

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

DANIEL 3-4

Two older couples were visiting, when the women walked into the kitchen... One of the husbands says to his pal, “The wife and I went to a nice restaurant last night.” His buddy replies, “*Yea, what’s it called?*”

He says, “That’s just it I can’t remember. What’s the name of the red flower that has the thorns?” “A Rose?”

“Yea.” He shouts to his wife, “Hey Rose, what was the name of that restaurant?” Some folks have a bad memory, and that was Nebuchadnezzar’s problem...

When Daniel revealed the king’s dream and its interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar was impressed. In 2:47 he said to Daniel, “Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets.”

To our best estimation, twenty years elapse between Daniel 2 and 3. And sadly, that was enough time for King Nebuchadnezzar to forget about Daniel’s God.

He ignored God’s predictions and concentrated on his own ambitions. In Chapter 3 rather than bowing to the true God, the King of Babylon is making himself out to be a god. *His memory needs to be refreshed...*

Chapter 3 begins, “Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.” The plain of Dura was six miles south of ancient Babylon. In 1854 an archaeologist named Julius Oppert

unearthed a pedestal 45' square by 20' high on which a colossal statue sat. He believed it to be the base for Nebuchadnezzar's gold image.

This statue was 60 cubits high by 6 cubits wide. Using a Babylonian cubit it measured 105' by 10.5'.

The image was made of gold, probably of wood overlaid with gold. The polished gold glistened in the sunshine. It was an impressive sight - *the colossal statue rising above the plain*. It could be seen for miles.

One scholar estimates on its dedication day 300,000 people gathered in the plain of Dura around this image.

And realize its significance... In Chapter 2 the Babylonian emperor saw the image of a man. It represented history's Gentile world empires. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a panoramic overview of history.

The head of gold was Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar, the silver torso the Medes and Persians, the abdomen of brass the Greeks, and the legs of iron the Romans.

The image eventually crumbled, and gave way to a great mountain which represented God's Kingdom.

But in defiance of God's message Nebuchadnezzar duplicates the image in *all gold*. In essence he's saying, "I'm not only the head. I'll never be succeeded. My kingdom will rule forever." People made the *trip* to the plain of Dura because their king was on an *ego trip*.

Here's an added note, the average human has a height to weight ratio of 5 to 1. The king's image was 60 cubits by 6

cubits, or 10 to 1 - which made it *very skinny*. A possibly plump emperor envisioned himself as tall, gold, and *slender - another tribute to his vanity*.

Though all of Chapter 3 is *historical* it's also *typological*. For Nebuchadnezzar's actions are similar to a world ruler yet to come - one we call the Antichrist.

Its interesting, Nebuchadnezzar's image measured 60 by 6 cubits. Seven is the number of perfection. But since man always comes up short of God's perfection - *six, one short of seven, is the number of man*.

Man was created on the 6th day. He works 6 days and rests on the 7th... Whenever man is idolized he's measured in sixes. Goliath, the Philistine champion, measured 6 cubits... Solomon's throne had 6 steps and 6 lions on either side. When you saw it you saw 6-6-6. His yearly allowance of gold was 666 talents.

Babylon, the fountainhead of idolatry, used the *sexagesimal system* of measurement rather than the decimal system. Its basic units were the numbers 6 and 12. Ironically, America also uses the sexagesimal system. We buy donuts in a dozen. Twelve inches make a foot. Clocks have 12 hours. *It's all symbolic*.

Six is the number of man and men, and humans are born worshipping themselves instead of God.

The Antichrist will be the ultimate secular humanist. According to Revelation 13:18 his number is 666.

Like Nebuchadnezzar he too will erect an image to himself, and demand that all the peoples of the earth bow down and

worship. The parallels between Revelation 13 and Daniel 3 are more than coincidence.

Well, verse 2 tells us, “And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”

All the official dignitaries were required to be there.

“So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” Nebuchadnezzar’s herald makes it clear that worshipping this image is not optional. If anyone refuses he will be *fired*, literally.

And this sounds eerily like Revelation. Antichrist also has a herald. The false prophet encourages the world to worship his image. Those who don't get executed.

Notice too, the herald calls for all peoples, nations and languages to unite in the worship of this image.

