

A Tree Grows in Babylon

Daniel 4

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Introduction: Is God putting a band around America's tree?

1. Deuteronomy 8
 2. Compare with Matthew 21:18–22
 3. Humanism (Metal Man) in America
 - a. Is it illegal if the President does it? ([David Frost/Richard Nixon exchange](#))
 - b. [Charles Evans Hughes](#): “We are under a Constitution, but the Constitution is what we [the judges] say it is.”
 - c. Rep. Joe Knollenberg, R-Mich.: “[It's not \[the taxpayer's\] money.](#)”
- I. Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream: “Second Verse Same as the First. [I'm Henry the Eighth I am.](#)”
- A. Establishing who's in charge: God through the nation Israel.
 1. Daniel 2 established the true prophets of the new kingdom.
 2. Daniel 3 established the true priests of the new kingdom (the Jews to the world: “to the Jew first”).
 3. Daniel 4 establishes who the true king and ruler of the new kingdom is.
 - B. Daniel 4 is written by or dictated to Daniel by Nebuchadnezzar as a warning letter to the world (4:1–3).
 1. The chapter opens and closes with a hymn of praise to the Most High God.

2. Nebuchadnezzar is still confused about who God really is. He has not made a distinction between Bel and Nabu and the Holy God (“Dani-EL” and “BEL-teshazzar” and NEBU-chadnezzar).
3. In Nebuchadnezzar’s mind, Daniel may have just brought a new revelation of the God who stands behind Babylon’s gods or a more clear understanding of what he has believed about God (Dan. 3:29: “Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.”), but he has not realized that all other gods are false.
4. We don’t know everything Nebuchadnezzar was thinking.
 - a. He could have been a modalist, believing that all the various gods he was familiar with were modes of expressions of an Unknown God who Daniel was making known. Daniel was a knower and interpreter of hidden things.
 - b. He could have thought that there were lesser gods who served the One True God, Bel and Nabu being two of the lesser gods, now that Daniel has brought this new revelation.
5. Nebuchadnezzar, like every ruler (See Ps. 2), must learn that there is but One True God.
6. People outside of Israel were worshipping in ignorance (see Acts 17:22–31). Daniel, representing Israel as a prophetic and priestly nation, comes as a prophet and priest to Babylon and the world.

C. Like the dream and interpretation in Daniel 2, the dream and interpretation in Daniel 4 (two witnesses) comes from Daniel's God not Nebuchadnezzar's gods.

1. Bel and Nabu are no longer relevant. A shake-up in Who's in charge and what follows: representation (who represents God in time and history), law, sanctions, eschatology.
2. Nebuchadnezzar has to make a total break from his syncretistic and synthetic worldview ("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" [Dan. 4:27; also see Judges 8:33: they "made Baal-berith their god" with terrible consequences]).

D. Nebuchadnezzar is being called on to take his stand (compare Elijah and the prophets/gods of Baal: 1 Kings 18:20–39): "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.' But the people did not answer him a word" (v. 21).

1. Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mocking Bird* stands against the social, legal, and political powers of the day. The court room scene where the people in the balcony stand when he leaves. They knew what it meant for him to take such a stand.
2. Righteous Gentiles who opposed the Nazification of Germany.
3. Joseph Tson of Romania: "In October 1974, Tson was arrested and imprisoned in Romania for being a Christian minister. Charged with 'propaganda which endangers the security of the state,' Tson was subjected to weekly interrogation."
4. Will the church take a stand today?

II. The Dream and Its Interpretation (This dream leads us to consider the mission of Israel in the NT).

A. There was a tree in the midst of the land of Babylon.

1. It was large.
2. Reached to the heavens.
3. Could be seen throughout the earth.
4. The tree was leafy and full of fruit.
5. Everyone and thing benefitted from the tree, its shade, and fruit.

B. The tree was to be cut down near to the ground.

1. Branches were to be broken off.
2. Leaves stripped from it.
3. Fruit scattered.
4. Beasts and birds scattered as well.
5. The tree was not to be uprooted but a band of iron and bronze was to be placed around the stump.

C. The tree is Nebuchadnezzar

1. Like the tree that would lose its growth cycle, he is to lose his dominion temporarily.
2. He will dwell with the beasts of the field (under judgment/dominion of other men: Gen. 2).
3. He will remain in this condition for seven periods of time, months, or years (probably seven months) during which time he is drenched with the dew of the heavens.
 - a. Baptism into a new way of life? (see 1 Cor. 10:2).
 - b. After seven periods means he is made whole in the eighth period.

- i. Jesus is raised on the “first day of the week” which is the eighth day.
 - ii. Circumcision takes place on the eighth.
 - iii. The eighth day is new birth.
4. Nebuchadnezzar comes to recognize that the One True God of Israel is the King of the heavens (Dan. 4:34–37).

D. Daniel, as a representative of the king, was troubled.

- 1. Nebuchadnezzar’s enemies would take advantage of the king’s absence.
- 2. The lives of the faithful Jews would be in jeopardy.

III. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

A. Trees signify fruitful dominion and rulership.

- 1. Garden: Adam and Eve were not permitted to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This prohibition was only temporary. They had to mature in knowledge and wisdom before they could rule (“So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” [1 Kings 3:9] and “For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil” [Heb. 5:14]).
- 2. The Ruling Trees (Judges 9:8–15).
- 3. The Fruitless Tree (Israel was not being a nation of prophets, priests, and kings [Matt. 23:1–4, 15]): “And He began telling this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. And he said to the vineyard-keeper, “Behold, for three years I have come looking for

fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?” And he answered and said to him, “Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down”” (Luke 13:6–9).

4. The cursed fig tree (Matt. 21:18–22): leaves but no fruit
5. The leafless fig tree of the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:32).
6. True Israel as the Olive Tree (Rom. 11).
7. Tree representing the kingdom (Matt. 13:32 parallels with Dan. 4:12).
8. Tree of life (Rev. 22:2).