

# THE KING DETHRONED AND HIS PRIDE ABASED

BIBLE TEXT : Daniel 4:1-37.

LESSON 421 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "This matter 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" (Daniel 4:17).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### Daniel 4:1-37

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.

2 I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the 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 dominion *is* from generation to generation.

4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine 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.

7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, 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 before him I told the dream, *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,

## Bible References:

### I The King's Dream

1. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God's eternal dominion, Daniel 4:1-3.
2. The king dreams of a great tree hewn down, Daniel 4:4-17;  
**Psalm 37:35-36**  
35 I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.  
36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he *was* not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

### II The Interpretation and Warning

1. The wise men of Babylon could not interpret the king's dream, Daniel 4:18, 6, 7;  
**Daniel 2:2-13**  
2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.  
3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.  
4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation.  
5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill.  
6 But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.  
7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it.  
8 The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me.  
9 But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, *there is but* one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.  
10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore *there is* no king, lord, nor ruler, *that* asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean.  
11 And *it is* a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.  
12 For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise *men* of Babylon.  
13 And the decree went forth that the wise *men* should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.
2. Daniel interprets the dream, Daniel 4:19-26,  
**Daniel 2:36-45**  
36 This *is* the dream; and we will tell the interpretation

tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.

10 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.

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* 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.

13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven;

14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:

15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his 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 This matter *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 basest of men.

18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now

thereof before the king.

<sup>37</sup> Thou, O king, *art* a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

<sup>38</sup> And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou *art* this head of gold.

<sup>39</sup> And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

<sup>40</sup> And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all *things*: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

<sup>41</sup> And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

<sup>42</sup> And *as* the toes of the feet *were* part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

<sup>43</sup> And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

<sup>44</sup> And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

<sup>45</sup> Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream *is* certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

### 3. Daniel counsels the king to heed the warning of the dream and turn from his sin, Daniel 4:27;

#### **Isaiah 58:1**

<sup>1</sup> Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

#### **Jeremiah 26:3**

<sup>3</sup> If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.

#### **Ezekiel 3:18**

<sup>18</sup> When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

#### **Matthew 27:19**

<sup>19</sup> When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

#### **Hebrews 12:25**

<sup>25</sup> See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven:

### **III The Fulfilment**

#### 1. After 12 months of pride and rejection of God's mercy, Nebuchadnezzar was dethroned, Daniel 4:28-32;

#### **Daniel 5:20**

<sup>20</sup> But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind

thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, 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.

19 Then Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream *be* to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth;

21 Whose leaves *were* fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it *was* meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation:

22 It *is* thou, O king, that art 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 an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet 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;

24 This *is* the interpretation, O king, and this *is* the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king:

hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

**2 Chronicles 26:16**

<sup>16</sup> But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

**2 Chronicles 32:25**

<sup>25</sup> But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit *done* unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

**Isaiah 14:12-15**

<sup>12</sup> How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

<sup>13</sup> For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

<sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

<sup>15</sup> Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

2. Driven from his palace, the king lived in the fields as an animal, Daniel 4:33;

**Daniel 5:21**

<sup>21</sup> And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and *that* he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

**Psalms 32:9**

<sup>9</sup> Be ye not as the horse, *or* as the mule, *which* have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

3. After seven seasons Nebuchadnezzar turned to God and his understanding returned to him, Daniel 4:34;

**Acts 8:22**

<sup>22</sup> Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

4. The kingdom was restored to Nebuchadnezzar when he acknowledged that God rules in Heaven and in earth. Daniel 4:35, 36, 17, 25, 32.

5. King Nebuchadnezzar gives his testimony and warning on pride, Daniel 4:37, 1-3;

**Proverbs 16:18**

<sup>18</sup> Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

**Proverbs 29:23**

<sup>23</sup> A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

**1 John 2:16**

<sup>16</sup> For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

**Revelation 3:17**

<sup>17</sup> Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

**Notes:**

In a former lesson we studied the second chapter of Daniel and found that through a dream God revealed to Nebuchad-

25 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.

26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; 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 shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

30 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?

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 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.

33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar:

nezzar that he was the very head of gold of the image that depicted world empires. The God of Heaven gave him the kingdom of Babylon and all the power, strength, and glory of that kingdom, and called him a king of kings. But what unconverted man is there whom God has blessed, promoted, and prospered, who will not take all the honour unto himself and forget that it is God who giveth these things? Nebuchadnezzar had yet to learn and acknowledge that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men."

### **The King's Prophetic Forewarning**

Nebuchadnezzar had been successful in his wars and all his administration. His enemies had all been effectively subdued and everything was quiet and prosperous in his empire. He had succeeded in making Babylon one of the wonders of the world. Everything to which he had laid his hand had turned out favourably. There remained nothing more to be desired to satisfy his ambition as a man, or to add to his glory as a great king. And while he was thus at rest in his house and flourishing in his palace a dream came to him. This dream, so vividly described in our text, the king remembered and recounted in minute detail. But the king was utterly at a loss to understand the meaning of this dream. It should have been plain from the very terms of the dream that it was meant to give the king a serious admonition against pride and self-glorification, and that God would send speedy humiliation to those who give themselves the glory for what they have achieved or enjoy. Needless to say, the king was very much disturbed by this dream and the implications thereof.

