

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

6

“THE HEAVENS DO RULE”

Daniel 4: 1-37

*“He answered and said, Lo, I see four men
loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they
have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like
the Son of God.”*

Daniel 3:25

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Adult Sunday School Class

“THE HEAVENS DO RULE”

Daniel 4:26

Chapter four “in Daniel is a tract that King Nebuchadnezzar wrote through Daniel. It contains Nebuchadnezzar’s heathen expressions and ideas, as well as his experience in coming to the true God. It is a tract describing his conversion. In his testimony he presents an unusual experience: a judgement of God upon his sins called ‘lycanthropy’ . . . Out of that dramatic experience came Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion to the true God. He writes the tract in Aramaic and addresses it to all the inhabitants of the earth.” (Criswell. Vol. III. P. 18) The book of Daniel recounts how God used this great man and his friends during the 70 year captivity of Israel in Babylon. However, there is a subtext that concerns the man Nebuchadnezzar. God, for His own reasons, chose this pagan King to chastise His people for their sins. As a matter of fact Jeremiah tells us, *“that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that*

will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.” (Jeremiah 27:8) Because of His special use of this man God chose to reveal Himself to him is a step-by-step way that eventually brings him to saving faith. It took time and a very dramatic experience for Nebuchadnezzar to understand who he was in God’s sight.

Chapter four is the story of the final stage in Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion. The chapter opens with Nebuchadnezzar at his palace content to survey all he had conquered. God was soon to show him that it was not his greatness that brought this success but the divine blessing of God’s hand. The king’s peace was interrupted by a disturbing dream. He was troubled by the vision of a great tree. He said *“Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight*

thereof to the end of all the earth: The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.” (Vs. 10-12) He saw the tree being cut down at the command of “a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven.” (Vs. 13) The stump was bound with an iron band. Then it was said of him, “Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him.” (Vs. 16) The purpose of this vision and the subsequent events was so “that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.” (Vs. 17b)

Nebuchadnezzar told this dream to his wise men. They could not help him. He then told it to Daniel, whose Babylonian name was Belteshazzar, and asked for the interpretation. The king had already had experience with how Daniel's God could reveal secrets and dreams. Daniel had to tell Nebuchadnezzar some bad news. God was going to humble this great king

to bring him unto Himself. *“This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”* (Vs. 24-25b) God was pronouncing judgment on him and Daniel is extending to him an opportunity to repent. *“Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.”* (Vs. 27) With this chilling message in his mind Nebuchadnezzar remains in his pride and self-sufficiency for one entire year. Listen to his arrogance in his own words. *“The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”* (Vs. 30) The last conscious thought

Nebuchadnezzar had was the voice of God saying, *“O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee 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.”* (Vs. 31) For seven years Nebuchadnezzar was to roam the forests as an animal. *“Until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”* (Vs. 32b)

After seven years he lifted his eyes to Heaven. Then his understanding returned and he realized it was God’s working in his life. His testimony was, *“I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation.”* (Vs. 34b) C. I. Scofield summarized it in this way in his note on verse 34. “A process may be traced in Nebuchadnezzar’s apprehension of the true God. (1) ‘God is a God

of gods [one amongst the national or tribal gods, but greater than they]' and a Lord {Adonai = Master of kings, and a revealer of secrets" (Dan. 2:47). (2) He is still a Hebrew deity, but Master of angels, and a God who responds to faith (Dan 3:28). (3) Here (Dan. 4:34-35) the king rises into a true apprehension of God. Cf. Darius, Dan 6:25-27)" The last words we hear from Nebuchadnezzar are his testimony of faith in God. *"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."* (Vs. 37)

"The day of judgment fell at the end of twelve months. How earnestly did the Lord plead with him through Daniel." (Criswell. Vol. III. P. 39.) God calls to every person to repent and come to Him. He brings different people across our path to witness of His faithfulness and truth. Often He enters into our lives and brings us to Himself. Sometimes the experiences can be dramatic but they never come without an exhortation to first repent so that there would *"be a lengthening of thy*

tranquility.” (Vs. 27) God gave Nebuchadnezzar an additional twelve months to repent. He is longsuffering with us but He will not call for ever. “While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.” (Hebrews 3:15)

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