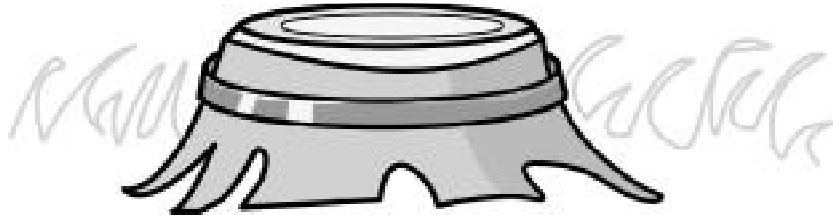


Nebuchadnezzar's Judgment (Punishment)



SABBATH—OCTOBER 16

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Daniel 4.

MEMORY VERSE: “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, give praise and honor and glory to the King of heaven [God]. Everything he [God] does is right. All of his ways are fair. He is able to bring down those [people] who live proudly” (Daniel 4:37, NIV).

HARRY TRUMAN WAS THE CARETAKER OF A RECREATION LODGE five miles north of Mount St. Helens in Washington State, U.S.A. Neighbors had warned Harry that Mount Saint Helens was going to explode. But Harry Truman ignored them. He said, “Nobody knows more about this mountain than Harry. The mountain doesn't [does not] dare blow up on me.” On May 18, 1980, at 8:31 A.M. the mountain did explode, flattening everything for 150 square miles, including Harry, his cabin, and his cats.

People warned Harry. But they could not force him to flee. It is the same with God and us. He warns us against not loving Him. But He does not force us to love Him. This week, we will study one example of how God worked in a powerful way to warn someone.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What was King Nebuchadnezzar's fundamental (basic) problem? How are Daniel 4 and Daniel 2 almost the same? What does Daniel 4 teach us about God's patience with sinners? Does God always remove the things that separate us from Him? What makes a person's conversion¹ real?

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 23.

¹conversion—accepting Jesus as your Savior and changing how you live because you became a Christian. We can accept Jesus and change how we live only with the help of the Holy Spirit.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 17

**THE KING'S TESTIMONY²
(Daniel 4:1-9).**

Daniel 4 holds the wonderful testimony of King Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar ruled the world. But he humbled himself before the King of the universe (God). He admitted that he would depend on the Lord, “the Most High.” The Lord is the One who “rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it [the kingdom] to whomever He chooses” (Daniel 4:25, NKJV). During his long rule (605–652 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar had learned that the Hebrew God can explain mysteries (Daniel 2:28, NIV). The king also admitted that God can save His faithful followers from the furnace of fire (Daniel 3:27, 29). But the king's heart remained proud and independent. So God removed him from his throne and humbled him into the dust. After getting well from his sickness, the king surrendered fully to God. The “once proud king had become a humble child of God.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophecies and Kings*, p. 521.

Read the king's words in Daniel 4:3. Contrast³ his words with what happened in Daniel 3, and with Daniel's interpretation of the dream in Daniel 2:44. What did the king seem to finally learn about people trying to live without God's help?

²testimony—the good things about God that we tell to other people.

³contrast—show how things are different.

⁴falling broken—humbling yourself to the point of being “poor” in spirit and changing your lifestyle to that of a humble Christian according to Bible truths.

⁵events—things that happen.

People have wished to be God from the earliest times of the great controversy (war) between Jesus and Satan. This same wish was seen in Nebuchadnezzar, as well.

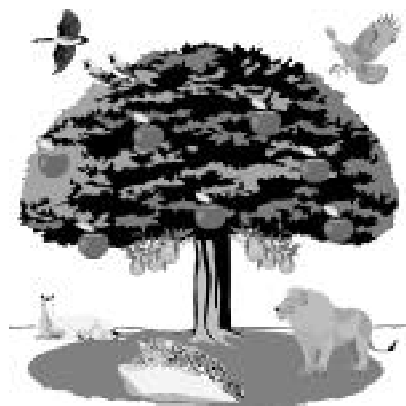
Think about everything we have read about Nebuchadnezzar so far. In what ways was he trying to be God?

You do not need to be a proud, powerful king in order to try to be God. How can anyone be tempted to play God? Why is falling broken⁴ before the Cross the only cure against trying to be God?

MONDAY—OCTOBER 18

**NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SECOND
DREAM (Daniel 4:10-18).**

What was the dream about? What events⁵ happened in the dream? Daniel 4:10-17.



Babylon was in the middle of the then known world. The tree being in the middle of the earth shows how important Nebuchadnezzar was.

The king also sees “a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven” (Daniel 4:13, NKJV). Throughout history, God has been the Holy “Watcher,” caring for His people. (Read 2 Chronicles 16:9).

The stump and the band mean that God would protect Nebuchadnezzar even when Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind. Nebuchadnezzar would return to his throne after he came to know God. While he was insane, Nebuchadnezzar also may have been chained with a bronze chain to limit his movements. There is some proof for a Mesopotamian custom (habit) of putting metal bands on trees. Were the bands used to prevent trees from cracking? Or were the bands used for some other reason? Nobody knows for sure. Remnants⁶ of a tree with bronze rings or bands were dug up at Khorsabad, at the entrance to the temple Shamash (the sun god). (Read J. J. Collins, *Daniel* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993], p. 226.)



Daniel 4:17 was spoken to the king. What must the people who are living know? What difficult questions does this knowledge cause us to ask? But

⁶remnants—remaining pieces.

what comfort does knowing these things give us?

TUESDAY—OCTOBER 19

DANIEL'S ADVICE (Daniel 4:19-27).

