

The Book of Daniel #3

by: Ronald L. Dart

I couldn't help but wonder why God would allow a writing from a pagan King to enter the Bible and then the answer occurred to me. Nebuchadnezzar, you know, wrote one chapter of the book of Daniel. I wondered why is it there? Well, it is certainly true that the Bible is the word of God and it 's inspired by God, but in many cases, it takes the form of testimony.

One of the really strong threads in Biblical jurisprudence is that everything has to be established by witnesses, no man could be condemned except by the testimony of two or three witnesses. And, I guess because of this we have four Gospels in the New Testament, not just one. Have you ever thought about that? It is really a significant item. There are four Gospels, not one, Jesus didn't write His own book. We have three eyewitness accounts, for sure, and one that appears to be by a competent historian named Luke, who collected testimony from enough people, to put together a comprehensive narrative which he vouches for.

This is probably the best way to establish what happened in history was to have Nebuchadnezzar to write it down and have Daniel attest to it. This makes Two Witnesses!

Nebuchadnezzar Wrote a Chapter in the Book of Daniel

Here is what Nebuchadnezzar wrote, you'll find it in Daniel four and verse four, "I Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house and flourishing in my palace." Everything was going fine {5} "I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head upset me, {6} So I made 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." Now poor old Nebuchadnezzar, I don't know what he was eating for dinner, but he sure had a lot of dreams.

These two dreams that we've dealt with in the book of Daniel are extremely significant to Nebuchadnezzar because it does seem, for whatever reason God may have, that God decided to reveal certain things to this man before they happened.

So, "They drug in all of the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, the soothsayers and Nebuchadnezzar said, "I told my dream before them, but they did not make known to me the interpretation."

The Dream Is Told To Daniel

"Then, at last (Daniel 4: 8), came Daniel before me, whose name is 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."

I, Nebuchadnezzar, told him this, {9} "O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and no secret troubles you, tell me the vision of my dream that I have seen and the interpretation thereof. {10} Here's the vivid dream I had, I could never forget it, I saw, and there was a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. {11} The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached up into heaven, and the sight thereof was that you could see it all the way to the ends of the earth. {12} The leaves thereof were beautiful, there was much fruit and it was food for everybody. The beasts of the field had shadow under it, the fowls of heaven dwelt in the branches of it, and all flesh could be fed from this tree. {13} Then I saw in the vision of my head upon my bed and behold a watcher, a holy one came down from heaven, {14} and he cried aloud and he said this, "Cut down the tree, cut off the branches, shake off his leaves, scatter his fruit and let the beasts get away from under it and the fowls from his branches. {15} Scatter everybody, nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, put a band of iron and brass around the stump, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, let his portion be with the wild beasts of the grass of the earth.""

This was very important, {16} "Let his heart be changed from a man's and let a beast's heart be given to him and let seven times pass over him." Times, usually in the Bible, when it is used this way, will be a year. {17} "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 rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whoever He will and sets up over it the basest of men."

Now on a side note, the N.I.V. and other translations translates the word for 'watcher' as 'angel', but that's an interpretation not a translation, because the word is Chaldean and the word means 'watcher'. The word is found nowhere else in the Bible because this section is in the Chaldean language, not Hebrew, but it probably refers to a heavenly messenger or an angel.

Daniel Interprets the Dream

Now he went on to say in Daniel 4 and verse 18, "This dream, O King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen, Now you O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom, none of them are able to make known to me the interpretation, but you're able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you. {19} Then Daniel was stunned for a while and his thoughts troubled him and when he heard it, he knew what it meant, and the King said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation trouble you."

Daniel answered and said, "My Lord, the dream be to them that hate you and the interpretation thereof to your enemies. {20} The tree you saw, that grew and was strong, whose height reached into heaven and the sight thereof to all the Earth. This beautiful tree that gave shelter to everybody and food to everybody. {22} It is you, O King, you have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown, and reaches to heaven and your dominion reaches to the end of the land." He was a King of kings. He ruled a great Empire and ruled everything in sight.

"Whereas the King saw a watcher (verse 23), a holy one coming down from heaven and saying "Cut the tree down and destroy it, just leave the stump in the earth with a band of iron and brass. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven and let his portion be with the beasts of the field until seven times pass over him. {24} "This is the interpretation, O King, this is the decree of the Most High, {25} That they shall drive you from among men and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, they will make you eat grass like an ox, they will wet you with the dew of heaven, seven times shall pass over you until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whoever He wants. {26} And because they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, your kingdom shall be sure unto you, but only after you come to know that Heaven rules."

Man, what a lesson is coming down to him from this! He is going to have seven years of insanity. Seven years where he doesn't have a human heart, a human mind to work with. He will go out there in the desert, into the wilderness, his hair will grow long and his fingernails will grow long. He will be crazy for seven years.