After the wise men of Babylon had been unable to interpret the dream, Daniel came before the king. The king gave a wonderful testimony to the faithfulness of Daniel, the prophet of God, then told him his dream. For one hour Daniel did not speak in the king's presence. Daniel was troubled in his thoughts, very probably because the interpretation of this dream was much different from the former dream. To stand before a world monarch and tell him his faults was altogether different from standing before him and telling him he was a great king, a head of gold in the scheme of world empires. But at the king's encouragement, Daniel said that the tree that had grown and become strong was the king, "for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth." But as the dream foretold, he was to be driven from men and have his dwelling among the beasts of the field and eat grass as an ox, and the dew of heaven was to be upon him until seven times passed over him. Then Daniel, true to his God, at the risk of his own life, gave counsel to the king and advised him to break off his sin by righteousness, and his iniquity by showing mercy unto the poor. What a different story the outcome of this dream would have been if King Nebuchadnezzar had heeded the warning!

### **The King's Offence**

We would suppose that such an impressive forewarning and admonition could not fail of the desired effect, but there is nothing more treacherous and deceitful than poor, depraved human nature. Nebuchadnezzar doubtless intended to profit to the full from the counsel he had received. He had the utmost confidence in the wisdom and inspiration of the prophet. He had every reason to accept the whole presentation as a veritable message from God, nor was it in the composition of this monarch's character to make light of so evident a communication from the Deity whose signs and wonders he had beheld. But it is

and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' *feathers*, and his nails like birds' *claws*.

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 honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* 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 my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37 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.

hard for rich and powerful men in the midst of their glory and flatteries to be true and faithful to all they know and feel as their duty in regard to what is right and proper. The Saviour and His Apostles have remarked upon the great difficulty of such to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and Nebuchadnezzar was not an exception. Where is the unsaved man in public office who could be entrusted with such power and glory without having his head completely turned and his self-esteem lifted higher than the stars?

The king possibly pondered long the meaning of this dream, and no doubt for a while walked carefully as a result of it. Finally a whole year had passed and he was walking upon the high places of his palace, in all its grandeur, ornamented with battlements and towers. All around and beneath him lay the city with its grand avenues and its gigantic wall with one hundred mighty gates. Nebuchadnezzar, taking a survey of his magnificent achievements, refers them exultingly to himself, to his own genius, but leaves out that eternal Providence without which he was no more than the meanest beggar. He looked and admired, but forgot about the dream, 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?"

He had heard the heavenly "watcher" say, and Daniel repeat, that it was his duty, as that of all men, to know and realise that it is the Most High that ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will; but in the moment of transport over what he had accomplished he forgot all this and set everything down to his own credit. Thus he lent his soul and speech to a miserable pride, which seems to have been this man's besetting sin -- the besetting sin of all human greatness and success -- which reached its culmination as he thus walked and spoke amid the towers and battlements of his glorious palace.

#### **The King's Punishment**

Twelve months of grace had been given to the king, ample time for consideration and repentance from his pride and vainglory. Punishment came quickly when the Lord's time arrived. While the words were still in the king's mouth there was a voice from Heaven, saying, "The kingdom is departed from thee." That which the king had seen in a dream, and which had been interpreted by the faithful prophet, finally came to pass. It is thought that the king was seized with a form of insanity in which his human understanding was taken from him and he thought himself to be an animal. This well may be the case, because in reference to his recovery he said, "Mine understanding returned unto me." Yet we cannot think of this as altogether a natural affliction, for it was sent from God as a direct result of his sin and pride. He had unduly glorified his own genius and God turned that genius into the lowest instinct of an ox that eateth grass, as helpless and as base as if he had never been a man at all. The description throughout exhibits one of the most horrible afflictions that could come upon a human being, to say nothing of such a mighty potentate as Nebuchadnezzar. Verily, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Almighty God.

#### **The King's Recovery and Restoration**

Seven times or seasons, very possibly meaning seven years, passed over the king's head in this condition, but "at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven." That look unto Heaven was coming from a grievous sufferer who looked imploringly for mercy and help from whence only they could come. It was a look of reverence for the God of Heaven and a look of prayer for pity; and it was an availing look. The king

states: "Mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: 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?"

He had endured a most awful judgment, but it had upon him the intended effect. It humbled his pride. It brought him to the most devout personal recognition of the true God. It set him to work to do all in his power to honour and glorify Jehovah. It took away from his heart all shame or hesitation in confessing his sin, and the justice of the punishment he had suffered on account of it. It made him a penitent adorer and royal missionary of the true God. He had learned that the heavens do rule, and now his royal desire was that all people and nations and languages that dwell in all the earth might learn the same without coming to it through such sorrows as he had experienced.

The fact that after such total disability he found his kingly authority reserved for him must likewise refer to the special providence and merciful goodness of God. It could have been that Daniel and the three other Hebrews who held high places in government were used of God in holding this position for their king. They knew that this affliction was for a definite time and that he would recover. Accordingly, the king had this testimony to give that when the days of his affliction were accomplished his counsellors and lords sought unto him and he was established in his kingdom and excellent majesty was added unto him.

God's discipline acknowledged and accepted is always God's favour secured.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Describe in your own words the dream, which Nebuchadnezzar had.
2. What words of commendation did the king have in regard to Daniel's ability?
3. Why should the king have so much confidence in Daniel's ability?
4. After Daniel interpreted the dream, what more did he have to say to the king?
5. Under what conditions would it have been possible that this dream would never be fulfilled?
6. What was the king in the process of saying when the Lord let that which the dream had prophesied happen?
7. What effect did the fulfilling of the dream have on the king in the end?