

## Daniel 4

**Daniel 4:27 Therefore, O King, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.**

The story of the Great Tree Dream begins and ends with Nebuchadnezzar giving praise in acknowledgement of the greatness of God. As a literary device, the conclusion before the story creates curiosity as to how this Babylonian king would have come to such a conclusion. It conditions the reader, preparing us for the story of an event so powerful that the king of Babylon was brought to his knees.

This is Nebuchadnezzar's second dream story. Again, he called for the wise men of Babylon to interpret the dream (this time he told them the dream) but they could not give an interpretation. Daniel was summoned and so he hears and then interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Nebuchadnezzar is represented in the dream by a great tree that reaches to the heavens and that covers the earth. The tree gives shelter and sustenance to all. Then the holy one comes from God and

orders the tree to be chopped down. The stump is to be bound with a band of iron and bronze. Then the personality represented by the tree morphs into a man whose heart is changed into that of a beast until seven times pass over him.

Daniel's interpretation was that because of his pride and arrogance, God would take the kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar and the king would become like a beast in the field for 7 years until he came to know "that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." When this lesson was learned the kingdom would be restored to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel concluded his interpretation with an appeal to the king. He advised the king to "break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. "Perhaps," Daniel suggested, "There may be a lengthening of your prosperity."

The dream served first to make the point again that Nebuchadnezzar served at the pleasure of God, the Most High who rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses. This was the point of Nebuchadnezzar's first dream and the lesson of the fiery furnace. So, for the third time, God demonstrated to Nebuchadnezzar that the existence of his

kingdom depended on the will of God and that he could not keep the kingdom should God decide to take it from him. In such a circumstance, it would be necessary to "keep God at bay" in order to remain in power.

This was the substance of Daniel's advice at the conclusion of the dream interpretation. Given that God has found you to be forgetful of the fragility of your rule and empire, He is going to take it away from you for 7 years. Rather than go through that, why don't you decide to change now and conform to God's requirements. Then He would have no reason to chasten you. But, Nebuchadnezzar refused to hear the message of the dream. He did not conform his perception of life to the reality that his dream had revealed. Consequently, he lost 7 years.

The challenge we all face is to come to grips with our dependence on God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." (James 1:17) If you will take that step, the next is to conform to what you know would be pleasing to God. It is in your own interest to do so.