Recall Nebuchadnezzar's policy of bringing his conquered people to Babylon and integrating them into Babylonian society. One way to unify folks is through religion. Give them a common religion to rally around.

This has been many a dictator's strategy. It was said of 1942 Germany, "No attempt is made to stamp out faith in the supernatural. The policy is more blasphemous. It is to replace Christ. Religion is now counterfeited rather than dismissed. The Nazis are creating an anti-type of Christianity. They have made their leader their God." This will be Antichrist's strategy.

He'll be "anti-christ," not anti-god or anti-religion. In Revelation 17 he uses religion to climb to power. Non-biblical religion is a powerful tool in the devil's hands.

And notice too, Nebuchadnezzar's evil theft of music. Music was created to be used to worship God.

Here Satan steals the music and uses it as the very signal to fall down before the idol. Satan is aware of music's powerful sway, and often uses it in evil ways.

Verse 7, "So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

“Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews.” The word “*accused*” means “eat to pieces.” It implies a savage accusation.

Recall when God enabled Daniel to interpret the king's dream he upstaged the soothsayers of the royal court. Here, they remember their defeat and seek to get even by taking a bite out of Daniel's three friends!

And here's the accusation against the Hebrews...

“They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.” *Here's what happened..*

Picture in your minds-eye masses of people stretched across the plain... Here's a photo from 2013 of the Pope's visit to Rio de Janeiro. Three million people stretched across a 2.5 mile stretch of beach. This is how I imagine the crowd in the plain of Dura.

Then on cue, this mass of humanity bows their faces into the desert sands... except... *three lone individuals*. Talk about sticking out! They're defiance was obvious.

And we need to realize this scene gets repeated every day...

In *your office, at school, at the block party, on the tennis team, in the gym* - 99% of the people bow to the god of conformity, or convenience, or comfort.

They bow to *the god of “cool” or “hip” or “why make waves.”* Very few people dare to *stand up* for God!

Will you *stick up* for the Lord, even if it means you'll *stick out* in the crowd? When the world looks on, like these Hebrews we need to *stand up NOT roll over!*

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good!

But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who *will deliver you from my hands?*” Nebuchadnezzar was boiling with anger - a tyrannical despot isn't use to being disobeyed.

Usually, he would've never given out a second chance. He must've liked Daniel and these Hebrews.

Now if you were Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego what would do? I can hear the rationalizing, *“It's a sign from God, He's showing us mercy... We've made our point. This time, we'll still stand, just hunch over a bit.”*

But not these guys! They're determined to obey God.

The first two of the Ten Commandments forbids idolatry. *Compromise never entered their minds!*

Understand, these three Hebrews weren't out to pick a fight. *The fight came to them...* They hadn't logged a protest, or staged a demonstration... they just knew **what they wouldn't do...** They'd never *bend*, let alone *bow*, to anyone or anything other than the true God.

Realize, the Babylonian beef with these Hebrews wasn't that they worshipped their God. It was their refusal to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image.

Sometimes faith is measured by what we're against.

This was why Christians were persecuted in ancient Rome. *Not a single Christian died for loving Jesus.* The Romans didn't care if you loved and worshipped Jesus, just as long as you pledged allegiance to the Caesar.

All you had to do was take a pinch of incense, toss it on the fire, and confess three-words, "[Caesar is Lord.](#)"

As simple as that was, the Christians refused. There was only one Lord, Jesus! They wouldn't betray Him!

And this remains the issue today! Nobody cares if you love Jesus. In fact, most people **say** they love Jesus - then go and do as they please. *But do you love Him enough to follow Him and obey Him exclusively?*

Real Christianity refuses to yield to the gods of any age. It marches to a heavenly drumbeat! It *pleases God*, not *appeases men*. This is the stand taken here!

Listen to them in verse 16, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.” In other words, *our minds are made up.*

Remember in 1:8 Daniel “purposed in his heart” that he would not be defiled by the king’s food. Obedience makes up its mind ahead of time. The person who waits to decide might just buckle under to the pressure.

1 Peter 4:12 tells us, “Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you...” Peter is saying that there's a fiery furnace in every believer’s future.

That’s why we all need to purpose in our hearts ahead of time to never bow to anyone other than God.

