

Daniel

IV (β). Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream

- We noted last time that ch.4 is a letter from the king to all the peoples in his dominion relating a profound, life changing experience he'd had in his life;
- We judged from the evidence in his salutation that he was relating his own conversion to faith in the God of Israel, the God of D., Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah;
- The contents of ch.4 seems to be the account of that final, saving confrontation between this earthly king and the LORD of Heaven and Earth;
- **A. The King's Dream, vv.4-17:**
 - This experience was in the form of another dream;
 - **1. The Circumstances, vv.4-8:**
 - Let's note the circumstances, v.4, READ; the king was at home enjoying peace and prosperity;
 - From this statement commentators infer a time when the king was not waging war but was occupied at home w/ building and "home beautification";
 - Vv.5-8 describe nearly the same process as characterized the previous dream: the king dreams and is troubled ("terrified"); the king's wise men were summoned to interpret it but they could not; finally, D. is summoned for the task;
 - NOTE – it's not known why D. is not the first one consulted; maybe as chief of the wise men he has arranged, for the sake of the others' education, that everyday issues of the king be handled by the apprentice and junior wise men, and for anything they cannot handle D. is to be consulted;
 - It's possible that so much time has elapsed since the events of ch.2 at the beginning of his reign and those events of ch.3 that their impact has worn off; and Neb. has simply forgotten about the uniqueness of D. – that coupled w/ the sudden onset of fear this dream brings, in his haste, he simply summons all the wise men of the kingdom;
 - At any rate, the events unfold according to the pattern established in Daniel – i.e., in such a way that,
 - On the one hand God's servant, God's message and thus God himself, is highlighted; and
 - On the other hand: the things of this world, the powers of man are a vain hope...
 - **2. The Dream Itself, vv.9-17:**
 - In vv.9-17 Neb. addresses D. and relates the substance of the dream, READ;
 - **a. The Tree, vv.10-12:**
 - V.10, a single tree on an open plain; similar to the opening scene of ch.3 – Neb.'s golden idol on the plain of Dura;
 - Like the statue of ch.2, the tree also was of enormous height, vv.10c-11, READ; and overflowing in its abundance, v.12, READ;
 - **b. The Messenger, vv.13-17:**
 - While the king's attn. is fixed on the grandeur of this tree, he suddenly notices the appearance of an angel, v.13, READ; messenger is lit. "watchman";
 - The angel delivers a shocking decree, vv.14-15a, READ;
 - **Q.** Something happens mid-way through v.15(b), WHAT? **A.** The figure changes! The decree is no longer against an "it" (the tree), but against a "him" (a person);
 - Regarding this person it is said... vv.15b-16, READ;
 - Finally, the purpose of the decree is announced, v.17, READ;
 - **B. Daniel Interprets the Dream, vv.18-27:**
 - Having narrated the dream, Neb. pleads w/ D. to interpret it for him, v.18, READ;
 - And D. himself is affected by the dream, v.19, READ;
 - Being admonished by the king D. begins: vv.20-22, READ; like the statue's head of gold in his first dream, the tree represents the Babylonian kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar;

- Then D. repeats and makes clear what is implied by the angel's decree, vv.24-26, READ;
- To this D. adds a prophetic admonition, v.27; though the judgment is "decreed" (v.24) such things are always conditioned on the reaction of the person;

Jeremiah 18:7-11 ⁷ *If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, ⁸ and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. ⁹ And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, ¹⁰ and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it. ¹¹ "Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, 'This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.'*

Ezekiel 18:21-23 ²¹ *But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. ²² None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered against him. Because of the righteous things he has done, he will live. ²³ Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?*

- NOTE D.'s heart; he did not wish the judgment to come but for the king to repent and be delivered from it;

C. How It Came to Pass, vv.28-37:

- W/ such an admonition we hope for the best; how this actually turned out is hinted in v.28, READ;
- **1. After a Gracious Interlude, v.29:**
- **Q.** But was the judgment immediate? **A.** NO! – v.29, *"Twelve months later..."*; God in His grace gives sinners time to repent; 2 Peter 3:9, *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* Rom.2:4, *"...God's kindness leads you toward repentance";*
- **2. The Judgment Comes, vv.30-33:**
- But, God's grace notwithstanding, one day the king's heart is so filled w/ pride that he lavishes praise upon himself, v.30, READ;
- Immediately, the angelic voice which had warned him a year earlier reiterates the judgment, vv.31-32, and what was decreed came to pass, v.33, READ;
- "A form of insanity called lycanthropy (fancying himself to be a beast and living in their haunts) for pride generated by his great conquest and buildings" Fausset's Bible Dictionary;
- There is an irony in this form of madness. Though God made man in His likeness and gave to him glory and dominion; if he then in pride exalts himself to godhood – like Adam in the garden and Nebuchadnezzar here – he loses his true humanity, becoming like the beasts; and so loses also his dominion;
- **3. The King's Restoration, vv.34-37:**
- The king's restoration is outlined in that last verses
- First, he was restored to his right mind, v.34a, READ; like the demoniac running naked among the tombs whom Jesus healed – he was found dressed and in his right mind;
- This is immediately expressed in actions, v.34b-35, READ;
- BTW, true sanity is expressed in praise;
- Along w/ his right mind the glory and splendor of his kingdom are returned to him as well, vv.36;
- The lesson to be learned – v.37, READ;