

time the king was in his royal palace, and thinking of his kingdom with pride and satisfaction, exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" He was repeating the thoughts, almost the exact words, of Satan, when he sought to exalt his throne above God. When proud thoughts were entertained, and these words were uttered, the sentence was pronounced which blasted the tree, and degraded the monarch whom the tree symbolized.

GOD SAVE NOT IN PROSPERITY

It was God who had given the king his reason and ability to establish a kingdom like this. The same God could take away the judgment and wisdom upon which the king prided himself. And God did so. It is the mind which elevates man above the beasts. When the power of the mind is removed, he sinks to the lowest level. Nebuchadnezzar became as the beasts. David says, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." (SDP 57.1)

When God can not save men in prosperity, he brings upon them adversity. If in all this they reject God, then they bring upon themselves destruction. Let the results be as they may, God is clear from all censure. This is illustrated by Nebuchadnezzar's case. The proud and powerful monarch no longer swayed the scepter. He became a maniac, and for seven years he was found with cattle, the companion of beasts, feeding as they fed. His reason dethroned, he was no longer regarded even as a man.

The mandate had gone forth, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit." It is necessary in the cause of God and in the world, that men bear responsibility. But when men are lifted up in pride and depend upon worldly wisdom, God can no longer sustain them, and they fall. Nations and individuals alike have this experience. Even the professed church of Christ which departs from the humility of the Master, loses its power, and will certainly be brought low.

The people who glory in wealth, or intellect, or knowledge, or in anything save Jesus Christ, will be brought to confusion. In Christ alone "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Every brilliant thought, every intellectual idea, which in any way brings greatness, originates with our Lord. It is God who is dealing with humanity. He rules. (SDP 58.2).

It should be remembered that in all of God's dealing with the king Nebuchadnezzar, God was working for the salvation of the ruler and those affected by his influence. God allowed him to suffer seven years of deplorable degradation, and then removed his chastening hand.

After passing through this terrible humiliation, he was brought to see his own weakness; he confessed his guilt, and acknowledged the God of heaven. He sent to all the world the description of this experience as recorded in the fourth chapter of Daniel. He had learned that those who walk in pride, God is able to abase. In comparison with God and his universe, the inhabitants of the earth sink into insignificance, and are reputed as nothing. "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?" (SDP 58.3).

References

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The debasement of a Proud Monarch

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The fourth chapter of Daniel is, in some respects, the most wonderful chapter in the Bible. "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 shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR PRAISES GOD

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." (Dan. 4: 1-3). This is a public document written by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, after his humiliation by the God of heaven. It was sent "unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth." It therefore comes to us with as much freshness and vitality as though it were issued to the generation in which we live.

The object was, says Nebuchadnezzar, "to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me." (Dan. 4: 2). Nebuchadnezzar's reign had been one long scene of warfare. He was a man of war. This characteristic was so prominent in the life of the great king that prophecy calls him "the terrible of the nations," (Ezekiel 30:11) and the "hammer of the whole earth." (Jeremiah 50:23).

He had met the foe on every side and had been successful, because God had put his "sword into the hand of the king of Babylon," (Ezekiel 30:25) and had made use of this monarch to punish other nations which had refused the light of truth. To illustrate: For thirteen years the city of Tyre resisted every effort made by Nebuchadnezzar. Finally he was successful, but gained no spoils, for Tyre, captured on the seacoast, removed to an island. Then Nebuchadnezzar turned his arms against Egypt, and that nation, which years before held Israel in bondage, now became a slave to the Babylonian power. (SDP 50.2).

THE FALL OF EGYPT

The prophet Ezekiel, one of the Hebrew captives, was given a view of the capture of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, and was told to send the testimony to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. In this prophecy Egypt is represented as a mighty tree towering above all the trees of the earth. Even the trees of Eden envied the splendor of this one. All the fowls of heaven nested in its boughs; the hosts of earth dwelt beneath its branches. But this tree of Egypt was lifted up because of its greatness, and God sent

Babylon to hew it to the ground. The crash of its fall shook the earth. (SDP 51.1). Also read Ezekiel 29:19.

THE DREAM

"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." (Dan. 4:10-16).

Having conquered the world, Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in his house, when one night he dreamed a dream. Success had followed him wherever he turned. At his feet bowed the representatives of all nations. Into his coffers flowed the wealth of the east and the west, and the north and the south. About him was clustered the wit and the learning of the age. Libraries were at his command, and art flourished. The dream troubled him, and he called upon his wise men for an interpretation, but they could give no explanation. God always permitted the wise men of earth to have first trial. When these wise men failed, Daniel was called. Daniel again had an opportunity of proving the wisdom of his God and the weakness of the Babylonian deities. (SDP 52.1).

The tree was a familiar object and a striking symbol. The tree seen in the dream was planted in the midst of the earth, and as he watched, the king saw it grow until the top reached heaven, and its boughs stretched to the ends of the earth. (SDP 52.2). Fowls rested in the branches and beasts dwelt in its shadow. As Nebuchadnezzar gazed upon the tree, he saw a "watcher, even an holy one,"- a messenger from heaven, whose appearance was similar to the one who walked in the

midst of the fiery furnace with the Hebrew children. At the command of this divine messenger, the tree was hewn down, the stump alone remaining. Hewing down the tree did not kill the stump nor the roots. The life remained, and it was ready to send forth new shoots more numerous than before. (SDP 53.1).

The parting words of the angel as he left Nebuchadnezzar were, "This matter is by the decree of the watchers . . . 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." More than that, "He setteth up over it the basest of men." Because a man holds a position, it does not signify that he is better than others. (SDP 53.2).

THE INTERPRETATION

When Daniel realized the true significance of the dream, and foresaw the humiliation of the king of Babylon, "his thoughts troubled him." He was encouraged by the king not to be troubled, but to give the true interpretation. He did so, plainly telling the king that the tree seen in the vision was emblematic of Nebuchadnezzar himself, and his dominion.

"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 shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility." (Dan. 4:24-27).

Daniel exhorted the king, "Let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." There was yet time for repentance, and had the king heeded this counsel, it would have saved him from the great humiliation which came upon him. But when men's hearts are set, the message to change, though given by an angel from heaven, remains unheeded. Consequently, "all this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar." (SDP 56.3). A year of probation was granted the king after this solemn warning had been given. At the end of this