

King Nebuchadnezzar Becomes Insane



Nebuchadnezzar King Babylon

A Dramatised Account of Daniel Chapter 4

Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Babylonian Empire, stood amongst the rooftop gardens of his Imperial Palace, looking out over the capital of Babylon. The sun was setting, casting a golden light on the tops of the buildings and temples in the distance. His face beaming, Nebuchadnezzar said, "Ah!—It's SO good to be back home!"

His Queen looked at him with adoring, worshipping eyes and said, "It's wonderful to have you BACK, my lord! You were gone for so many months on your last conquest!"

"Yes!" he exclaimed. "And such GREAT conquests they were! You should have been there to see me lead my Imperial armies as we swept into Palestine and the nations of Jordan! NOTHING could withstand me! We absolutely CRUSHED their armies! We battered their city walls down and burned their palaces! NEVER has there been an Empire as GREAT as mine or a conquering King as GLORIOUS and MIGHTY as I!"

"You brought back SO much WEALTH and RICHES this time!" his Queen exclaimed.

"And SLAVES!" the King said. "I brought back THOUSANDS of slaves also! I am going to put several THOUSAND of them to work in the slave-labour gangs to beautify BABYLON!"

The Queen looked out over the mighty city, marvelling, "How absolutely WONDERFUL it looks! Never has there been a greater or more magnificent city in all the World!"

His chest swelling with pride, Nebuchadnezzar replied, "And I intend to see that it becomes even MORE glorious! With all the new slaves I brought back, I can push the work even FASTER now!"

After several glasses of wine, Nebuchadnezzar and his Queen went to bed, and the great Monarch, ruler of Babylon and the World, drifted off to sleep beneath his shimmering sheets of silk. Elsewhere in the city, men and women of a hundred nationalities, shivering from the cold, exhausted from their

day's labour, fell asleep on rough straw mats in bare stone courtyards.

How quickly the night passed for them! At the crack of a whip, early the next morning before the sun rose, they struggled sleepily to their feet. After eating a poor meal of bread and soup, they were herded out to the streets to labour. By their sweat, their tears and their blood, they built Babylon, the most magnificent city on Earth!

Just after sunrise that morning, a lone figure walked down the wide streets of Babylon, then turned right onto the famous "Processional Way", the main avenue of the city. He was in his late 40's and obviously an important official. He strode down the broad avenue towards the great Ishtar Gate. Suddenly, as he was passing through the Gate, he heard the clatter of a chariot up ahead, driving furiously down the great roadway toward him. As they went racing by, one of the riders cried out, "STOP! There he is!" The horses were abruptly reined in and the chariot came racing back down the avenue and stopped!

"DANIEL!—Quickly!—Get in!" an aged Jewish nobleman called out. "King Nebuchadnezzar wants to see you right away!" Lord Belteshazzar—known to his Hebrew friends as Daniel—quickly climbed up in the chariot beside his friend Abednego, and the chariot raced back down the long avenue towards the Royal Palace in the distance. As soon as he arrived at the Palace steps, a dozen guards escorted him into the King's throne room!

Around the throne was a group of muttering magicians and astrologers, but when Daniel entered, King Nebuchadnezzar immediately had them all put out of the chamber. "Come! Come here, Belteshazzar!" he summoned.

Daniel bowed and approached the throne. "What is it, O King?" he asked.

With a look of almost wide-eyed fear, the King explained: "I had an incredible dream—a NIGHTMARE!—early this morning! As I was lying in my bed, the visions that passed through my head TERRIFIED me!"

He held his head wearily in his hands, saying, "But I don't even understand what it MEANT! I told my dream to all the wise men of Babylon—all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners—but they could NOT INTERPRET it!

"But you, O Belteshazzar, are MASTER of the Magicians!! I know that the spirit of the HOLY GOD is in you, and NO mystery is too difficult for YOU! Many years ago, you were able to tell me the meaning of my dream of the great shining image! (See Daniel 2.) So here then is my dream:

"I was standing on a great plain and I looked, and there before me stood a TREE! It was absolutely ENORMOUS! It grew LARGE and STRONG!—SO high that its top touched the SKY; and it was visible to the very ENDS of the EARTH! It had beautiful leaves and abundant fruit! The beasts of the field found shelter under it, and the birds of the air built nests in its great branches, and every creature on Earth was fed by its fruit!"