Continuing in verse 27 Daniel said, "Wherefore, O King, let my counsel be acceptable to you, break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may possibly be the lengthening of your peace." It's interesting that he presents here, the breaking off of sins is not merely a matter of the mind, but of what you actually do. You break off your sins by righteousness and you break away from your iniquities, how? By showing mercy to the poor. It means you actually go out and do something.

King Nebuchadnezzar Speaks With Pride

"Now all of this (Daniel 4:28) came upon King Nebuchadnezzar, {29} At the end of 12 months as he was out walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, {30} The King said, "O look at this great city that I've built, for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and the honor of my majesty." Right here's the core, this is why it all had to happen. It wasn't the might of King Nebuchadnezzar that created history, it was God who created that history, and that lack of humility brought him down.

"While the words {31} were in the Kings mouth, there fell a voice from heaven saying, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from you, {32} They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like an ox and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the

Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whoever he will." {33} The same hour, the thing was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. His mind went, he was driven from men, he ate grass like an ox and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until his hair was grown like eagles feathers and his finger nails were like bird's claws." It is the seven years of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity.

Seven Years Fulfilled

"At the end of the days, (Daniel 4:34) I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned, and I blessed the Most High and I praised and honored Him that lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, His kingdom is from generation to generation. {35} And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing and He does according to His will in the Army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and no one can stay His hand or say to Him, What are you doing? {36} At the same time my reason returned to me and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and brightness returned to me, and my counselors and lords sought me out and I was established in my kingdom and excellent Majesty was returned to me. {37} Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, all his ways judgment and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

What a shame that it takes us so long in our lives to learn this simple lesson. Those who walk in pride, God is able to take down.

This was late in Nebuchadnezzar's life. He was soon gone and replaced by a succession of lesser men. Later in Daniel's life, Babylon was at war with the Persians and something truly important and truly strange happened then.

Persians Invade Babylon

Well, Nebuchadnezzar went to meet his maker, as the saying goes, and later in Daniel's life, Babylon was at war with the Persians. The leader of the Babylonian army, facing defeat had retreated south leaving Babylon besieged by the invading Persians. The son of Nebuchadnezzar whose name was Belshazzar was the King.

Holy Vessels from the Temple

Lets continue this story in Daniel chapter five. "Belshazzar the King made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. {2} While Belshazzar tasted the wine, he commanded his servants to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the Temple in Jerusalem." Now mind you, this is a big move on his part, to take holy sacred vessels from the Temple, things that had been dedicated to God, "in for the king, his princes, his wives, his concubines to drink wine out of them. So his servants brought all the sacred vessels in to him. {4} They poured the wine and they all drank it and praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, iron, wood, and stone."

And no doubt it created an acrid stench in the nostrils of God.

Hand and Fingers

"In the same hour," (Daniel 5:5) "Belshazzar is sitting at his table drinking wine out of one of the silver bowls and he sees the fingers and hand of a man." He doesn't see the man, he just sees the hand and fingers, "and over opposite the candlestick on the plaster of the wall, the hand began to write." And from here the expressions has entered into our language, "To see the handwriting on the wall" is to see a final, irrevocable judgment.

Verse 6, "The King's countenance was changed," well I don't doubt it did. My countenance would be changed if I'm sitting at my table having a glass of wine and I look up and see a disembodied hand writing on my wall. "His thoughts troubled him so that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees knocked one against another." I should think so!

Bring In The Wise Men

The king cried aloud, (Daniel 5:7) "Bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Whosoever can read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold around his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." {8} Well, "They brought in all the King's wise men, but nobody could read the writing." They looked at it and said, "I don't know what this is. They could not make known to the King the interpretation thereof, {9} Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled and his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished, and stunned, at what was going on. The man's face was all contorted and twisted."

"Now the Queen {10} kept her wits about her and she came to the King and she said, "O King, live forever, let not your thoughts trouble you and don't let your face be fallen, {11} There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods was found in him, whom King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, the King, I say your father, made master of the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans and the soothsayers."

We assume that Daniel must have been retired because he was not in the original group called up. Verse 12, "Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts were found in the same Daniel, whom the King named Belteshazzar, now let him be called, he will tell you what this means."

Bring In Daniel

"Then they called Daniel (Daniel 5:12) and he was brought in before the King and the King spoke and said to Daniel, {13} "Are you that Daniel which are of the children of the

captivity of Judah, whom the King, my father, brought out of Jewry? {14} I have heard of you. I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in you. Now I have brought in the wise men and the astrologers. I brought them in, that they should read this writing and make known the interpretation, but they couldn't do it. {16} But I heard of you, I have heard that you can make interpretations and dissolve doubts. Now if you can just read this writing and make known to me the interpretation, you will be clothed with scarlet and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." {17} Daniel answered and said before the King, "You can keep your gifts, you can give your rewards to somebody else, but I will read the writing to the King and I'll make known to him the interpretation."

Maintain Peace

"O King, (Daniel 5:18), the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father the kingdom, and majesty, glory and honor, {19} And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages trembled in fear before him, whom he would he killed, whom he would he kept alive, whom he would he set up, and whom would he put down."

