

EXPLANATIONS

1. Explain the probable reason Nebuchadnezzar commanded that all people worship his image.
2. Explain why they had the Hebrew men thrown into the fiery furnace.
3. Explain how the guards were consumed by the fire.
4. Explain the deliverance of the three Hebrew youths.
5. Explain the reaction of Nebuchadnezzar to this miracle.

CHAPTER FOUR

I. DESPOT'S DISGRACE—4:1-37

a. EMPEROR'S EPHEMERAL EXCURSION
AND EDICT

TEXT: 4:1-6

- 1 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you.
- 2 It hath seemed good unto me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God hath wrought toward me.
- 3 How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his domain is from generation to generation.
- 4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace.
- 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid; and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.
- 6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream.

QUERIES

- a. Is it possible that Nebuchadnezzar would make such a humiliating confession?

- b. Was Nebuchadnezzar now converted to the God of Israel?
- c. Why did the king's dream make him afraid?

PARAPHRASE

This is the proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar the king which he sent to the whole world—to people of every nation and language that dwelt in all the earth—May your peace be multiplied. I consider it necessary and proper at this time to publicly announce to you the great and marvelous signs and wonders which the Most High God has done toward me. They were incredible—the miraculous dreams and experiences—surely demonstrating that his kingdom is everlasting and his dominion is over all of mankind forever. I, the great emperor, Nebuchadnezzar, was dwelling in luxury, contentment, safely and secure in my great palace, when one night I had a dream that terrified me and caused me great agitation of soul. So I called in all the wise men of Babylon and ordered that they tell me the meaning of my dream.

COMMENT

v. 1-2 NEBUCHADNEZZAR THE KING, UNTO ALL THE PEOPLES . . . There are many who would deny the historicity of this chapter. Their arguments revolve around two points (a) alleged lack of historical confirmation in records outside the Bible; (b) alleged intrinsic improbability. The critics say (1) other O. T. historical books do not mention the insanity of Nebuchadnezzar (2) there is no record of this event among heathen writers of antiquity (3) Josephus had no information except the O.T. when he wrote of this event (4) Origen and Jerome could find no historical grounds for this event (5) If these things had happened, Nebuchadnezzar would have made sure they were recorded permanently so how come they are absent from Babylonian records? (6) If the record of the event was lost how was the event ever known, recovered and recorded by Daniel?

Let us consider these alleged discrepancies in order: (1) There are thousands of events of, not only Nebuchadnezzar's life, but hundreds of other important persons concerned with Israel which are not recorded in the historical

books of the O.T. None of the books of the O.T. pretend to be complete in every detail even of the history of Israel. An argument from the silence of other O.T. books is no argument at all against the record of Daniel; (2) for that matter, the argument from the silence of profane historians is no argument against the record of Daniel—*only if there were profane records stating that such an event never happened would there be an argument against Daniel.* But, as a matter of fact, there are two historians of antiquity who mention certain events in the life of Nebuchadnezzar which support the historicity of Daniel's record: Berosus and Abydenus. Berosus was a Chaldean, and a priest in the temple of Belus, during the days of Alexander the Great. Abydenus (268 B.C.) was a pupil of Berosus. Berosus wrote three books relative to the history of the Chaldeans, of which only some fragments are preserved in Josephus and Eusebius. Both these writers derived their knowledge from the traditions of the Chaldeans, and both should be regarded as good authorities. Berosus mentions "Nabolassar, king of Babylon and of the Chaldeans." He then mentions the expedition of his son, "Nabuchodonosor" (Nebuchadnezzar), against the Egyptians; the capture of Jerusalem; the burning of the temple; and the captivity of the Jews. After these and other statements about the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar and the magnificence of his capital, Berosus gives the following narrative:

"Nabuchodonosor, after he had begun to build the forementioned wall, fell sick and departed this life when he had reigned forty-three years, whereupon his son, Evil-Merodach, obtained the kingdom."

This quotation may be found in Josephus vs. Apion. It confirms the account of Daniel: (1) in referring to some sickness in the case of Nebuchadnezzar that was unusual which probably preceded, for a considerable time, his death, and, (2) this statement of Berosus accords, in respect to *time*, remarkably with that in Daniel inasmuch as both accounts agree that the sickness occurred after he had built Babylon, and towards the close of his reign.

The other quotation, that of Abydenus, is found in the works of Eusebius:

“After these things (Nebuchadnezzar’s conquests) as it is said by the Chaldeans, having ascended his palace, he was seized by some god, and speaking aloud, he said: ‘I Nebuchadnezzar, O Babylonians, foretell your future calamity, which neither Belus, my ancestor, nor queen Beltis, can persuade the destinies to avert. A Persian mule will come, employing your own divinites as his auxiliaries; and he will impose servitude upon you. His coadjutor will be the Mede, who is the boast of the Assyrians. Would that, before he places my citizens in such a condition, some Charybdis or gulf might swallow him up with utter destruction! Or that, turned in a different direction, he might roam in the desert (where are neither cities, nor footsteps of man, but wild beasts find pasturage, and the birds wander), being there hemmed in by rocks and ravines! May it be my lot to attain to a better end, before such things come into his mind!’ Having uttered this prediction, he forthwith disappeared.”

The points of agreement between Abydenus and Daniel in the matter of the Babylonian’s insanity or sickness are amazing: (1) The sickness or seizure occurred after Nebuchadnezzar’s conquests and sometime before his death; (2) In both Daniel and Abydenus, the king is on the top of his palace; (3) The king was seized by some divinity, (and it is worthy of note that Abydenus does not ascribe the seizure to either an idol or to any god worshipped by the Chaldeans, but to God simply, as to a God that was not known); (4) in the language which Neb. is reported by Abydenus to have used respecting the return of the Persian king after his conquest, there is a remarkable resemblance to what is said in Daniel. How did such a prediction concerning Cyrus come to be attributed to Nebuchadnezzar?—the only reasonable conclusion is that this tradition has its origin from certain factual events involving Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity—thus Daniel’s account and that of Abydenus both

have their origin in a factual event. There are things in both the statements of Berosus and Abydenus which cannot be accounted for except on the assumption of the truth of such an occurrence as that which is stated in the historical record of Daniel.

v. 3 HOW GREAT ARE HIS SIGNS! . . . The destructive critics claim this edict is "historically absurd" because it makes Nebuchadnezzar appear to be too familiar with Biblical phraseology, (cf. Psa. 145:13). However, with the impact of Daniel's extensive influence as third in the kingdom it is neither "absurd" or incredible that the Babylonian king's vocabulary in addressing Daniel's God would have such familiar phrases in it. Furthermore, it is altogether possible that Nebuchadnezzar requested the direct assistance of Daniel in phrasing this edict. Still further, excerpts from the Babylonian psalms and other literature often remind one of Biblical psalms.

This edict sheds interesting light, as Young puts it, "upon the open, magnanimous character of the great king." One thing is evident as the character of Nebuchadnezzar unfolds itself in Daniel's narrative, this pagan king is not nearly so biased and prejudiced and close-minded as many unbelievers today who have less reason to be so. Nebuchadnezzar was shaken by his experience! He was impressed as he had never been before! If he, the mightiest monarch who had ever ruled to that time, could be rendered so totally impotent and incompetent then the only noble or honest thing to do was to admit it. Perhaps the element of fear was also a strong motivation for Nebuchadnezzar's doxology.