Verse 17 continues their response, “If that is the case (if they are thrown in the furnace), our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.

But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” This is real faith!

God will deliver them *from Nebuchadnezzar - if not from the fire.* Even if they burn, they’ll be free from his tyranny. They’ll enter their heavenly reward, and be taken to a place where he can never touch them again.

God will deliver them *from the fire or through the fire.*

So often we make the mistake of trusting in a particular outcome - *rather than trusting in God, and letting Him determine the outcome*. Our faith is not really in God - it's in God working in the way we desire.

This is why real faith is a *"but if"* faith...

I believe God can cure my cancer, *but if* He doesn't, I won't deny Him... I believe God will turn my child around... or save my marriage... or ease my financial woes... or stop the foreclosure... *but even if He doesn't, I'll not deny Him!* That's furnace-facing faith!

It's not God who is tested in our trials. It's our faith. *Real faith cares more about maintaining my witness than saving my skin*. Outcome-only faith isn't real faith.

Studdard Kennedy was a combat chaplain in WW2. He ministered to soldiers on the front lines in France.

From the battlefield he wrote a letter to his 10 year-old boy. "Son, the first prayer I want you to say for me is not, 'God, keep Daddy safe,' but, 'God make Daddy brave. And if he has hard things to do, make him strong to do them.' Son, life and death don't matter. But right and wrong do. Daddy dead is Daddy still, but Daddy dishonored before God is something too awful for words. I suppose you would like to put into your prayer a bit about safety, too, and Mother would like that, I'm sure. Well, put it in afterwards, for it really doesn't matter nearly as much as doing what is right."

This is the kind of faith exhibited by these Hebrews.

Verse 19, *"Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach,*

and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.” He turns up the heat! Which is what might happen to us in the days ahead.

“And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” In other words, they were dressed in flammables. Their clothes would act like kindling.

“Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.” The fire was so intense its heat torched the jailers who escorted the Hebrews.

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” *But there’s a surprise...*

“Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?”

They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”

“Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Here’s the glorious truth: **whenever we stand for Jesus we never stand alone!** He stands with us. When the king gazes into the inferno he sees

a fourth person, "*like the Son of God*" - *who could that be but Jesus?*

Yet, here's a question... *the king saw the fourth person, but did the three Hebrews?* Our text doesn't tell us if the Hebrews were aware of the fourth man...

When we go through the fire Jesus is always with us!

But sometimes we sense His presence - sometimes we don't. On occasion we feel the tight squeeze of His hand - but on other occasions we hold on to raw faith.

Yet even in the darkest moments the people around us can see Him. They admire the Lord's strength in us.

In the Septuagint, or Greek version of the OT, there is a section here that doesn't appear in the Hebrew Bible. It gives us a vantage point from inside the fire.

The passage says the Angel of the Lord "*smote the flame of the fire out of the oven, and made the midst of the furnace as though a wind of dew had gone hissing through it.*" The Son of God hollowed out from the surrounding flames a cool spot in the middle of the fire.

On the surface the furnace was intense enough to consume the guards who tossed in the Hebrews, but at the core, where you'd expect it to burn hottest, the three Hebrews enjoyed a peaceful, refreshing breeze.

If we trust that excerpt, it's likely that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were very conscious of their companion. It's ironic, but at times *the sweetest fellowship with the Savior* is felt in the flames of a trial.

Verse 26, “Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.” Usually, when a house catches fire the noxious fumes penetrate the carpets and curtains.

All the fabrics have to be replaced... But not the slightest stench was detectable in the clothes worn by the Hebrews. They came out completely unscathed.

The only thing that burned on Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego were **the ropes that bound them!**

And this is why God allows us to go through the fiery trials. It streamlines our lives. Everything that’s an impediment to our growth or that’s spiritually superficial disintegrates. *The only thing that burns is what binds.*

“Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!

Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there

is no other God who can deliver like this.” Nebuchadnezzar must’ve been a bit of a pyromaniac. He still employs the fire. But at least now his heart is in the right place. His intentions are better.

Verse 30, “Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.”