Then Nebuchadnezzar's face grew pale and sweat beaded on his face as he

relived the experience: "Then in my vision, I looked, and a WATCHER stood before me!—Not a normal watchman such as guards a city wall, but..." In awe he whispered, "It was a HOLY ONE, an ANGEL descending from HEAVEN!"

"The Watcher cried out in a loud voice: 'Cut DOWN the tree and CHOP OFF its branches; STRIP off its leaves and SCATTER its fruit! Let the animals FLEE from under it and the birds FLY from its branches!—But let the STUMP and its ROOTS be bound with IRON and BRONZE and remain in the ground, in the grass of the field!'"

Trembling, Nebuchadnezzar paused, took a deep breath and continued: "Then the Watcher commanded, 'Let his MIND be changed from that of a MAN and let him be given the mind of a BEAST, till SEVEN YEARS pass over him! The decision is announced by the WATCHERS; the HOLY ONES declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High GOD is Sovereign over the kingdoms of Men and gives them to WHOMEVER He WISHES and sets over them the LOWEST and BASEST of men!'"

"That is my dream! Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it MEANS!"

Daniel sat down on a golden bench, deep in prayer and thought! "O God," he prayed, "what COULD this mean?" Then slowly, clearly, the meaning of the King's dream came to him. As the full truth dawned on him, Daniel was astonished, and his thoughts greatly troubled him, for he knew that the King would surely not be pleased with his answer!—But he knew that he must tell him the truth for his own good!

Seeing the troubled look on Daniel's face, Nebuchadnezzar said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning trouble you. TELL me what it means!"

Respectfully, Daniel answered, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your ENEMIES and its meaning to your ADVERSARIES! The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole Earth...is YOU! YOU, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the Earth, from Persia all the way to the border of Egypt!

"Here then is the INTERPRETATION of the words of the Watcher, O king, the decree the Most High God has issued against you:

"You will be DRIVEN away from people and will live with the wild beasts; you will eat grass like CATTLE and be drenched with the dew of heaven for seven years, until you acknowledge that the Most High GOD is ruler over the Kingdoms of Men and gives them to anyone He WISHES!

"The command to leave the STUMP of the tree with its ROOTS means that your Kingdom will be RESTORED to you when you acknowledge that HEAVEN rules over the EARTH!"

Stunned, Nebuchadnezzar stared at Daniel, hardly able to believe what he had just heard! Daniel knew only too well the REASON that this message had been

given to the King: For his great pride of thinking he alone had built the City of Babylon and the Babylonian Empire; for his oppression and merciless treatment of the poor while he lived in dazzling luxury!

Hoping that King Nebuchadnezzar would somehow CHANGE or REPENT so that he WOULDN'T have to go through such an ordeal, Daniel said, "O king, be pleased to accept my advice: FORSAKE your sins by doing what is RIGHT, and RENOUNCE your WICKEDNESS! Be kind to the OPPRESSED and the poor! Maybe THEN your peace and prosperity will CONTINUE!"

The stunned King Nebuchadnezzar sat for a long time quietly pondering what Daniel had said. These were very bold words for ANY man alive to say to the ruler of the World!—EVEN someone whom he respected as much as Daniel.

Daniel spoke up once again, "O King, if you will FORSAKE your sins, the Lord may YET have mercy, and none of this need happen...."

Nebuchadnezzar abruptly and coldly said, "You are EXCUSED, Belteshazzar!"

It became apparent during the next weeks that Nebuchadnezzar was NOT PLEASED with Daniel's advice, for Daniel was not summoned to the King's side again. For a long time, Nebuchadnezzar was sullen and sulking, still in fear of his ominous dream but unwilling to change. But after several months had passed, the fear that the dream had given him faded, and he began to become even MORE haughty, proud, cruel and tyrannical! As the building continued, hundreds more slaves fell under their burdens, never to rise again!

Twelve months passed, and one morning as he was strolling on the roof of his royal Palace, Nebuchadnezzar looked out over the great city that he had built. NEVER had there been—and never WOULD there be—a city as magnificent and glorious as Babylon, he thought! Why, it was the LARGEST city in the entire World, its massive 300-foot-high and 80-foot-thick walls running 60 miles around it!

