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DANIEL

5. A DESPOT DETHRONED

Confident of Babylon's invincibility, Nebuchadnezzar lays plans for an everlasting kingdom, but how secure is his throne?

POINTS TO LOOK FOR

- Higher powers alter the course of history.
- Shock treatment changes Nebuchadnezzar.
- Good comes from disaster.
- The king of Babylon writes a section of the Bible.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER FOUR

Twenty, thirty, or even more years could have passed since the drama of the fiery furnace. During this time Daniel and his three friends had continued to hold high positions in the government of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar's prestige and power had grown with each passing year. His fame as a builder and military commander had spread far and wide throughout the ancient world. Monuments found in Iraq and Lebanon still bear his name today.



Nebuchadnezzar dreams a second time

God had tried to reach Nebuchadnezzar's conscience through the image dream and the miraculous rescue of the three Hebrews from the furnace. But the king had not fully responded. It seems that he had defeated all his enemies except the worst - himself - his own pride!

Turn to Daniel 4 for the story of his fall.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SECOND DREAM

QUESTION 1 (Daniel 4:1-5)

God gave Nebuchadnezzar a second dream which he could not under-

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stand. What effect did this dream have upon him?

"I saw a dream which made me _____ ." (verse 5)

Filled with fear, Nebuchadnezzar again sent for his wise men - the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. But, like the astrologers who tried to explain the first dream, they hadn't the slightest idea as to what it meant. At last Daniel entered the audience chamber.

QUESTION 2 (Daniel 4:6-9)

What did Nebuchadnezzar say distinguished Daniel from the other wise men?

"In him is the _____ of the Holy God." (verse 8)

Since Daniel was titled "chief of the magicians" (Daniel 4:9), it was his right to have first interview with the king, but he chose to be last. Why? Did he want Nebuchadnezzar to learn once and for all that there was no benefit in consulting his astrologers? They merely consulted the stars. Didn't God create the stars? Then why not consult God?

As Daniel approached Nebuchadnezzar, neither king nor prophet could have realised the great shock that was in store for them both.

THE DREAM**QUESTION 3** (Daniel 4:10-17)

In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a great tree. Can you picture it? So tall and magnificent!



What happened to the tree?

- (a) A "watcher" from heaven gave the order to _____ down the tree. (verses 13,14)
But the _____ and _____ were to be left in the earth. (verse 15)

- (b) What details of the dream show that the tree was symbolic of some particular man?

The "heart of man" was to be changed to the "heart of an _____". (verse 16)

- (c) For how long was this change to last?

For _____ times, or seven _____. (See margin of KJV or footnote of NKJV – verse 16)

- (d) For what purpose was the dream given?

To let the people know that "the Most High _____ in the kingdom of men." (verse 17)



Daniel interprets the dream for King Nebuchadnezzar

B. TRAGIC NEWS FOR NEBUCHADNEZZAR

When Daniel understood the dream, he was greatly troubled. For a while he could not speak. The news was bad! But after the king had urged him to tell all, Daniel faithfully revealed the terrible truth.

QUESTION 4 (Daniel 4:20-22)

Which man did Daniel say the tree represented?

"It is _____, oh king." (verse 22)

QUESTION 5 (Daniel 4:23-25)

The cutting down of the tree meant Nebuchadnezzar's fall. For how long was he to be forced from his throne?

"And _____ times (years) shall pass over you." (verse 25)

The length of Nebuchadnezzar's absence from the throne is given on

Exhibit 3

THE NEW PERSON

What made the difference to Nebuchadnezzar? One of God's richest promises was fulfilled in his life - "I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you." (Ezekiel 36:26, page 841) A "new heart" means new desires, an inner trust in God; pleasure in obeying His commandments. It takes God's Spirit, and often some very hard experiences, to change a person's heart from pride to humility.

Why do we all need a new heart? Because, in a way we are all "little kings of Babylon" by nature. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23, page 1087) This is the reason why Jesus said: "You must be born again." (John 3:7, page 1027) That is, become a new person at heart, and endeavour to live that way.

Such a change brings a new power to our lives. Control of our lives is passed from "self" to Christ. Self comes off the throne and Christ goes on. There's a cross and a throne in every heart. A throne for Christ and a cross for self (Galatians 2:20, page 1121). This great exchange is renewed day by day. It gives us inner strength (Philippians 4:13, page 1131). "Ask and it shall be given you," said Jesus (Luke 11:9, page 1006) Peace is experienced when we receive the Prince of Peace.