How did Daniel react to the dream? Why was he so unwilling to speak? Daniel 4:19-22.

The situation was serious. How do you tell the king that he will lose his mind for seven years? But Daniel had to tell him the truth. The advice Daniel gave shows the king could still avoid punishment. God wanted the king to learn a lesson from this dream. But if the king would not learn the lesson, he would have to learn the lesson by losing his mind. Then, when he learned the lesson, he would get his kingdom back.

What did God want the king to understand? Daniel 4:25. Why would God want him to understand this?

Some thirty years earlier Daniel had told the king, “The God of heaven has given you a kingdom” (Daniel 2:37, 38, NKJV). But Nebuchadnezzar had set up a gold statue to announce he was independent of God's control. Nebuchadnezzar had refused to accept God's rulership. Now he was given another opportunity to accept God's rulership. But again he failed.

God was not going to give up on the king (Daniel 4:27). What does this tell us about God (Exodus 34:6; 2 Peter 3:9, 15)? What hope does this give us?

WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 20

THE KING'S HUMBLING EXPERIENCE (Daniel 4:28-33).

Why did God punish Nebuchadnezzar when he boasted, “ ‘Is not this the great Babylon I have built?’ ” (Daniel 4:30, NIV).

Babylon covered an area of about two square miles. The total length of its inner and outer walls was about thirteen miles long. The double wall protecting the city measured more than ninety-six feet in width. It was a religious center without any equal. “A cuneiform tablet⁷ of Nebuchadnezzar's time lists 53 temples honoring important gods, 955 smaller sanctuaries (churches), and 384 street altars—all of them within the city walls.”—Adapted from *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 797.



As soon as Nebuchadnezzar's boastful words came out of his mouth, he lost his mind. What do we know about the sickness that Nebuchadnezzar had?



Nebuchadnezzar acted almost the same as a wild animal. So he could have had lycanthropy, which is the wolf-man syndrome (sickness). Or it could have been boanthropy, in which a person thinks he or she is an ox. A Babylonian cuneiform tablet published in 1975 may speak of Nebuchadnezzar's mental illness. The tablet explains that the king gave confusing orders. He refused to accept advice. He did not show any love to his son or daughter. He neglected his family. And he no longer did his duties as king. (Read Siegfried H. Horn, in *Ministry*,⁸ April 1978, p. 40.)

What lessons can we learn from Nebuchadnezzar's pride? How is the king's experience different from the story of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-23)?

⁷cuneiform tablet—early Babylonian writings written on pieces of clay.

⁸*Ministry*—a magazine for ministers published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The word *ministry* means a person's work for God.

THURSDAY—OCTOBER 21

**NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S
CONVERSION⁹ (Daniel 4:34-37).**

What were the important points of Nebuchadnezzar's "sermon" after God returned him to his throne? Daniel 4:34, 35, 37.

The return of the king's mind came to him when he recognized the true God. "The once proud king had become a humble child of God. The cruel ruler had become a wise and merciful¹⁰ king. He who had rebelled against the God of heaven, now confessed¹¹ to the power of the Most High God and tried hard to encourage his people to accept God and be happy. God, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, had taught Nebuchadnezzar the lesson which all rulers need to learn. The lesson is that true greatness involves true goodness."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 521.

How does Nebuchadnezzar's hymn of praise show he had experienced a true conversion? Daniel 4:34-37.

There are several reasons to believe Nebuchadnezzar's conversion was true: (1) The king's desire to give God public praise and honor shows that the once proud king no longer thought himself to

be the greatest king on earth. (2) In Daniel 3, the king had rebelled against the God of the Jews, but now he pointed to Him as the true God of heaven who held the king's future in His hand. (3) The king's selfishness and self-glory were changed to concern for the glory of God.

How do the words in Daniel 4:34 show Nebuchadnezzar's full dependence upon God? Why is full dependence upon God so important for anyone who tries to serve Him? How does the Cross help us understand our total dependence upon God?

FRIDAY—OCTOBER 22

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read the chapter "True Greatness" in Ellen G. White's *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 514–521.

"God's judgments (punishments) against people, may be prevented by repentance¹² and conversion (Isaiah 38:1, 2, 5; Jeremiah 18:7-10; Jonah 3:1-10). For this reason God announced the upcoming judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar but gave him a full year to repent. In this way, the king could avoid a terrible sickness (Daniel 4:29). But he did not change. So he brought upon himself God's judgment. . . . God warns peoples and nations of their upcoming doom. God sends a message to the world today, warning that the end is coming fast. Few

⁹conversion—becoming a true follower of God.

¹⁰merciful—full of mercy; mercy is kindness we do not deserve.

¹¹confessed—to have said that you believe in God.

¹²repentance—being sorry for your sins and turning away from your sins.

people may listen to these warnings. But because God has given many warnings, people will have no excuse when the end comes.”—Adapted from *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 792.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the eyes of humanity,¹³ Nebuchadnezzar was one of the greatest kings in the ancient world. But in the eyes of God, what does greatness really mean?
2. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of individuals. Is there anything we can do to help a

person who is surrendering his or her heart to God's Holy Spirit?

3. An important idea in Daniel 4 is the rulership of God. Why is God's rulership such an important idea to understand? How does the Sabbath help us understand God's rulership?

SUMMARY: Nebuchadnezzar's experience in Daniel 4 is an example of the truth in Proverbs 29:23, “If a man is proud, he will be made low” (NIRV). But Nebuchadnezzar publicly confessed God, and his desire to give God the glory shows that he had a true conversion experience.

¹³humanity—all the people of the world.