

Date: March 16, 2016 at 4:34:29 PM EDT
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Daniel 4

Men--As we continue in our study of the book of Daniel, we're seeing some amazing stories about the faith, and perseverance of a man called Daniel, along with that of his three Hebrew "brothers," Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and the peculiar, but yet very human, idiosyncrasies of a pagan king, named Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled for 43 years over the Babylonian Empire! But, more importantly, we're seeing the "God of Heaven" who was, and is, actually ruling, and overruling, all along in the affairs of nations and individuals, to bring about His sovereign plan and purpose for all of mankind! Of greatest significance, perhaps, in last nite's lesson, was seeing God not only using a pagan ruler to bring judgment--but with eventual restoration--to His people Israel, but also in extending His marvelous grace to King Nebuchadnezzar himself!

Daniel 4 records Nebuchadnezzar's own account of his "salvation story"! He recounts the details of a second terrifying dream he experienced, sent from God--a dream that once again could only be revealed and interpreted by Daniel through revelation from God! The dream came probably 25 or 30 thirty years after he had witnessed God's deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, recorded in Daniel 3--which probably took place 20 or so years after his first series of troubling dreams, recorded in Daniel 2, about the "mysteries of things to come" which, as Daniel was enabled by God to reveal, included the rise and eventual fall of his own kingdom of Babylon, along with three others, before the coming of the eternal kingdom of Christ, which is yet to come! Through all this, Nebuchadnezzar is greatly moved and even appears to recognize the one and only true "God of Heaven"! But, apparently not yet! As confirmed by his own testimony in Daniel 4! What would it take?

Nebuchadnezzar himself explains in Daniel 4! The second major dream occurred at a time when Nebuchadnezzar's empire was thriving! He was "at ease...and flourishing in his palace"--on top of the world--when God sent him another troubling dream! This one was about "a tree that had grown large and strong, whose height had reached to the sky...visible to the end of the whole earth! Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant. It provided food for all, beasts of the field found shade under it, birds of the sky dwelled in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it!" Wow! But then! An "angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven..." and announced that the tree was to be "chopped down... leaving only the stump!" And, according to the "decree of the angelic watcher," "he" would be given the "mind of a beast...for seven period of time..." etc. (More details in 4:11-17)

When Daniel was again called in by Nebuchadnezzar and heard the dream, he was "appalled"--probably in having to reveal the sad upcoming plight of such a great, but prideful, world ruler, whom he served! "The tree! It is you, O king! You will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field... for seven periods of time (turns out to be 7 years), until you recognize the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes!" (Does Daniel's "finger pointing" incident with Nebuchadnezzar remind you of any another great Old Testament confrontation? That of Nathan with King David, in II Samuel 12?)

Well, you'd think that would be the turning point for Nebuchadnezzar! But, by his own account, he reports that "twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace..." reflecting on "the great Babylon which he himself had built...by the might of his power and for the glory of his majesty!" Oops! He hadn't gotten it! And, while the words were still in his mouth, a voice came

from heaven, and he was "driven away from mankind," and became the "beast" that God forewarned he would become!

Fortunately--and only by the grace of God--Nebuchadnezzar finally got it, and was given another opportunity to "humble himself" before God, repent, and be "saved"!

And this once prideful, pagan, world ruler would then declare "to all the peoples, nations, and men of every tongue that live in all the world...the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me!" We even used his very words as our memory verse for Lesson #4! "How great are His signs! How mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endures from generation to generation!" (Daniel 4:3)

Daniel 4 ends with the final words we would hear from Nebuchadnezzar, after he would be "reestablished" in his role as ruler of Babylon! "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride!" (Daniel 4:37) And his testimony has lived on through the ages!

Well, there isn't a better example in all the Bible of the disaster of pride in a person's life than that of Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel 4! We could cite many verses from Scripture that speak to this lesson which ring true and pertinent for all of humanity, and particularly in this day! (Including for those who run for the office of president in the greatest nation of the world today!) Proverbs 16:18 says: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall!" But there's another much better verse than this! Hebrews 7:25--"Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them!" Even a pagan king like Nebuchadnezzar!

And so, we're reminded again that our God is a sovereign God who, as Wiersbe notes, "Rules and overrules" in the affairs of nations and individuals, and "reveals profound and hidden things" in His Word--which is why we're so excited about being involved in our MOB study!

On to Lesson #5!

Have a great week, men! Enjoy "March Madness"! See you on March 29th!

Lowell