It is an interesting thing to contemplate about all this because what had happened during Nebuchadnezzar's reign for the most part, the world was at peace. This killing of one and keeping another one alive, is the sort of thing you sometimes have to do in order to maintain peace. That's the reason why God gave him the kingdom and majesty and glory and power. It was to put an end to the chaos that existed across the known world.

Kings Must Be Humble

Then Daniel continued with this, (Daniel 5:20) "When his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne and they took his glory away from him. {21} He was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, his dwelling was with the wild asses. They fed him with grass like oxen, his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men and He appoints over it whoever He will. {22} And you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this."

It is the saddest of stories, that sons do not remember the lessons their fathers paid so dearly to learn, the hard lessons of life. Belshazzar, had no excuse because he already knew all this, which Daniel carefully repeated to him. He knew it.

Daniel said, {23} "But you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven, and they have brought the vessels of His house before you and you, your lords, your wives, your concubines have drunk wine in them and you have praised the gods of silver and gold and brass, iron, wood and stone, those which don't see, they don't hear, they don't know. And the God in whose hand your breath is, and who knows all your ways, you have not glorified."

The indictment is complete, you knew better, and the drinking of wine out of these sacred bowls was a deliberate affront to God. This was no accident.

Handwriting on the Wall

Let's continue in Daniel 5 and verse 24, "Then was the part of the hand sent from him, and the writing was written {25} And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

{26} And this is the interpretation: MENE; God hath numbered your kingdom, and finished it.

{27} TEKEL; You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting.

{28} PERES; Your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and the Persians.

{29} Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in all the kingdom." The reason Daniel wasn't interested was because of what happened later that night. {30} "In that night Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans was slain and {31} And Darius the Mede took the kingdom, when he was about sixty two years old."

Babylon Falls to the Persians

Belshazzar and the Babylonians were justifiably cocky. Babylon was a strongly defended city. For one thing it was huge, it sprawled all over the landscape and was well walled and well defended. They had plenty of water because the Euphrates River flowed right through the city. It had gates in it and the water flowed under the gates into the city.

Well, unbeknownst to the Babylonians, who were all sealed up in their city, the Persians, an energetic people, had gone to work redirecting the channel of the river and late this same night, they broke through and drained the Euphrates off into another channel allowing the River to drop to where it went under the gates. They waded in underneath the gates in large numbers and took the city. This is the night Belshazzar died.

Darius the Mede Rules

When Darius took over the leadership of the kingdom in Daniel the six chapter, "It pleased him to set over the kingdom 120 princes who should rule over the whole kingdom, {2} And over these were three presidents, of whom Daniel was first. The princes had to give account to them, in that the King should have no damage." Daniel really was the number one administrator still. They brought him out of retirement and he is active again. {3} "This Daniel was preferred above the presidents and the princes because an excellent spirit was in him and the King thought to set him over the whole realm." The King was actually going to promote him further than he had done already. Now this is interesting because here's a

totally foreign kingdom that comes in and takes down Babylon and Daniel still survives as a wise man and a leader and administrator among them.

The Plot Against Daniel

And as natural as day follows night, politics follows power. Daniel 5 and verse 4, "So the presidents and the princes sought to find an occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, his administration. They couldn't find a fault, he had been faithful, there was no error or fault found in him." He hadn't been bribed, nobody had taken advantage of him. {5} These men said, "We are not going to find anything against Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God," because that's the one area where Daniel is completely inflexible. {6} "So the princes and presidents all assembled together to the King and they said to him, "King Darius, live forever, {7} All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, the princes, the counselors, the captains have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree."

Now here's what we have to understand what this decree is about and the reason why it was appealing to Darius. It was designed to establish even more firmly his power. "The decree was that whoever would ask a petition of any god or man for 30 days save of you O King, shall be cast into the den of lions." {8} "So now, O King, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which alters not. {9} Darius signed the writing and signed the decree. {10} Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; with his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks to his God, as he had always done."

That's interesting. He knew this decree was signed and he made no effort to cover it up, made no effort to keep it secret, because after all, one the reasons men of God are in this world is to witness to Him and Daniel wasn't about to hide his faith.

Verse 11, "Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God." They probably heard him praying through the window. {12} "Then they went to the King and they spoke to the King concerning his decree and they said, "Did you not sign a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god except to you, O king, that he would be cast in the den of lions?"

Oh, I can hear this thing being delivered. If you have ever been involved with a large organization where politics are involved, you can hear people say, "Well, I thought you signed this, that said that people couldn't do this!" "Well, I did!" "Well, did you know he's doing it!"

The King said, {12} "This is true, according to the law the Medes and Persians, which doesn't change." {13} Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, doesn't pay any attention to you, O king, nor the decree

that you have signed, but he makes his petition three times a day." {14} So the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and he realized right off the bat, that he had been snookered, and he set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he tried his best."

The rest will have to wait till the next time. I am Ronald L. Dart and you were Born to Win!

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