One thing the king had to admit, no human king thus far was so mighty that he could prolong his own reign if Daniel's God willed it otherwise. And it was very apparent that the rule of Daniel's God was everlasting and omnipotent. The history of the world since the days of Nebuchadnezzar confirms this great fact! All earthly rulers die; all authority lodged in the hands of earthly monarchs is soon withdrawn; and not one of them can insure that his authority will extend even to the next generation.

v. 4-6 . . . I SAW A DREAM WHICH MADE ME AFRAID . . . The mighty king was "at rest" which indicates more precisely that he was feeling secure and completely free from apprehension. His wars were over; his kingdom was tranquil and prosperous beyond his fondest dreams. He had built a magnificent city; gathered about him the wealth and the luxuries of the world and now he was preparing to while away the remainder of his life enjoying it all.

The word translated "afraid" is even stronger than "terrified." He was literally petrified with fear. Although he did not at first understand the dream, he was well enough versed in signs and portents to understand that the falling of so mighty a tree signified some mighty overthrow. And even afterward he reflected upon the dream as he lay in his bed, his consternation increased. The wierd and exaggerated visions of the dream kept flashing before his mind's-eye as he thought about its meaning.

The very first thing that morning when he arose the king sent with all haste an official decree that all the wise-men and seers of the nation's capital should be summoned to the palace to interpret his dream for him.

QUIZ

1. What is the answer to the attack upon the historicity of chapter 4 by critics who point to the silence of the other O.T. books and profane history about Nebuchadnezzar's insanity?
2. What is a probable explanation to the biblical phraseology of Nebuchadnezzar's edict concerning the greatness and everlastingness of God?
3. What does "at rest" indicate concerning the king's circumstances before his dream?
4. Why would this mighty monarch be "afraid"?
5. Why did the king call for his wise-men?

b. RULER'S REVERIE RELATED, PART I

TEXT: 4:7-12

- 7 Then came in the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers; and I told the dream before

- them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.
- 8 But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and I told the dream before him, saying,
- 9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.
- 10 Thus were the visions of my head upon 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 food for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the birds of the heavens dwelt in the branches thereof, and all flesh was fed from it.

QUERIES

- a. What does Nebuchadnezzar understand about "the spirit of the holy gods?"
- b. Was Daniel a "magician"? Doesn't the Law of Moses forbid this?
- c. Why did God choose to use a "tree" in Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

PARAPHRASE

But when they came in—all the scholars, astrologers, wise-men, and diviners—and I told them the dream, they could not interpret it. At that moment Daniel came in—the man I named Belteshazzar after my god—the man in whom is the spirit of the holy deity, and I told him the dream. O Belteshazzar, chief of the wise-men, I said, I know that the spirit of the holy deity is in you and no secret is too difficult for you—behold! my dream that I have seen. Tell me what my dream means: I was dreaming

and suddenly I saw a tree right in the center of the world all by itself and its height was very great. The tree was growing and becoming strong, and its height was reaching higher and higher into the sky until it could be seen by everyone in the world. Its leaves were fresh and green, and its branches were weighted down with fruit, enough for everyone to eat; wild animals rested beneath its shade and birds from all over the sky rested in its branches and all the people of the world were nourished from it.

COMMENT

v. 7 THEN CAME IN THE MAGICIANS . . . ETC. All these titles refer to the same general class of persons—those considered to be endowed with superhuman wisdom; who were supposed to be qualified to explain remarkable occurrences, to foretell the future, and to declare the will of the gods from dreams, signs and wonders. It is not strange to find the occult in that age when there was yet a limited revelation; when so much of the world's population dwelt in darkness and self-induced moral perverseness (cf. Rom. 1:18ff); and when the boundaries of science were not as extended as they are today. But in the age of enlightenment—with the Christian revelation and explosion in scientific knowledge—it is almost incredible that so many people today are becoming enmeshed in the superstitious and credulous web of the occult. Popular songs ("Aquarius") and books by the thousands are hawking the wares of the "mystic revolution" all over the 20th century world. One weekly U.S. news magazine estimates that 10 million Americans are "hard-core adherents" to astrological forecasting. Another 40 million, it reported, dabble in the subject: "It appears clear that what was once regarded as an offshoot of the occult is a rapidly evolving popular creed," it said. One American magazine publisher puts out some 30 separate horoscope magazines. During 1968 it sold 8 million copies of one edition. The executive editor of Doubleday & Co., said in the N.Y. Times of August 11, 1968, "American publishers have discovered of late that there is a great deal of money to be made in convincing readers that the fault is not in themselves but in their stars . . . The public in-

terest has been way ahead of the publisher's response . . . People in general want to read about these things. After all, there is the possibility of discovering the meaning of life. We can't get enough good books on the subject."

"In astrology," says the president of a well-known astrological organization, "the earth is at the center of the universe and the individual is the center of attention. Everybody's favorite topic is himself." A 22-year-old Boston girl put her finger on this point when she said, "Astrology . . . is a very personal tying of the individual to the universe. Science led us away from God and now science (meaning astrology?!) will bring us back." The astrologer holds out the vision of a world ruled by forces operating with clock-work regularity. These forces supposedly guide the individual to greater heights of achievement—they help him succeed, attain, understand. When things go wrong, one can blame the stars. When good things happen, you thank your lucky star. Astrologers tell people what they WANT to hear. The thing that is so incredible is that 20th-century-man would have laughed at the way the soothsayers and diviners exploited the superstitions of Nebuchadnezzar, not realizing that they are being exploited in the same way today. Nebuchadnezzar learned that in the God of Daniel, Jehovah-God—the God who has revealed Himself in history by miraculous deeds and direct propositional revelations in human language to selected prophets, is the only source of immutable truth. AND THAT IS STILL TRUE FOR 20TH-CENTURY-MAN! Daniel's God is omnipotent and immutable—He changeth not!

v. 8 . . . AT THE LAST DANIEL CAME IN . . . IN WHOM IS THE SPIRIT OF THE HOLY GODS . . . Why Daniel was not with the other wise-men when they came into the presence of the king we do not know. Leupold suggests two possibilities: (a) he may have been busy assembling the wise men and could not come earlier; (b) he may have chosen to defer his coming, timing it carefully to coincide with the moment when the failure of the Chaldeans was most evident.

Most commentators insist that Nebuchadnezzar's statement, "in whom is the spirit of the holy gods," is an explicit expression of his polytheism. However, Young believes

that the phrase is only rightly interpreted when the word "god" is made singular, "god" or "deity," as in our paraphrase. The king was very much aware that the God of Daniel was different from his own gods, so, he reasons, "The power or wisdom which is from the highest deity is to be found in Daniel." Young says there is "a wealth of philological evidence (linguistic material) to support" the position of a singular "god," (cf. Gen. 41:38).

V. 9 O BELTESHAZZAR . . . TELL ME . . . THE INTERPRETATION . . . It is evident from the following context that the emperor does not this time insist that Daniel relate to him the content of the dream, for the emperor tells Daniel the details of the dream. He wants Daniel to tell him the meaning of the symbolism he dreamed.

For comments on Daniel's Babylonian name, Belteshazzar, see our notes on 1:7. Leupold claims that the translation "chief of the magicians" does not accurately represent to the modern mind the position of Daniel. In our day "magicians" are thought of as purveyors of "slight of hand" magic. This meaning was never connected with the Greek word *magoi* from which we get the word "magician" or, as the *magi* (wise-men) in the account of the birth of Christ. Leupold thinks a better translation would be "chief of the scholars."

