

MARCH OF EMPIRE - LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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CHAPTER 6

A Chapter Written by Nebuchadnezzar

LESSON TEXT -- Daniel 4:1-18

The Personal Testimony of a Great King -- It Was Pride Which Caused King Nebuchadnezzar to Fall -- Daniel's Interpretation of the Dream -- A Difficult Task for Daniel -- GOD Fulfilled His Prophetic Warning Upon King Nebuchadnezzar -- All Gentile Governments Should Take Warning -- In Spite of the Judgments of GOD There Is Yet Hope for the Future -- The Wicked of the Earth are Warned

In our last lesson we concluded our study of the third chapter of Daniel which gives to us a record of the image of gold which Nebuchadnezzar set up in the plain of Dura for the people to worship. We also studied concerning the three Hebrew children who were cast into the fiery furnace and who came out alive and unhurt because of the Son of GOD who visited them in the fiery furnace during the time of their affliction.

AN INTERESTING COMMENT

We studied also concerning the effect of these things upon King Nebuchadnezzar. In verses 28 to 30 of chapter three, it says, "**Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.**"

We are now ready to take up our study of the fourth chapter of Daniel. This is a very interesting and important chapter because it was written (not by Daniel) but by Nebuchadnezzar himself. The outline of the chapter may be given as follows:

- (1) The King's proclamation,
- (2) The tree vision of Nebuchadnezzar,
- (3) The interpretation of the dream, by Daniel,
- (4) The fulfillment of the vision and,
- (5) The restoration of Nebuchadnezzar.

In other words, we have in this chapter an account of how Nebuchadnezzar was humbled, and then restored to power.

LESSON TEXT

Let us now read our lesson text from Daniel 4:1-18, where it says,

“Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 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.

I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 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. 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. 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, O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof. 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. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto Heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: 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. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from Heaven; 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: 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: 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. 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. This dream I king

Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now 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."

WHAT JOB SAID

We cannot read these words of Nebuchadnezzar without being reminded of what is stated in Job 33:14-17, where it says, "**For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.**"

PRIDE A DESTRUCTIVE FORCE

Indeed, my friends, pride is one of the most subtle and destructive forces in the world today if we could only realize it. It is very detestable because it hinders fellowship and destroys cooperation. And more than this, it serves as a stumbling block to keep other men away from GOD.

There is no question but what King Nebuchadnezzar was lifted up in pride and that he needed to be humbled and GOD took this means of bringing it about. Mind you, it was no small task to humble the heart of a great king like Nebuchadnezzar, but GOD was able to do this, as revealed in this chapter which we are not studying.

NO EXCUSE FOR PRIDE

After all, Nebuchadnezzar had no excuse for his pride! GOD had spoken to him previously through the vision of the great image, which gave Nebuchadnezzar an understanding of the march of empire during the times of the Gentiles.

GOD had spoken to him again through the miraculous event of the fiery furnace at which time the three Hebrew children were delivered. These things should have been warning enough for him not to lift himself up in pride but to walk humbly with GOD who had given to him such a great kingdom, but while he acknowledged the GOD of Daniel, it seems as if his own heart was unchanged by the instruction and the prophetic warnings which he had received. Therefore, GOD found it necessary to speak to him a third time as recorded in our present chapter. This time He spoke and acted in such a way as to bring about the humbling of the king.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM

Having given to Nebuchadnezzar the vision of the great tree which was strong and which reached unto Heaven, and which seemed to fill the whole earth, GOD used Daniel again to interpret this dream also for the king. The interpretation is recorded in verses 19 to 27 of our lesson text, where it says,

"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. The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the Heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; 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: 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. 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; This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: 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. 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. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity"

NOT AN EASY TASK

Do not think for one moment that it was easy for Daniel to speak the interpretation of the dream to the king, for the interpretation of the dream in this instance was intended of GOD for the king himself. It was in reality a prophetic warning to King Nebuchadnezzar of what would happen to him if he continued walking in the pride of his own heart as he had done up to that time. The king had promoted Daniel to a position of high honor and great responsibility in the kingdom of Babylon. Therefore, when Daniel was compelled to give the interpretation of the dream, which in this instance was against the king, he exposed himself to the wrath of the king, and put his own life and work in jeopardy. Nevertheless he was true to GOD and interpreted the dream faithfully and fearlessly.

GOD'S WARNING IGNORED

Before going any farther with the interpretation of the dream, let us read what is stated in verses 28 to 37 of our lesson text, where it says, **"All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 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? 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. 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. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: 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.

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: 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? 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. 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"

A NOTEWORTHY TESTIMONY

Here, my friends, you have the personal testimony of one of the greatest potentates who ever lived. King Nebuchadnezzar was truly a great man and was head of a world-wide empire, but as he here confesses, he was lifted up in pride. Notice that in verse 30 it says, **"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?"**

The words remind us of the language of Satan recorded in Isaiah 14:13-14, where it says, **"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. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."**

It is easy to see, therefore, that Nebuchadnezzar was moved upon by the spirit of Satan when he boasted of the greatness of Babylon, and of his own majesty.

Therefore, in order to break the pride of Nebuchadnezzar's heart, 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."

GOD'S WORD FULFILLED

Apparently Nebuchadnezzar was in this condition for about seven years, for the prophecy was that Nebuchadnezzar would eat grass as the oxen and be wet with the dew of Heaven until, seven times had passed over him and until he should know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. I am convinced that the seven times

referred to in this passage means seven years. That was a long time for the king to be afflicted in such a manner, but we can be thankful that such affliction served its purpose and the heart of the king was humbled, at which time his reason returned unto him and he gave glory unto the Lord. This is confirmed in the 37th verse where he said, "**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.**"

A PROPHETIC APPLICATION -- THE GENTILES WARNED

These words of the king cause us to realize that these things which happened to Nebuchadnezzar have a broader application and were symbolic of what will happen to all Gentile governments throughout the world in the end of the present dispensation.

It is common knowledge that powerful dictators are arising and are ruling over the Gentiles with an iron hand, and like Nebuchadnezzar of old, these men are lifted up with pride and use the personal pronoun freely in their public utterances. But mind you, my friends, throughout the Scriptures, GOD has warned the Gentiles not to lift themselves up in pride or else He would cut them off.

This is confirmed in Romans 11:18-23 where the Apostle Paul said to the Gentiles, "**Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.**"

These words clearly reveal a time of transition, when GOD will visit judgment upon the Gentiles because of their failure to believe and obey the Word of GOD. It reveals also that GOD will again favor His chosen people Israel, if they abide not still in unbelief.

YET THERE IS HOPE

Mind you, however, that while the tree in the vision which Nebuchadnezzar saw was to be hewn down, the stump of it was to remain. Thus we see that while the Gentile nations will be humbled, they will not be completely destroyed. A believing remnant of the Gentile nations will be spared, even during the coming time of tribulation. But during the tribulation these nations, which will be spared like Nebuchadnezzar will be humbled, and they will learn that GOD in Heaven ruleth over all, "**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?**" as stated in Daniel 4:35.

Therefore we are able to affirm, that what happened to Nebuchadnezzar individually will

happen collectively to the Gentile nations, and they shall be humbled before they are restored into favor with GOD.

A PROPHETIC ANNOUNCEMENT

In order to make a personal application of this entire chapter, we wish to quote the words of Isaiah 2:10-12, where it says, "**Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.**"

~ end of chapter 6 ~