He thought of the great golden temple to his god, Marduk, and of the 53 different temples and □ altars to the gods that he had spent so much time and money building and decorating. Proudly he thought of his Imperial Palace, the most magnificent building on Earth, and how he lived in extravagance and luxury beyond imagination, unsurpassed by any King on Earth!

Filled with pride, Nebuchadnezzar spread his hands over the city and exclaimed aloud, "Is not this the GREAT BABYLON that I have built as my royal residence, by MY mighty power and for the GLORY of MY majesty?"

The words were still on his lips when an audible Voice boomed from Heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been TAKEN from you! The Kingdom is DEPARTED from you! "You will be DRIVEN AWAY from people and will live with the wild beasts! You will eat grass like cattle! Seven years will pass over you until you acknowledge that the Most High GOD is ruler over the Kingdoms of Men and gives them to ANYONE He PLEASES to!"

Nebuchadnezzar shook with fear, mixed with a desperate rage! "No! No! NO!" he

shouted arrogantly, "I will NOT..." Suddenly he staggered dizzily and fell to the floor! The Palace guards raced forward to help him, but to their shock, he got up on all fours like a dog, and fled away from them on his hands and knees. Whimpering, he hid himself fearfully in the rooftop Garden.

When his nobles and counsellors assembled that afternoon, they were shocked at the sight that met their eyes. Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty King of the World, his face covered with dirt, was down on his hands and knees, digging amongst the flower-beds. He had gone mad! Daniel gave one last sad look at the fallen Monarch, and, together with the other officials, they eventually signed a decree to have him sent off to a country estate outside of Babylon.

Slowly, slowly, seven long years passed; summers and winters came and went. In the city of Babylon, the sound of building came to a stop and the slave-driver's whip was not heard; no roads or temples were built, no canals were dug. In the seventh year, early one morning, an important official came riding up to the gate of the heavily-guarded country estate. Once inside, Daniel was greeted by the Captain of the Guard.

"I've come to see King Nebuchadnezzar," Daniel said. "Where IS he?"

"The Captain laughed, "'The Beast' is over THERE! In fact, you are just in time for his morning meal!" he said, pointing to a slave carrying an armful of grass across the yard. Daniel and the Captain followed the slave across the yard, and there, curled up asleep amongst the tall grass was the most miserable WRETCH Daniel had ever seen in his life! He had never even seen the lowest slave in such a pitiful condition!

"The Beast" lay there asleep, his naked, hairy body wet with the morning dew. His long hair and beard were so indescribably filthy that they had matted together and looked like bird's feathers instead of hair! His fingernails and toenails had grown so long and curved that they looked like bird's claws. As the men approached, he woke up startled! But seeing the fresh tender grass, he raced up on his hands and knees and began eagerly eating it, grunting as he shoved it into his mouth!

The old man burst into tears! "Leave me alone with him!" he ordered. When they had gone, he began to pour out his heart in prayer to the Lord, pleading for Him to restore the King now that the seven years was over. "The Beast" paused in his eating and looked up at the man standing there praying. Then SUDDENLY, something SNAPPED inside his mind and his sanity was RESTORED!

Nebuchadnezzar raised his eyes toward Heaven, and realising all that had happened to him, began to praise the Most High God and glorify Him! With tears streaming down his face, he said: "His Dominion is an Eternal Dominion; His Kingdom endures from generation to generation! All the peoples of the Earth are esteemed as NOTHING in His sight! He does as He pleases with the powers of Heaven and the peoples of the Earth! NO one can hold back His hand or say to Him: 'What have You done?'"

Within a day, all his advisers and nobles had come to the estate, and seeing the King in his right mind, clean and dressed in his royal robes, they

restored him to his throne! His honour and splendor were given back to him and he became even GREATER than before!

Nebuchadnezzar had learned his lesson and had a change of heart and became the MAN OF GOD that the Lord intended him to be! He had, in fact, become CONVERTED to faith in the one true God! He was SO changed that he wrote a letter to the ENTIRE WORLD, and had it translated into every language in his Empire, confessing his sin and proclaiming his faith in God! So amazing was this official letter of public apology, that it is PRESERVED in the BIBLE in the fourth Chapter of the Book of Daniel!

