!

has a particular regard for the poor. Under the Law, the Israelites were commanded to let their fields, vineyards, and olive yards lie idle every seventh year so the poor could eat from them (Ex 23:11). When they harvested their crops, they were to leave the corners of their fields for the poor to harvest (Lev 19:9-10). Jesus counseled a rich young ruler, “*If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me*” (Mat 19:21). The only counsel that James, Cephas, and John gave to Paul and Barnabas was, “*remember the poor*” (Gal 2:10).

Thus, Daniel’s counsel was in complete harmony with God’s previous

surprised by this, for God honored Cornelius by opening the door of faith to him because of his prayers and alms (Acts 10:1-4). Acts of kindness are not despised in the heavenly chambers. For some, that introduces problems. For others it moves them to holy activity.

TRANQUILITY LENGTHENED

“*. . . if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.*” An element of hope is seen here, and a precious one at that. Other versions read, “*Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity,*”^{NKJV} and “*so that the time of your well-being may be longer.*”^{BBE} He does not say the judgment will not happen, but that it might very well be postponed, or delayed for a season. A few more years of

IT CAME TO PASS

“²⁸ *All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.*” In confirmation of the Word of the Lord, the decree of the watchers, and the word of the holy ones, all of these things came upon king Nebuchadnezzar. They were fulfilled to the finest and most exacting detail. All of this will be made known in the passage that follows.

Thus we learn that “*Where the word of a King is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?*” (Eccl 8:4). Again it is written, “*Behold, He taketh away, who can Hinder Him? who will say unto Him, What doest Thou?*” (Job 9:12). And again, “*If He cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder Him?*” (Job 11:10).

Let us hear the testimony of God Himself. “*Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*” (Isa 46:10). This is all confirmed in Nebuchadnezzar.

CONCLUSION

The Lord said of evil Pharaoh, “*And in very deed for this cause have I*

raised thee up, for to show in thee My power; and that My name may be

declared throughout all the earth” (Ex 9:16). That surely came to pass. Who

God Reveals A Judgment Against the King He Called “My Servant,” by Given O. Blakely

in all the world has not heard of the overthrow of Pharaoh and his armies? Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law to Moses heard (Ex 18:1). In Jericho, Rahab said they had heard (Josh 2:10). The inhabitants of Gibeon said they had heard (Josh 9:9). Balak, king of the Moabites, said he had heard (Num 22:5). Indeed, Divine objectives were realized.

Now, just that surely, God has raised up Nebuchadnezzar to testify of God's greatness to the nations. In our text, he had published a proclamation to all nations, testifying to the manner in which God worked with him. They learned that God raises up kings, and brings them down at will. He chastens, and even recovers them. He can drive them out from among

men, and bring them back again. He can make them great or humiliate them. He is "the Most High God," and has demonstrated Himself to be so.

This is a God you can trust – yea, must trust! It is one who can hold you up, strengthen you, guide you, and cause you to stand. Can you believe that?

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 7/26/2002. We will continue in our overview of Daniel, covering verses 29-37 of the fourth chapter. The lesson is titled, **"NEBUCHADNEZZAR FILLED WITH PRIDE, THEN HUMBLLED."** Although God gave Nebuchadnezzar ALL of his power and glory, and through Daniel informed him of it, yet the king was filled with pride, thinking his own wisdom and strength made him great. God will not overlook such insolence. Because he was an unparalleled king, he will be judged with an unparalleled judgment. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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