Exhibit 2**MODERN DISCOVERIES**

Thousands of bricks unearthed from Babylon's ruins have been found inscribed with Nebuchadnezzar's name. Because there was no stone on the broad plains around Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar set up the greatest brick-making industry of his time and became world-renowned as a builder.

Among his most outstanding building achievements were:

1. THE "HANGING GARDENS OF BABYLON"

named as one of the "seven wonders of the world".

Nebuchadnezzar built them to please his wife, Amuhea, daughter of Cyaxeres the Mede, to help her overcome her homesickness for her beloved mountains.

2. THE BEAUTIFUL "ISHTAR GATE"

with its cedar of Lebanon doors and coloured enamel tiled bulls and dragons. The ruins of this gate were unearthed by Robert Koldewey and taken to Germany just before the First World War. The Ishtar gate is housed in the Berlin Museum today.

3. THE GREAT ZIGGURAT (TEMPLE-TOWER)

of E-Temen-Ana-Ki, which His father, Nabopolassar, had commenced.

4. ELABORATE QUAYS

along the River Euphrates, where it flowed through the city. Nebuchadnezzar also strengthened the walls of Babylon and dug and lined moats to strengthen the city's fortifications.

5. THE "NEW PALACE"

on which he may have stood when boasting, "Is not this the great Babylon which I have built?"

Charles Boutflower says of Nebuchadnezzar, "He seems to have been possessed with a perfect rage for building." Nebuchadnezzar himself said about his building craze, "My heart compelled me."

four occasions as "Seven times". (verses 16, 23, 25, 32) The NKJV footnote says: "Possibly seven Years." While the Aramaic word here, ID-DAN, may refer to any "season" or "appointed time," it is also used for a specific period of one "year". This appears to be it's meaning in Daniel 4. the Septuagint (Ancient Greek) translation reads "Seven years". See also the KJV marginal readings for Daniel 11:13 ("After" the end of "times", even "Years").

READ EXHIBIT 1:**WHY GOD USED A TREE AS A SYMBOL OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR****C. BETTER NEWS****QUESTION 6** (Daniel 4:25, page 860)

What would bring about the end of Nebuchadnezzar's banishment from the throne?

"Till you _____ that the _____ rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." (verse 25)

QUESTION 7 (Daniel 4:26)

What part of the dream assured Nebuchadnezzar that he would be restored to his throne?

"And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the _____ and _____ of the tree, your _____ shall be assured to you." (verse 26)



Daniel's deep concern for the king is shown in verse 27. He urged Nebuchadnezzar to break off his sins and show mercy to the poor. By changing his ways, the king might avert the dire troubles that were predicted to overtake him. All God's warnings and promises are conditional. Their fulfillment depends upon man's response.

The Bible repeatedly calls for rulers and subjects to be just; to be the protectors of “little people” and the poor. It warns against corruption and oppression and holds rulers responsible to God for upholding equity and justice.

Strange to say, Nebuchadnezzar didn't do a thing about Daniel's warning. Perhaps he told himself, “It can't happen to me!” “Look how powerful I am!” “Who could drive me away from *my* throne?” “Am I not the great Nebuchadnezzar – the king of kings?” “Isn't my Babylon the world's super power?” “Isn't my city eternal?” “Haven't I defeated oppressive rulers and made life better for the poor?” (Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions show that he held such a high opinion of himself.)



With the passing of time he seemed to forget about the dream and his old pride fully returned. He believed he had every reason to be proud.

Modern discoveries reveal that he was, in fact, one of the world's greatest builders. Humanly speaking, Nebuchadnezzar did have something to boast about.

READ EXHIBIT 2: MODERN DISCOVERIES

D. THE PROPHECY IS FULFILLED

QUESTION 8 (Daniel 4:28-30)

Just twelve months after Daniel's warning, what boastful words came from the king's lips?

"The king spoke, saying, 'Is not this great _____, that I

Exhibit 1

WHY GOD USED A TREE AS A SYMBOL OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Nebuchadnezzar had a great admiration for trees, especially the cedars of Lebanon. He made repeated expeditions into Lebanon's forests to cut large beams for his building projects.

One of his inscriptions discovered in Lebanon, states that his kingdom was like a tree. The inscription says:

"Under her everlasting shadow I gathered all men in peace. A reign of abundance, years of plenty, I caused to be in my land." - Wady Brissa Inscription B, Column VIII, 34

In the longest of all his inscriptions in the Wady Brissa, Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as the royal woodcutter. He tells how, during his invasion of Palestine, he cut a road up "the cedar mountains" into the "luxuriant" and "fragrant" forest of Marduk (his principal god). With ceremonially "clean hands" he "cut down ... mighty cedars, tall and strong, of costly value". He needed these for the "adornment" of his buildings in Babylon.