Before we leave Chapter 3 here’s an important question, “Where was Daniel in all this?” Surely, he was not someone who bowed to the image - *no way!*

Daniel was probably away on business. At the end of Chapter 2 he was promoted to a upper-echelon post in Nebuchadnezzar’s government. Perhaps Daniel was on a diplomatic mission, busy with affairs of state.

But I don’t think his absence is a coincidence. Recall, this story is not only *historical*, but *symbolic*. God is painting a picture and Daniel’s absence was strategic.

At the end of the age, just before Jesus returns, there will be a time of fiery trials upon the earth. The Bible calls it “**Great Tribulation.**” The Antichrist will attack the Jews for not falling down to worship him.

And Jesus will protect them through the fire, just as he did these three Hebrews. But Daniel represents the one faithful group who won’t be present for this trial.

The Church gets raptured beforehand! We’re out of town on business, so to speak - rejoicing in heaven!

Daniel 4 is one of the most remarkable chapters in the Bible. For it was written not by a prophet, or an apostle - but by a pagan king in an idolatrous land.

Before it was a chapter in your Bible, this passage was an royal edict read all over the Babylonian empire.

What if the Ayatollah in Iran issued a letter to the world acknowledging his sin and pride, and recounted how the Christian God had humbled him and brought him to the truth. *Would such a letter get any attention?*

Of course, it would be *a global bombshell!* Well, this is exactly what we have in Daniel 4, if not more so!

Verse 1, “Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied to you. I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. How great are His signs, and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.” From the man who sought to reign forever, the world should know there is a God and it’s not him.

Prior to Chapter 4 Nebuchadnezzar had a few brushes with God, but here he meets Him head-on!

Verse 4, “I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.

Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the

astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation.”

Nebuchadnezzar is like some of us - he kept returning to the wrong people for advice. These were the same guys in Chapter 2 Daniel exposed as frauds.

“But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God)...” Can you imagine anything more flattering than to be known as a man in whom is the Spirit of God? To live a life that can't be explained without a reference to God's presence!

I'm sure there were days Daniel moaned, “Lord, why am I here? My heart is in Jerusalem, not in this pagan place!” Yet God had purposes for him in Babylon - just as He has reasons for positioning you where He has.

In Jerusalem Daniel would've been useful, but in Babylon, God used him to steer worldwide events.

As a Christian minority we can get discouraged. We're often the only one. But there's power in One. If you don't think so, let a single mosquito into your tent!

When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white person this one lady became a civil rights symbol that exposed the evils of segregation.

She was one person, but she made a big difference.

It's often not *how many* - but *who we are* and *where we're placed* that matters. As a true believer you may be a minority

at work, or in your family - but that doesn't mean God won't use you in a major way!

The king continues in verse 8, "And I told the dream before him, saying: "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation. "These were the visions of my head while on my bed: I was looking, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew and became strong; its height reached to the heavens, and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves were lovely, its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, the birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

"I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven." This "*watcher*" was probably an angel.

He cried aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth.'" This is where it starts to get uncomfortable for the king. The tree that gets chopped is no longer referred to as an "**IT**" but as "**HE.**" The dream is pointing toward Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 16 continues, “Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times (or seven years) pass over him.”

‘This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.’ It’s interesting God’s angels are watching us! Our failures and successes are lessons to them, just as they carry out lessons for us.

And what will happen to Nebuchadnezzar will be a lesson on God’s sovereignty, taught to all the world.

He finishes, “This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.” I’m not sure the wise men didn’t know what the dream meant, as much as they lacked the courage and guts to tell it... *Daniel though had no such problem.*

“Then Daniel, whose name was Belshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, “Belshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.”

Belshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies! Daniel knew immediately its interpretation. It smacked of judgment!

Here Daniel gives us an example of how to deliver a harsh message. Before the words leave his mouth, his heart goes out to Nebuchadnezzar! He cares for him.

This man was Daniel's boss. He had an empire to run. Daniel shuttered at the implications of this vision...

God was going to humble Nebuchadnezzar. *The head of gold will turn ill in the head.* He'll be humbled by a mental illness that'll cause him to act like a beast.

Nebuchadnezzar had stood tall and proud, now he'll be made a stump. He'll crawl aimlessly on all fours.

Earlier, Daniel was tempted to eat the king's finest delicacies, now for seven years the king's diet will be weeds and grass - not a good kind of vegetarianism.