We are informed of the absolute confidence Nebuchadnezzar had in Daniel's possession of divine wisdom! This does not seem to be for the purpose of proving to the king that Daniel has such abilities (as in Daniel 2). It almost seems as if the king had deliberately refused to hear Daniel until he was forced by necessity to turn to him as a last resort. Young believes that this is actually the case—"If others can interpret the dream, he will go to them rather than to Daniel. With this God, Nebuchadnezzar, as yet wanted no dealings." Calvin also believes that it was "extreme necessity" which compelled the ruler to turn to Daniel for interpretation of his dream. "And hence we gather that no one comes to the true God, unless impelled by necessity." (Calvin) It is most certainly true that no one comes to God by accident! We are convinced more and more that most unbelief is due to moral resistance, not to

intellectual ignorance. Every man has sinned and sinned because he deliberately chose to resist the moral light he possesses! (Romans, chapters 1, 2, and 3 and Jn. 3:19-21)

v. 10-11 . . . I SAW, AND, BEHOLD, A TREE IN THE MIDST OF THE EARTH . . . The phrase is progressive. The king was contemplating or studying the dream as he was dreaming. Not only so, but the tree was in the process of growing as he was dreaming. This tree was occupying a central position on the earth. Its centrality was to indicate its preeminence and importance for the entire earth. It grew until it reached into the sky, towering to the heavens, sending out its branches afar. It was a "sight" to behold to everyone in the earth.

Trees were figurative, especially in Oriental dreams, of monarchs. Ezekiel 31:3ff compares the Assyrian monarch with a cedar of Lebanon (cf. also Ezek 17:1ff; Isa. 2:13; 10:18-19; Jer. 22:7, 23). Barnes notes, "Nothing is more obvious than the comparison of a hero with a lofty tree of the forest, and hence it was natural for Nebuchadnezzar to suppose that this vision had a reference to himself." Herodotus relates a dream of Xerxes, who, ready to set out against Greece, beholds himself crowned with an olive shoot, the branches of which stretch out over all the earth; of Croesus that he will destroy the men of Lampascus "like a fir" since this tree when cut down, sends forth no fresh shoots, but dies outright; of Astyages the Mede who dreamed of a vine growing from the womb of Mandane, his daughter, and spreading over the entirety of Asia, the vine being Cyrus. This should in no way imply that the dream of Nebuchadnezzar was not unique. The record of Daniel is plain to indicate that the Babylonian monarch's dream was a divinely imposed dream, a revelation from God. It was supernaturally imposed—it was unique.

v. 12 . . . AND IT WAS FOOD FOR ALL . . . All who lodged in the tree found fruit upon it. All living things on the earth are represented as finding sustenance and security in this great, towering, affluent tree. A really imposing sight! But this is not all of the dream. And what perplexed the king most was the remainder of the reverie!

QUIZ

1. What is so surprising about finding a popularity of the occult today?
2. What is meant by "the spirit of the holy gods?"
3. What confidence did Nebuchadnezzar have in Daniel's abilities?
4. Why did the king wait until the last resort to seek Daniel's interpretation?
5. How great was the "tree" in the king's dream?
6. Why would this portion of the dream not be so perplexing to the king?

c. RULER'S REVERIE RELATED, PART II

TEXT: 4:13-18

- 13 I saw in the visions of my head upon by bed, and, behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven.
- 14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from its branches.
- 15 Nevertheless leave the stump of its 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 The sentence 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 lowest of men.
- 18 This dream I, king Nebuchadnezzar, have seen; and thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, 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.

QUERIES

- a. Who are the "watchers" and "holy ones?"
- b. Why leaven "the stump of its roots" in the earth?
- c. What are the "seven times" which are to pass over him?

PARAPHRASE

Then as I lay there dreaming, I saw a divine guardian descending from the heavens. He was shouting, Cut down this great tree; trim off its branches; shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit. Get the animals out from under it and drive the birds from its branches, but leave its stump and roots in the ground, banded with a chain of iron and brass, surrounded by the tender grass. Let the dews of heaven drench him and let him eat grass with the wild animals! For a certain period of time let him have the mind of an animal instead of a man. This sentence upon the tree is decreed by the divine guardians and is no idle fancy but a divine revelation of an impending fact. The purpose of that which is decreed is to show men everywhere that there is one Ruler who is higher than the highest among men, the Most High, and that He rules over all the kingdoms of men. The Most High gives rule of the nations to whomsoever He will. He prefers to use those who are humble to rule over nations and men, and deposes the proud and arrogant. And now, O Belteshazzar, this is what I, king Nebuchadnezzar have dreamed. Declare to me speedily what all this means. No one else can help me; all the wisest men of my kingdom have failed me. You alone can tell me because the spirit of deity is in you.

COMMENT

v. 13 I SAW . . . A WATCHER . . . A HOLY ONE . . . Some divine vigilante or divine guardian (an angel) manifested himself (perhaps more than one, cf. v. 17) to the king. Angels are called watchers in the religion of Zoroaster so it may be that a pagan king is using the term familiar to him concerning divine apparitions although it is more likely a simple, straightforward description of what he saw. Angels are vigilant ones—they keep guard un-

ceasingly (cf. Heb. 1:14; Matt. 18:10; see also our special study on *Angels* in connection with chapter 10 of this commentary). This is the only portion of scripture in the whole Bible where angels are called by the name "watcher" but even this title is descriptive of part of their ministry even as is the word "angel". The king earlier described the manifested divine being he saw in the fiery furnace as "one like a son of the gods" (cf. 3:25). Some way or another the angel exhibited its supernatural nature to the king and he was impressed.

v. 14 HE CRIED ALOUD, . . . HEW DOWN THE TREE . . . The divine vigilante suddenly shouted loudly and confidently, to someone (probably other divine beings), Cut down this towering, proud tree. Drastic, complete demolition of the tree is commanded—even to stripping it of its leaves and fruit and the scattering of all life depending upon it. As great and impressive as this tree is, so also, great was the fall thereof (cf. Matt. 7:24-27). One commentator has remarked on the scattering of animals and birds . . . "a lively image of subjects alarmed by the fall of their sovereign . . ."

v. 15-16 . . . LEAVE THE STUMP . . . LET IT BE WET WITH . . . DEW . . . LET HIS PORTION BE WITH THE BEASTS IN THE GRASS . . . LET HIS HEART BE CHANGED FROM MAN'S . . . Just as unexpected as the complete demolition of the tree earlier, now comes the command to leave "the stump" indicating the possibility of reviving the tree. Furthermore the "stock of its roots" is to be left indicating there shall be something left of this particular tree which may again grow. The "band of iron" probably refers, as Keil says, "to the withdrawal of free self-determination through the fetter of madness," (cf. Ps. 107:10; Job 36:8). This is the insanity referred to in our comments on 4:1.

From now on it seems as if the angel has stopped speaking in symbolic figures and is, for all practical purposes, interpreting some of the particulars of the fulfillment of this dream. "Let him be wet," changes the subject from the tree to the man. This man shall find himself in such an insane state, like a dumb animal, that he shall not

know enough to keep under cover at night. It will even be his lot to share with cattle the grass they eat. Robert Wilson, in *Studies in The Book of Daniel*, quotes from a work entitled *Dictionary of Psychological Medicine*, "the complete loss of personal identity, and the conviction of being changed into one of the lower animals, accompanied frequently by a corresponding belief on the part of the beholders, is one of the most remarkable facts which the psychological history of the race reveals." In the same book a well-accredited case is cited of a man who imagined himself to be a wolf, and attempted to act like one. This phenomenon of man imitating animal in a state of mental illness is called lycanthropy. To all intents and purposes he behaves as a beast would behave, thus it is expressed as being changed in heart from a man to a beast. It is obvious that the physical heart is not meant.

