

Daniel 4:24-27

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Daniel finishes interpreting the dream and implores the king to change his ways.

King Nebuchadnezzar had another dream that disturbed him and that his wise men were unable to interpret. So he called on Daniel. Daniel was hesitant to interpret the dream seeing that it was bad news for the king. But Nebuchadnezzar wants to know the truth of the dream, whether it is good or bad. Daniel just finished explaining that the mighty tree in the King's dream represented the King and his thriving kingdom.

And so Daniel delivers the *interpretation* of bad news that the king knew was coming; he explains that *"this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king."* Nebuchadnezzar will be driven away from mankind—despite his mighty rule his *dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field and he will be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven*. It is a striking image: a once great king who was formerly dressed in purple and jewels, eating the finest food available, then living as a ragged vagrant chewing grass and sleeping in damp fields among cattle. He would lose his kingdom and all the glory he had accumulated, living as an animal until *seven periods of time* had passed. It is generally agreed that this means seven years. It seems to be an odd affliction to live as an animal for seven years. In modern times a condition in which a person lives as an animal has been diagnosed as a mental illness called zoanthropy. It is possible that this is what afflicted Nebuchadnezzar.

The purpose of this affliction was so that Nebuchadnezzar would *recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whom he wishes*. We know from previous chapters in Daniel that the king was very prideful and thought of himself as a god, even building a statue that his people were forced to worship. God chose to punish the king to bring him to the truth.

There is some good news for the king. In the dream, *it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree*, representing his kingdom. His *kingdom would be assured to him after he recognizes that it is Heaven that*

rules. It seems that God gave Nebuchadnezzar this dream to give him the opportunity to change his ways before he was afflicted. Daniel gives him *advice* hoping it will be *pleasing* to him. He asks him to *break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor*. Daniel wanted him to do these things *in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity*. As we see throughout the Bible, judgment can often be avoided through repentance. This is still Nebuchadnezzar's letter to his kingdom. It takes a lot of humility to recount your sin and pride to your entire kingdom.

Biblical Text:

²⁴ **this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: ²⁵ that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes. ²⁶ And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that *it is Heaven that rules*. ²⁷ Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by *doing* righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.'**