The interpretation comes in verse 20, "The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home - it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.

And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze 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 has come upon my lord the king: they shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules. Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity." Notice, Daniel says, "*break off your sin.*" The answer is never "taper off" but "*break off.*"

Jesus said of our sin, "cut it off and cast it from you."

Repentance isn't slowing up while headed down the wrong road - it's moving in an entirely new direction.

Verse 28, "All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.

At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon." Notice for a year God withheld his judgment. He was giving the king time to repent. But the king ignored God's warnings.

"The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" He was strolling around his palace, admiring the beauty of Babel... *its colossal walls, its colorful ceramics, its famous hanging gardens, its 53 Temples to*

Ishtar, its seven-story ziggurats, its 10,000 seat banquet hall...

Babylon was his boast. Look at his trophies!

Yet, “While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!”

In reality, God had exalted Babylon, not *its king* - and if you fail to give Him glory, all He’s given can be taken in an instant. The classic example is Nebuchadnezzar

God tells him, “And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.

They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.”

Imagine President Obama disappearing for seven months... *No speeches. No public appearances. No photo-ops. Nothing but silence from Camp David...*

Except at night... A few daring reporters have seen a shadowy figure, running on all fours, chewing grass.

Imagine, if that happened... The White House *press corps* would be in an *uproar*. Yet, Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity didn’t last seven months, but seven long years.

It's interesting, there are recognized psychological conditions that fit Nebuchadnezzar's symptoms...

Boanthropy is when a human thinks he's an **ox**.

Cyanthropy is when a person thinks he's a **dog**.

And **Lycanthropy** is when he thinks he's a **wolf**.

My grandkids have *Elephant-thorpy*. They stick out an arm like a trunk, and make elephant sounds.

Nebuchadnezzar went from *glory* to *grovel*. *He went mad*. Greek historian, Abydenus, wrote of him years after the fact - in 268 BC. He said the king had been "possessed by some god," (*perhaps a demon*) and that he had "immediately disappeared." That fits our text...

Jewish tradition tells us that it was Daniel who cared for the king while he was "out to pasture." Daniel must have used his political clout to insure the king's return.

Daniel knew from the dream, God would restore him.

Which brings us to verse 34, "And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation."

When did the king return to his right mind? When he lifted his eyes to heaven and honored the Most High.

It took seven years for the most powerful man the world has ever seen to learn he was God's appointee. Everything he had possessed was a gift from God.

It's sad, but since Nebuchadnezzar there have been many people who've had much less, yet failed to learn this lesson. Without God we're all nothing but wild beasts, unable to govern ourselves, let alone others.

We all need to learn that heaven rules, not earth.

On the morning of the battle of Waterloo, Napoleon was discussing strategy with his commanding officer.

"We'll put the infantry here, the cavalry there, and the artillery in that spot. At the end of the day, England will be at the feet of France, and Wellington will be the prisoner of Napoleon." That's when his commander interjected a warning, "We must not forget that man proposes and God disposes." Napoleon arrogantly snapped back, "No, I want you to understand, that Napoleon proposes and Napoleon disposes."

Historians tell us what happened that day. God sent torrential rains and hail so that Napoleon was unable to maneuver his troops as he'd planned. Disaster struck the French. By nightfall, "France was at the feet of England and Napoleon was a prisoner of Wellington."

We could sum up Nebuchadnezzar's encounter with the God, by saying, "Babylon was at the feet of Heaven and Nebuchadnezzar was a prisoner of God."

Nebuchadnezzar continues in verse 35, "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

Nebuchadnezzar wasn't content with being *the head of gold*, so God made him *a bust*. He had to learn who was Boss! God humble the most powerful man on earth as a lesson... **"No one can restrain God's hand!"**

The king continues, **"At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me.**

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice." Imagine, reading this letter, signed by the emperor. It's his explanation for his absence.

And after reading it myself, I think Nebuchadnezzar will be in heaven. To me, this is a prayer of repentance. The *ruler of the whole earth* became *a servant of God*.

And you've got to love the chapter's last line. The most powerful ruler this planet has ever seen, writes, **"And those who walk in pride He is able to put down."**