This state is to continue until "seven times shall pass away over him." This could mean seven years. But in a book like this, where the symbolical use of numbers stands out so prominently, the emphasis obviously rests on the seven as depicting some complete, fully-determined period of time, known to God and purposely begun and terminated by God—not necessarily seven years. Dispensationalists see in this a period of humiliation of seven years for Nebuchadnezzar which in turn symbolizes the end of the Gentile age (that is, the period between Christ's coming *for* ["the rapture"] and His coming *with* ["the judgment"] His saints). This period is supposed to be for seven years, and is that which most dispensationalists identify as Daniel's 70th week (see 9:24ff). Allis, in *Prophecy and The Church*, comments that the dispensational interpretation of Daniel 4 shows the extremes they are prepared to carry their interpretations to in order to establish their doctrines. Daniel plainly indicated that this dream applied directly and exclusively to Nebuchadnezzar and was completely fulfilled in the strange and tragic experience through which the king personally and individually passed. The dispensationalists see in the "tree" the type of Gentile domination, and in the cutting down of the tree the judgment of the apostate professing-church at the end of this age, after the rapture of the true Church. The "seven times" become the seven

year interval between the rapture and the appearing; and Nebuchadnezzar's changed attitude is regarded as foreshadowing the millennium.

v. 17-18 THE SENTENCE IS BY THE DECREE OF THE WATCHERS . . . By this statement the king is informed positively that the dream he had had is no idle and meaningless fancy on his part, but it is a divine revelation of an impending fact to be accomplished in his own person. But the most significant part of this entire event is the purpose for which it is designed—"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 . . . etc." And it is a lesson for all men of all ages, inscribed in the archives of history, that there is one Ruler which is higher than the highest among men—the Most High (cf. Isa. 10:5ff; Jer. 27:5-7). Babylon, and especially as it was in the days of the proud and arrogant Nebuchadnezzar, came to symbolize the pride and the spirit of arrogance and rebellion of world power against God. So this dream and its fulfillment portrays that the pride of the world power will receive its just recompense of reward. We shall have more to say on this in following chapters.

After stating the content of the dream, the king, somewhat appealingly, commands Daniel to interpret it. The king appeals again to his confidence in Daniel's superior abilities over the other wise men of Babylon for it is evident to the king that Daniel is in possession of "the spirit of deity."

QUIZ

1. What does the term "watcher . . . a holy one" signify about the person who announced to Nebuchadnezzar his dream?
2. What does the "hewing" down of the tree signify?
3. What does the leaving of the stump signify?
4. What does leaving it to be wet with dew signify?
5. What does "let his portion be with the beasts in the grass" signify?
6. Is it possible for people to be insane enough to act like animals?

7. What is the purpose of this dream and its fulfillment to the person of Nebuchadnezzar? to all men of all ages?

d. RULER'S REVERIE REVEALED, PART I

TEXT: 4:19-23

- 19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was stricken dumb for a while, and his thoughts troubled him. The king answered and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine adversaries.
- 20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth;
- 21 Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was food for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the birds of the heavens had their habitation:
- 22 it is thou, O king, that are 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 a holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew down the tree, and destroy it; nevertheless 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;

QUERIES

- a. Was Daniel's "dumbness" natural or miraculous?
- b. Why did Daniel want the dream to be applied to the king's enemies?
- c. Why was Daniel unafraid to tell the king the true interpretation?

PARAPHRASE

Then Daniel, whose Babylonian name was Belteshazzar, stood there stunned and silent for a time, aghast at the meaning of the dream. Finally the king said to him: Belteshazzar, do not fear to tell me plainly the interpretation of this dream. Daniel replied: O king, this is a dream that would please your enemies, for what it portends they would surely like to see fulfilled upon you. For this tree you saw growing and becoming strong and its height was reaching into the heavens and which was seen by everyone in the world—whose leaves were fresh and green and branches weighted down with fruit—under which wild animals rested and upon whose branches birds from all over the sky rested—this tree, Your Majesty, is you. For you have grown mighty and great; your greatness and sovereignty extends over all the earth and sea and sky. Then you saw a holy guardian coming down from heaven, saying, Cut down the tree and destroy it; but leave the stump and the roots in the earth surrounded by tender grass, bound with a chain of iron and brass. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven and for a certain period of time let him eat grass with the animals of the field.

COMMENT

v. 19 THEN DANIEL . . . WAS STRICKEN DUMB FOR A WHILE AND HIS THOUGHTS TROUBLED HIM . . . The Holy Spirit gave Daniel the meaning of the dream almost at once and he was overwhelmed immediately by the awesomeness and terrifying nature of the judgment about to come upon the king. In interpreting the dream he had to pronounce a judgment upon this man who had treated him justly and had even promoted him to a position of great influence. There can be little doubt that Daniel was attached to Nebuchadnezzar, and that this attachment was the cause of his agitation of mind. Daniel's hesitancy is, therefore, highly honorable. Daniel was a man who would not violate his conscience at the king's command; but neither would he be unloyal to the king when it was not a matter of conscience. Men who are loyal to God will always be found to be most

loyal to kings. Men like Daniel, though they may refuse to comply with the sinful commands of rulers, will be the first to weep for them and pray for them! This was no miraculously induced dumbness nor does it seem to be motivated by paralyzing fear for his own safety—not if Daniel's previous actions are any indication of his courage and faith.

We are not to suppose either that Daniel had any specific, malevolent hatred for the enemies of Nebuchadnezzar. A more correct translation of this phrase would render it, "this is a dream that would please your enemies, for what it portends they would surely like to see fulfilled upon you." Literally it is translated, "The dream is for thy enemies . . ."

The king, aware that something serious and perhaps evil was portended by the dream, yet not possibly aware that it would be so drastic, was gripped with anxiety to know and therefore urged Daniel to speak plainly and freely, without fear, what he knew about this dream. So Daniel begins to relate to the king what God has revealed to His prophet concerning this dream.

v. 20-23 . . . IT IS THOU, O KING . . . For explanation of verses 20, 21, and 23 see notes on 4:9-15. Daniel's recapitulation of the description of the tree and what is to happen to it is almost word for word in the very terms used by the king. Having repeated the description of the dream for the sake of emphasis and impression, Daniel comes to the point with his, "It is you, O king!" Like the prophet Nathan before him ("Thou art the man!") Daniel dares to confront the world's mightiest potentate with the judgment of God.

QUIZ

1. Why was Daniel "stricken dumb?"
2. Was Daniel attached to the king in a sympathetic way? Why?
3. What did Daniel mean by, ". . . the dream be to them that hate thee . . . ?"

e. RULER'S REVERIE REVEALED, PART II

TEXT: 4:24-27

- 24 this is the interpretation, O king, and it is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king:
- 25 that thou shalt be driven from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen, and shalt be wet 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 roots of the tree; 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 there may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

QUERIES

- a. Did the king actually "dwell with the beasts of the field?"
- b. How do "the heavens rule?"
- c. What is the meaning of "a lengthening of thy tranquillity?"

PARAPHRASE

Your Majesty, the Most High God has decreed—and it will surely happen—that you will be driven from association with sane and normal people and you will live in the fields like an animal, eating grass like an ox, your body wet with dew from staying out in the fields over night. For a definite period of time this will be your condition until you learn that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men and gives power to rule to anyone He chooses. But inasmuch as the stump and the roots of the tree in your dream were to be left in the ground, it is decreed that you

will be restored to sanity and your rule over Babylon will be given back to you; this will be done when you have learned that Heaven is sovereign over all men on the earth. This is true, O king, and if you will take heed to what I am saying to you and repent by ceasing to do evil and do what you know is right, showing mercy to the poor and weak, perhaps God will prolong your present state of peace and security and withdraw this impending judgment.