On one of his inscriptions, the king is pictured grasping a tree with his left hand while he fells it with an axe in his right hand. Alongside the picture are the words, "King Nebuchadnezzar fells with his own hand a cedar of Lebanon." Elsewhere he prays to Marduk, "May my woodcutting prosper."

In view of all this, the tragic command in his dream, "Chop down the tree", (Daniel 4:14) would have had a telling impact upon Nebuchadnezzar.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS TO THINK THROUGH

1. Why did God give Nebuchadnezzar this dream as long as one year before it was fulfilled?
2. Why is it usually difficult for the rich and mighty to humble themselves before God?
3. Are ordinary people much different?

REVIEW QUIZ

Fill in the blank spaces by selecting words from this list:

seven	Holy	stump	ten	Seeds
image	days	roots	tree	years
after	Spirit	before		

1. The king of Babylon recognised that Daniel had the _____ with him.
2. In this prophetic dream the king was represented as a _____.
3. The expression "seven times" means seven _____.
4. The fact that the king was to be restored to the throne of Babylon was represented in the dream by the _____ and _____ being left in the earth.
5. The king wrote the record of the dream and its consequences _____ his years of insanity.

have built for a royal dwelling by _____ mighty power and for the honour of _____ majesty?" (verse 30)

QUESTION 9 (Daniel 4:31-33, page 861)

Even while the king was speaking, a voice from heaven pronounced - "Nebuchadnezzar - the kingdom has departed from you!" At this, Nebuchadnezzar became insane and was driven from his throne.

Try giving a description of his condition during the seven years he spent in the open fields, what he looked like, and what he did.

NOTE: An unusual fragment of a tablet from Babylon, now in the British Museum, was published in 1975. It is considered possible that it refers to Nebuchadnezzar's mental illness. The inscription says, "life appeared of no value to" him, "he does not show love to son and daughter", and "family and clan do not exist" for him any longer. (A K Grayson, Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts, Toronto, 1975, pages 88-92)



Nebuchadnezzar went mad for seven years and ate grass. After this time, Nebuchadnezzar realized his mistake

The "watchers and the holy ones" mentioned in verses 13, 17, 21, 31 who pronounced judgement upon Nebuchadnezzar were undoubtedly angelic messengers of God. We will find out more about them in Daniel 6, 8, and 10.

E. THE KING RESTORED

QUESTION 10 (Daniel 4:36)

At the end of the seven years, did God keep the promise He had made to Nebuchadnezzar in the dream? (see verse 26)

YES/ NO/ ONLY PARTLY (circle your answer)

QUESTION 11 (Read Daniel 4:34-37)

Did Nebuchadnezzar change his attitude toward God? Had his pride and arrogance now gone?

YES / NO / ONLY PARTLY (circle your answer)

QUESTION 12 (Daniel 4:1,2,37)

Do you think the king had a genuine change of heart? Notice what he said after returning to his throne.

"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, _____ and extol and honour the _____ of _____, all of His works are truth and His ways are justice. And those who walk in _____ He is able to put down." (verse 37)



Nebuchadnezzar finally acknowledges God as the source of all life and that He alone is worthy of worship

THINK THE FOLLOWING FACTS THROUGH

Compare what Nebuchadnezzar said about God after the image-dream and after the miracle of the fiery furnace, with what he said after his seven years' madness.

- (a) After the image-dream he said:
 "God is the God of Gods"
 "Lord of kings"
 "a revealer of secrets"
- (b) After the fiery furnace experience he said:
 "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego."
 "No other god can deliver like this."

QUESTION 13 (Daniel 4:34-37)

By comparison, what did Nebuchadnezzar say after his restoration from the seven years of insanity?

ANSWER: _____

Nebuchadnezzar was so moved by his experience that he wrote it out for everybody to read, and here it is in the Bible today. Think of it! The king of Babylon humbly writing a section of the Bible and giving God all the praise! And this was the once-proud lord who tried to take the place of God, forcing people to worship according to his own will – acting as if he were God-on-earth.

QUESTION 14

Can you think of one or two appealing and important things we can learn about God from Nebuchadnezzar's experience?

ANSWER: _____

READ EXHIBIT 3: Page 13*THE NEW PERSON*