His letter ends with this proclamation: "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, PRAISE and EXALT and GLORIFY the King of Heaven, because everything He does is right and all His ways are just! And those who walk in PRIDE He is able to ABASE and HUMBLE!"

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

(1) Apart from his harsh, cruel treatment of the poor, Nebuchadnezzar's GREATEST sin was PRIDE! He may seem like a very EXTREME case, yet there are people in the World today who are JUST as proud over much SMALLER accomplishments! You don't have to be the King of a World Empire and live in extravagant luxury to be proud! Some people just practically ooze with pride over the way they look, or their house or their position in society!—Or the fact that they do their job so well! Let's face it, ALL of us are guilty of the sin of pride in one area or another and have our little "idols" that the Lord has to keep smashing!

(2) Like Nebuchadnezzar, ALL of us can be guilty of forgetting that it is GOD that has given us our position in life, or made us great in some way, and begin to take the credit to ourSELVES! "An high look and a proud heart is SIN" (Proverbs 21:4), and when we get too big a shot of our own EGO, then we're in TROUBLE! The minute you start patting yourself on the back, you're finished, because "PRIDE goes before DESTRUCTION, and an HAUGHTY SPIRIT before a FALL! When PRIDE comes, then comes SHAME."—Proverbs 16:18; 11:2.

(3) As the Bible and history show us over and over again, few people seem to be able to take power, prosperity, or popularity without being corrupted by it!—And the reason that King Nebuchadnezzar's pride stands out so MUCH is because he had GREAT power, prosperity and popularity and was GREATLY corrupted by it!

But WE can be just as guilty of letting these things corrupt US on our OWN personal level if we don't stay mighty close to the Lord and constantly acknowledge Him in ALL we do, and remind ourselves that WHATEVER blessings we have, have been given to us by the Lord! "Every GOOD and PERFECT gift comes down from the Father! What do you have that you did not RECEIVE from GOD?—For a man can receive NOTHING, except it be given him from HEAVEN!"—James 1:17; 1Corinthians 4:7; John 3:27.

(4) Once the Lord reveals our sins to us by the WORD, or someone points them out to us, we have to make a CHOICE: Either humble ourselves and RECEIVE it

and repent and change, or else harden ourselves in pride like Nebuchadnezzar did! And when you start to resist the Lord's SPIRIT, then the LORD starts to resist YOU! As James 4:6 says, "God RESISTS the PROUD! He gives GRACE (mercy) only to the HUMBLE!"

(5) When people REJECT God's Word regarding specific problems in their lives, such as pride, they usually become even WORSE!—Even HARDER, haughtier and more defiant than ever!—Which is a VERY spiritually dangerous state to be in, because people who are proud and selfish lay themselves wide open for the Devil! Pride in Satan was the BEGINNING of all evil, and is STILL the root of all evil today, and if you allow it to dominate your heart, and resist the Lord's attempts to chasten and humble you, you are creating a foothold for the Enemy in your life!

(6) In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the tree was cut down until only the STUMP remained in the GRASS! The only thing that could finally CHANGE Nebuchadnezzar's heart was for him to have to be "cut down" right to the "grassroots" level with the poor, to see what it was LIKE!—And the Lord has had to do this to MANY proud, exalted people to teach them the same lesson! As Nebuchadnezzar confessed, "Them that walk in PRIDE He IS able to ABASE!"

(7) It took great COURAGE for Daniel to tell Nebuchadnezzar to repent and change. We ALSO should have the courage and the conviction to humbly, and in love, point out people's errors to them, even if it hurts.—Proverbs 27:6, 28:23; Galatians 4:16. But use WISDOM!—Proverbs 9:7-8; Matthew 7:6.

PRAYER: Lord, please help me not to think of myself more highly than I ought to think, but help me to realise that it's YOU Who has given me WHATEVER good I enjoy: whether riches, position or talents! Please help me not to get lifted up in pride about my accomplishments, but help me to humble myself under Your mighty hand and remain an obedient servant, a mere useful tool for Your Kingdom! In Jesus' name I pray! Amen.

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