COMMENT

v. 24-25 . . . TILL THOU KNOW THAT THE MOST HIGH RULETH IN THE KINGDOM OF MEN . . . Daniel specifies in no uncertain terms that the object of his revelation is the king himself. The world's most powerful and magnificent potentate will be driven from normal associations with other men and will be bereft of human rationality. He will literally live like a wild animal—even to eating grass like an ox and living oft-times out in the open. That this is not unheard of among the insane may be thoroughly documented. We ourselves have observed it in some of our modern-day mental institutions. It is plain from the text that Daniel was revealing this malady would be supernaturally induced—it was not from natural causes.

As we observed before, the term “seven times” probably means simply a specific and, in the purpose of God, an adequate time for the accomplishing of God's providential goal—it does not necessarily mean seven years.

The most important part of Daniel's revelation is the focus or purpose of the king's insanity. The intent of the matter is to give mankind, specifically this heathen king and his subjects, and the captive covenant people, a proof that the fortunes of kings and empires are in the hand of Jehovah—that His providence perpetually interposes in the affairs of men, distributing thrones and empires, always for the good of the faithful, but according to His will. This revelation would be especially relevant for the Jews in pagan bondage and slavery. Their spiritual immaturity would cause them to doubt the faithfulness of God to His promised covenant made with their forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, etc.). Definite, prophetic, electrify-

ing, empirical evidence was needed that God was able and would, in His own good time, overrule the power of paganism and carry on the fulfillment of His covenant in His faithful people.

"Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He pleased" (Psa. 115:3). "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all" (Psa. 103:9). God governs in the affairs of kingdoms and nations, and the Scriptures declare that the care of Providence extends to the most minute and inconsiderable parts of the creation; and, therefore, much more does it extend to the affairs of men and the fates of kingdoms (cf. Matt. 6:26; Jer. 27:5ff). The Bible expressly asserts the setting up and pulling down of rulers and empires are from God (cf. Psa. 75:2-7). There are many instances in the Bible of God's overruling the conduct of men, even of the wicked, to accomplish His own great designs, when the persons themselves had nothing in view but their own interests. Who could have thought that anything good would come from the murderous, selfish and perverted actions of the brothers of Joseph when they threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery in Egypt? Their only purpose was to get rid of one they envied and hated. But God had a very important purpose—the deliverance of the covenant family and thousands of others. Therefore, Joseph tells his brothers, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Gen. 45:8). See our Special Study Nine, pgs. 93-113, entitled Theo-Ramic Philosophy of History, in *Minor Prophets*, pub. College Press.

v. 26-27 . . . BREAK OFF THY SINS BY RIGHTEOUSNESS . . . The part of the dream depicting the stump of the roots of the tree left in the ground predicted the possibility of Nebuchadnezzar's rule being restored to him conditioned upon his acknowledgment that Daniel's God rules omnipotently. This, as we learn later, is exactly what transpired, (cf. 4:34ff).

Evidently Nebuchadnezzar was guilty of the common fault of monarchs—inequity, tyrannism, violence in dealings with the ruled. He was "missing the mark" (sinning).

according to God's moral standards of government. So the prophet of God demands that the king "break with his sins" and practice justice, equity and kindness in the administration of government. There can be no mistaking it that God holds all rulers, pagan and godly, responsible for meeting His moral standards in governing (cf. Amos, chap. 1-2): "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy!" If the king shows mercy to the poor and weak, he shall receive mercy from God. There will be, perhaps, an extension of his present time of peaceful and prosperous rule. The promise does not include the withdrawal of judgment of insanity, because the fundamental and overriding sin of Nebuchadnezzar is pride and it appears that he did not pay much heed to this warning by Daniel. In fact, he may have been offended and slightly angered with Daniel—there is no mention of having rewarded Daniel as he had done on similar occasions earlier.

QUIZ

1. Is such insanity as predicted of Nebuchadnezzar impossible?
2. To what extent does God rule in the affairs of kings and empires?
3. Why would God be concerned about the sins of a pagan ruler?
4. Why did Daniel not promise the withdrawal of God's judgment of insanity if the king would break with his sins?

f. DESPOT'S DERANGEMENT

TEXT: 4:28-33

- 28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.
- 29 At the end of twelve months he was walking in the royal palace of Babylon.
- 30 The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?

- 31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee:
- 32 and thou shalt be driven from men; and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen; and seven times shall pass over thee; until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.
- 33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair was grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

QUERIES

- a. Why the mention of the "end of twelve months?"
- b. Why was Nebuchadnezzar so proud of Babylon?
- c. How was his hair "like eagles' feathers?"

PARAPHRASE

And all that Daniel predicted in his interpretation of the dream happened to Nebuchadnezzar. One year after the king had the dream, he was strolling on the roof of the royal palace in Babylon, and remarking proudly, Behold my great city of Babylon—the city I have built by my own skill, power and ingenuity. I built it as my royal residence and a monument to my own greatness. It is still standing and I still rule over it! Does this not prove how omnipotent I am? But as he was in the very act of speaking a voice from heaven said to him, O king Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you: The rule of this kingdom is now going to be taken from you. You are about to be driven out of your glorious palace to live with the animals of the fields, and to eat grass like the oxen for a certain period of time, until, that is, you finally realize that God rules in the affairs of men and that it is by His sovereign power and decision that men are providentially allowed to rule the kingdoms of the earth. That very hour this prophecy was fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar became insane and was hidden somewhere in his palace and he lived like the animals of the field, ate

grass like an ox, slept out in the open; and his hair grew, became unkempt and as long as eagles feathers; his fingernails and toenails grew long like birds' claws.

COMMENT

v. 28-30 . . . IS NOT THIS GREAT BABYLON . . . The fulfillment of the predicted judgment verifies with finality the prophetic commission of Daniel. There can be no question in the mind of Nebuchadnezzar after this. Neither should there be any doubt in the minds of the Jewish nation in captivity that Daniel was God's spokesman and that God was active, providentially overruling all the seemingly omnipotent machinations of pagan world power to preserve His covenant people.

The accuracy of Nebuchadnezzar's boast has been remarkably confirmed. Ancient historians, Josephus (quoting Berosus) and Eusebius (quoting Abydenus), wax eloquent about the grandeur of old Babylon. The East India House inscription, now in London, has six columns of Babylonian writing telling of the stupendous building operations which the king carried on in enlarging and beautifying Babylon. He rebuilt more than twenty temples and directed construction work on the docks and defenses of the city. Most of the bricks taken out of Babylon in the archaeological excavations bear the name and inscription of Nebuchadnezzar stamped thereon. One of the records of Nebuchadnezzar sounds almost like the boast which Daniel recorded in verse 30; it reads, "The fortifications of Esagila and Babylon I strengthened and established the name of my reign forever."

Many critical scholars hold that the book of Daniel was not written in the time of Daniel (600 B.C.) but that it was composed some four hundred years later, about 168-165 B.C. However, on the basis of the critical view, it is difficult to explain how the supposed late writer of the book of Daniel knew that the glories of Babylon were due to Nebuchadnezzar's building activities. One higher critic, Pfeiffer, sweeps the problem under the rug by simply making the arbitrary statement, "we shall presumably never know" how the writer of Daniel knew that Babylon was the result of Nebuchadnezzar's building projects, as the ex-

cavations have proved. This is a very handy, but unscientific, method of dispensing with facts!

The king's last statement shows that his ultimate objective was the glorification of his own name—"for the glory of my majesty."

v. 31-32 WHILE THE WORD WAS IN THE KING'S MOUTH . . . The king had not even finished boasting about himself and he was interrupted by a voice from heaven pronouncing execution of the judgment upon him. The administration of the kingdom which he considered to be his exclusive prerogative, was taken from him and he was driven to live and act like the beasts of the field. See our comments earlier on the dream, (4:15-16).

v. 33 . . . HIS HAIR . . . LIKE EAGLE'S FEATHERS . . . HIS NAILS LIKE BIRD'S CLAWS . . . This is an additional description of the king's physical state during his insanity. His hair was left to grow naturally, untrimmed, and is aptly described as growing long like eagles' feathers. His fingernails and toenails, uncared for, would also grow to great lengths. This is only natural if he actually lived as the beasts of the field.

Although he was insane and physically grotesque, he was not exposed to the curious gaze of the multitudes, or to harsh treatment, or derision. He did not, evidently, become the gazing stock of all that passed by but was, no doubt, confined in the precincts of the royal palace. There he acted like an animal, eating grass, sleeping out on the ground, etc. The affairs of state were, no doubt, carefully taken in hand by his wisemen, princes, and probably by the establishment of a kind of council of ministers—expecting him to return to sanity and resume control of the government. One commentator cites a number of historical parallels to such temporary measures.

QUIZ

1. What would the fulfillment of the dream mean to the Jews?
2. How great and glorious was the city of Babylon?
3. Is there any way to confirm the greatness of Babylon?

4. How are the opinions of the destructive critics proved false by archaeology?
5. What do you suppose Nebuchadnezzar looked like in his state of insanity?
6. Where do you suppose he was confined in his insanity?

g. SOVEREIGN'S SURRENDER

TEXT: 4:34-37

- 34 And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever; for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation;
- 35 and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?
- 36 At the same time mine understanding returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, and my majesty and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent greatness was added unto me.
- 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven; for all his works are truth, and his ways justice; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

QUERIES

- a. To what extent did Nebuchadnezzar's worship of God go?
- b. How did the king's understanding return to him?

PARAPHRASE

At the end of the days appointed by the Most High God I, Nebuchadnezzar, surrendered to the sovereignty of the God of Heaven, and my sanity returned to me. Then I praised and worshiped the Most High God and honored The Eternal One. His dominion is everlasting and His rule

is sovereign in every age of man to the end of time. All the power of mankind is as nothing when compared to Him. He does whatever He desires and executes His will among heavenly beings and earthly beings alike and no one can stop Him or challenge Him, saying, What do You mean by doing these things? As soon as my reason had returned to me, then my honor and reknown also returned to me as also the glory of my kingdom. My counsellors and court officers sought my leadership again and I was reestablished as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of Heaven, the Judge of all, Whose every act is right and just; for He is able to take those who walk proudly and punish them into the dust!

COMMENT

v. 34-35 . . . I BLESSED THE MOST HIGH . . . The mighty potentate seems to have learned well the lesson God wanted him to learn. There is no reason at all to question the statement of facts made here. The sincerity of his motive will have to await the final judgment when all the secrets of men will be revealed. One thing seems almost certain, Nebuchadnezzar is convinced of the omnipotence of Daniel's God! He admits to God's sovereignty in both the unseen and seen world—and that universally so! There is no potentate among mortals or immortals to be compared with Him, as far as the king is concerned.

It also seems certain that the king is thanking Daniel's God for the restoration of his sanity and his kingdom. This, in itself, is a great condescension on Nebuchadnezzar's part.

v. 36-37 . . . NOW I . . . PRAISE AND EXTOL AND HONOR THE KING OF HEAVEN . . . Nebuchadnezzar was not only restored to full control of the government and so acknowledged by his men of state, but "excellent greatness was added unto me." One is reminded of Job—"And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning . . ." (Job 42:12). Does this act of God indicate some acceptable manifestation of faith by this pagan king? Could we say the pagan king had been converted? We do not know! It would seem

proper to believe that God was pleased with the faith of Nebuchadnezzar, however immature and limited it may be. Edward J. Young lists the following in favor of Nebuchadnezzar:

- “(a) There is discernable a progress in his knowledge of God (cf. 2:47 with 3:28 and finally with 4:34, 35).
- (b) The king acknowledges the utter sovereignty of God with respect to his own experience (4:37b).
- (c) The king utters true statements concerning the omnipotence of the true God (4:34-35).
- (d) The king would worship this God, whom he identifies as King of heaven (3:37a). These reasons lead me to believe that, although the faith of Neb. may indeed have been weak and his knowledge meagre, yet his faith was saving faith, and his knowledge true.”

Compared with the advantages Pharaoh enjoyed and the utter rejection he made of God's will, Nebuchadnezzar had a conversion experience. Certainly Nebuchadnezzar was equally receptive and responsive to the will of God as the King of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah. To what extent God will accuse or excuse Nebuchadnezzar at the judgment is solely God's prerogative. It is now our blessed privilege to preach the Good News of salvation by faith in Christ. Let us bless God that we do not live in the pagan darkness of the days of Nebuchadnezzar. Perhaps the major purpose served in this incident was to bolster the hope of that faithful remnant of Jews down in Babylon that their God could, and would, overcome and carry out His redemptive, messianic purpose in them soon.

QUIZ

1. Did Nebuchadnezzar really praise the name of Jehovah?
2. Out of what kind of motive did he do so?
3. Was Nebuchadnezzar converted to faith in Daniel's God?
4. What other person would it be interesting to use as a comparison with Nebuchadnezzar?
5. What might be the major purpose of God's acting thus with Nebuchadnezzar?

SERMON NUMBER FOUR

DESPOT'S DISGRACE

Text: Daniel 4:1-37

INTRODUCTION

I. DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDE IN NEBUCHADNEZAR NOW THAN IN THIRD CHAPTER

- A. In chapter three the mighty king of Babylon made an image (perhaps resembling himself somewhat)
 - 1. Everyone was to bow down and worship it
 - 2. But the Hebrew children wounded his pride by refusing to do so
 - 3. He arrogantly condemned them to the fiery furnace
 - 4. But God delivered them
- B. Now, nothing but thoughts of peace are in his heart
 - 1. Now he extols and praises the God of Heaven.....
 - 2. And Neb. is an old man—not easily changed

II. THIS CHAPTER IS REMARKABLE ALSO IN THAT IT IS A BABYLONIAN STATE DOCUMENT

- A. This is a Statutory Declaration by the king
 - 1. Obviously quite different in its terms from anything Neb. has declared before
 - 2. He spoke about Jehovah-God before in chapters 2 and 3 in a sort of respectful salute, as he would any other god
 - 3. This, however, is a universal, official document with the king publicly bowing his proud neck in submission to Daniel's God
 - 4. So, here in this 4th chapter, we have this State Document from the archives of Babylon . . . the personal testimony of one of the great monarchs of all history, his own account of how he, a proud self-willed, ruthless tyrant, was brought to repentance before God, and then was restored by the God of all grace.

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- B. This incident is also remarkable in that it shows the amazing patience of God with even a stubborn pagan ruler
1. God spoke twice before to Neb. in chapter 2 in the dream of the image
 2. God spoke again in the deliverance of the Heb. children from the furnace
- III. THIS IS THE KIND OF THING GOD DOES FROM TIME TO TIME IN HISTORY
- A. From time to time God, in history, has reminded the whole human race forcibly of Himself
The flood, Tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, Pharaoh Ex. 9:16
- B. The preamble to this declaration (verse 1) is interesting
1. It is beneficent, "Peace be multiplied unto you."
 2. It is voluntary, "It seemed good to me . . ." it is his own idea
 3. It is experimental. The moment Neb. has had this transforming experience he wants to tell everybody else about it. If you have a full heart your mouth will speak, and if your mouth doesn't speak then your heart is empty.
 4. It is enthusiastic, "How great are his signs"

DISCUSSION

I. THE DREAM DECLARED, 4:4-18

- A. Its effect on Nebuchadnezzar at the first
1. He was at ease in his house when it happened
 - a. This is going back 8 years to the old Neb. in circumstances of security and luxury
 - b. Beware of ease and plenty. It is difficult to be prosperous without being proud (later he represents himself boasting about Babylon which he built)
 - c. Prosperous and proud, at rest and flourishing, but a stranger to God
 - d. THERE IS A DECEITFUL PEACE. GOD ALONE CAN GIVE PEACE, BUT THE DEVIL CAN GIVE A COUN-

DESPOT'S DISGRACE

TERFEIT OF GOD'S PEACE AND THERE IS A DECEITFUL PEACE THAT LULLS THE SOUL INTO A FALSE SECURITY:

- e. TO BE UNTRoubLED IS NOT EVIDENCE OF SAFETY: TO BE PROSPEROUS DOES NOT MEAN THAT ALL IS WELL.
2. The dream disturbed him (lit. "petrified with fear")
 - a. How easily our peace and ease can be disturbed!
 - b. Guilty men, of course, are easily frightened.
 - c. Shakespeare rightly says, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all"
 - d. And, though Neb. did not know what his dream meant, it destroyed his false peace—IT WAS GOD IN MERCY HELPING HIM OUT OF A FOOL'S PARADISE
 3. What is he going to do?
 - a. He turns to the wrong people—how human this story is!
 - b. Men get troubled; their hearts fail them for fear; but they don't go to the messengers of God—THEY RUN TO THE POLITICIANS AND THE PSYCHOLOGISTS, OR THEY TURN TO ANY QUACK WHO HAS ANYTHING TO SAY ON A SOAPBOX
 - c. Popular songs "Aquarius" and books by the 1000 are hawking the wares of the "mystic revolution" all over the 20th century world. One weekly U.S. news magazine estimates that 10 million Americans are "hard-core adherents" to astrological forecasting. Another 400 million dabble in the subject. "In astrology," says the president of a well-known astrological organization, "the earth is at the center of the universe and the individual is the center of attention. Everybody's favorite topic is himself." THIS IS WHY PEOPLE WILL GO TO EVERY SOURCE BUT THE BIBLE . . . BECAUSE THE BIBLE DOES NOT FOCUS ON MAN, EXCEPT TO TELL HIM HE IS A SINNER, IT FOCUSES ON GOD AND HIS SON! (cf. Jn. 3:19-20)

B. Content of the dream

1. The tree

- a. Trees were used to symbolize greatness in world rulers (cf. Ezek. 31)
- b. This is a tremendous tree, a miracle tree, a skyscraper of a tree, so big that all the earth can see it
- c. One cannot help remembering the image Neb. set up in the plain, gold, gleaming, everybody able to see it. All life is dependent upon this tree
- d. Herodotus relates a dream of Xerxes, who, ready to set out against Greece, beholds himself crowned with an olive shoot, the branches of which stretch out over all the earth . . . Coroesus also dreamed that he would destroy the men of Lampascus "like a fir" since this tree when cut down, sends forth no fresh shoots, but dies outright, etc.

2. The watcher (a divine vigilante) (watching over the affairs of men)

- a. Hew down the tree and watch the hangers on scatter
- b. Leave a stump, possibility of the tree being revived
- c. Bound with band of iron probably refers to withdrawal of free-self-determination through the fetter of madness
- d. In a book entitled *Dictionary Of Psychological Medicine* are these words, "the complete loss of personal identity, and the conviction of being changed into one of the lower animals, accompanied frequently by a corresponding belief on the part of the beholders, is one of the most remarkable facts which the psychological history of the race of man reveals." In the same book a well-accredited case is cited of a man who imagined himself to be a wolf, and attempted to act like one. This phenomenon of man imitating animal is a state of mental illness is called lycanthropy. To all intents and

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purposes he behaves as a beast would, thus it is expressed as being changed in heart from a man to a beast.

3. The purpose
 - a. It is decreed by the watchers, it is no idle and meaningless fancy or an upset stomach
 - b. "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 . . . etc." (cf. Isa. 10:5ff; Jer. 27:5-7)
 - c. IT IS A LESSON FOR ALL MEN OF ALL AGES, INSCRIBED IN THE ARCHIVES OF HISTORY, THAT THERE IS ONE RULER WHICH IS HIGHER THAN THE HIGHEST AMONG MEN—THE MOST HIGH GOD. THIS WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE TO INSCRIBE IN THE MEETING ROOM OF THE UNITED NATIONS THAN WHAT THEY HAVE THERE! ONE WOULD LIKE TO DECLARE THIS IN THE MIDST OF THE KREMLIN!

II. THE DREAM DIVINED, 4:19-27

A. Thou art the man!

1. Daniel was not too anxious to have to tell the king what it meant
2. Neb. had treated him justly and had even promoted him, so Dan. might even have been attached to him
3. Daniel was a man who would not violate his conscience at the king's command; but neither would he be unloyal to the king when it was not a matter of conscience
4. Men like Daniel, though they may refuse to comply with the sinful commands of rulers, will be the first to weep for them and pray for them!
5. Daniel dares to confront the world's mightiest potentate with the judgment of God—like Nathan confronted David

B. You shall be driven from among men

1. Neb. was to dwell with the beasts of the field, and made to eat grass like an ox, and this for a determined time by God

DANIEL

2. The most important part of Daniel's revelation is the focus or purpose of the king's insanity. The intent of the matter is to give mankind, specifically this heathen king and his subjects, and the captive covenant people of God, a proof that the fortunes of kings and empires are in the hand of Jehovah—that His providence perpetually interposes in the affairs of men, distributing thrones and empires, always for the good of the faithful, but according to His will. "Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He pleased" Psa. 115:3; "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all" Psa. 103:9
- C. Break off your sins
1. It is possible that Neb. rule might be restored to him
 2. Conditioned upon his repentance
 3. Cease to do evil—begin to do good ("break off your sins by practicing righteousness), cf. I Jn. 3:7-8
 4. IT IS BECAUSE OF SIN THAT GOD'S CHASTENING MUST COME . . . WHAT A PITY WE TALK SO LIGHTLY OF SIN VERY OFTEN, WHEN THE BIBLE MAKES SO MUCH OF IT!
 5. Here, with Daniel and Neb., is an example of how God would have preachers preach to sinners
 - a. Preach to men out of a heart full of concern
 - b. Interpret the ways of God to them—point out their sin if need be
 - c. Extend the mercy of God upon His conditions and terms

III. THE DREAM DEMONSTRATED, 4:28-33

- A. Nebuchadnezzar was not impressed
1. The accuracy of Neb. boast has been remarkably confirmed. Ancient historians wax eloquent about the grandeur of old Babylon. The East India House inscription, now in London, has six columns of Babylonian writing telling of the stupendous building operations which the king carried on in enlarging and beautifying Babylon.

DESPOT'S DISGRACE

- a. He rebuilt more than 20 temples
 - b. Directed construction work on the docks and defenses of the city
 - c. Most of the bricks taken out of Babylon in archaeological excavations bear the name and inscription of Neb. stamped thereon
2. He had no sooner bragged than the judgment of God fell
- B. He was driven from among men
1. He lost his right mind to such an extent that he did not even know to come in out of the damp nights
 2. He ate grass in his deranged state
 3. He was evidently unattended until his hair grew long (always thought long hair in men and insanity were to be associated) and his nails were long like birds claws
 4. Although he was insane and physically grotesque, he was evidently not exposed to the curious gaze of the multitudes, harsh treatment, or derision. He was, no doubt, confined in the precincts of the royal palace. There he acted like an animal, eating grass, sleeping out on the palace ground. The affairs of state were, no doubt, carefully taken in hand by his wisemen, princes, and perhaps even his son. A number of historical parallels could be cited to such temporary measures.
- C. Critics attack this miracle as unhistorical
1. They say other O.T. historical books do not mention the insanity of Neb. and, there is no record of this event among heathen writers of antiquity
 2. First, there are 1000s of events, of not only Neb. life, but 100s of other important persons concerned with Israel which are not recorded in the historical books of the O.T. None of these books pretend to be complete in every detail even of the history of Israel. An argument from the silence of other O.T. books is no argument at all against the record of Daniel

DANIEL

3. Second, the argument from the silence of profane historians is no argument against the record of Daniel—ONLY IF THERE WERE PROFANE WRITERS STATING THAT SUCH AN EVENT NEVER HAPPENED WOULD THERE BE AN ARGUMENT AGAINST DANIEL
4. As a matter of fact, there are two historians of antiquity who mention certain events in the life of Neb. which support the historicity of Daniel's record: Berosus and Abydenus. Berosus, a Chaldean priest in the time of Alexander the Great. Abydenus (268 B.C.) was a pupil of Berosus. Berosus wrote: "Nabuchodonosor, after he had begun to build the forementioned wall, fell sick and departed this life whe he had reigned 43 years, whereupon his son, Evil-Merodach, obtained the kingdom." Abydenus tells of a prediction of Neb. about insanity for one of his enemies after which his enemies after which Neb. disappeared for a time.

CONCLUSION—4:34-37

I. THE MIGHTY POTENTATE FINALLY SURRENDERS TO HIS SOVEREIGN

- A. There is no reason at all to question the statement of facts made here
 1. The sincerity of his motive will have to await the final judgment when all the secrets of men will be revealed
 2. One thing seems almost certain, Neb. is convinced of the omnipotence of Daniel's God!
 3. He admits God's sovereignty in both the unseen and seen world—and that universally so!
 4. It also seems certain that the king is thanking Daniel's God for the restoration of his sanity and his kingdom.
- B. Does God's restoration of Neb. indicate some acceptable manifestation of conversion by this pagan king?
 1. It would seem proper to believe that God was

DESPOT'S DISGRACE

pleased with the faith of Neb., however immature and limited it may be

2. Ed. J. Young lists the following in favor of Neb. acceptance of God
 - a. There is discernable a progress in his knowledge of God (cf. 2:47 with 3:28 and with 4:34-35)
 - b. The king acknowledges the utter sovereignty of God with respect to his own experience
 - c. The king utters true statements concerning the omnipotence of the true God (4:34-35)
 - d. The king would worship this God, whom he identifies as King of heaven.
3. To what extent God will accuse or excuse Neb. at the judgment is solely God's business. Neb. was as responsive it would seem as the king of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah.

II. Graham Scrobbie writes:

"Here we take leave of Nebuchadnezzar. How does he bid us farewell? Not only as a sane man but as a converted man. The last thing related of him is the humble public confession which he made, and the noble testimony to the true God, which, for the benefit of all men, he delivered in the edict contained in this chapter. With the restoration of his reason and his kingdom came the regeneration of his soul. There is nothing in this Book more sublime than this testimony of Nebuchadnezzar's. To him light came at eventide, and he turned his throne into a pulpit, and his State papers into sermons, that his erring subjects might learn the wonders of Omnipotence, be led to honor the Most High, and have peace multiplied unto them through His Name. Nebuchadnezzar's testimony is the political message for all earth's kings and rulers until Christ shall come—"GOD RULES." This is the king's final message to the world. "Those that walk in pride He is able to abase." LET US REMEMBER THAT WHEN IT SEEMS TO US THAT THE WICKED PROSPER AND THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER. THE LORD REIGNETH . . . REJOICE!" AMEN!

EXAMINATION FOUR

REFUTATIONS

(Answer the following by giving the argument which will correct the statement)

1. Nebuchadnezzar believed his dream about the tree to be a sign from the Babylonian wise-men. Refute!
2. Daniel viciously prayed that the king's dream should come true upon his enemies. Refute!
3. This account of such a dream is only another example of pagan mythology which has found its way into the biblical text. Refute!

ASSOCIATIONS

(Associate the person or thing of column 1 with the most nearly correct parallel of column 2; some of column 2 are not correct)

1	2
watcher	king of Babylon
beast's heart	flute
seven times	complete period
tree	Nebuchadnezzar
King of heaven	Daniel
eat grass	Belshazzar
	lycanthropy
	insanity
	angel
	God

MEMORIZATIONS

(Fill in the blanks:)

It had seemed good unto me to show the _____ and _____ that the _____ God hath wrought toward _____. How _____ are his signs! and how _____ are his wonders! his kingdom is an _____ kingdom, and his _____ is from generation to generation.

EXAMINATION FOUR

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, _____ and _____ and honor the King of _____: for all his works are _____, and his ways _____; and those that walk in _____ he is able to _____.

EXPLANATIONS

1. Explain the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as Daniel interpreted it.
2. Explain how the prophecy concerning the king's insanity might have actually happened.
3. Explain what you think the scriptures indicate to be the result in Nebuchadnezzar's relationship of Jehovah-God.

BELSHAZZAR

Midnight came slowly sweeping on;
In silent rest lay Babylon.
But in the royal castle high
Red torches gleamed and courtiers cry.
Belshazzar there in kingly hall
Is holding kingly festival.
The vassals sat in glittering line,
And emptied the goblets with glowing wine.
The goblets rattle, the choruses swell,
And it pleased the stiff-necked monarch well.
In the monarch's cheeks a wild fire glowed,
And the wine awoke his daring mood.
And, onward still by his madness spurred,
He blasphemes the Lord with a sinful word;
And he brazenly boasts, blaspheming wild,
While the service courtiers cheered and smiled.
Quick the king spoke, while his proud glance burned,
Quickly the servant went and returned.
He bore on his head the vessels of gold,
Of Jehovah's temple the plunder bold.
With daring hand, in his frenzy grim,
The king seized a beaker and filled to the brim,

And drained to the dregs the sacred cup,
 And foaming he cried, as he drank it up,
 "Jehovah, eternal scorn I own
 To thee. I am monarch of Babylon."
 Scarce had the terrible blasphemy rolled
 From his lips, ere the monarch at heart was cold.
 The yelling laughter was hushed, and all
 Was still as death in the royal hall.
 And see! and see! on the white wall high
 The form of a hand went slowly by,
 And write—and wrote, on the broad wall white,
 Letters of fire, and vanished in night.
 Pale as death, with a steady stars,
 And with trembling knees, the king sat there;
 The horde of slaves sat huddering chill;
 No word they spoke, but were deathlike still.
 The Magicians came, but of them all,
 None could read the flame-script on the wall.
 But that same night, in all his pride,
 By the hands of his servants Belshazzar died.

—*Heinrich Heine* (1820)

CHAPTER FIVE

I. DEGENERATE DESPOT'S DEMISE—5:1-31

a. TERROR

TEXT: 5:1-7

- 1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.
- 2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, might drink therefrom.
- 3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at