

Publishing Editor's column

DANIEL 4 is an unusual chapter in that it was written by a heathen monarch, Nebuchadnezzar. Presumably he was specially inspired by God to record his experiences because it would have a greater impact coming as a first-hand account. The central incident of the chapter is the humiliation of the mighty monarch, brought down by the hand of God from his might and pomp to the level of a beast. The immediate cause of God striking him down in this way was his boastful statement recorded in verse 30: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of *my* majesty?"—words uttered as he walked in the magnificent palace he had built.

Nearly 2,000 years previously, when men began to multiply after the Flood, we read of a similar act of pride. Men moving from the mountains to the east into the Euphrates valley said, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name" (Gen. 11:4). On that occasion God thwarted their aims by making them all speak different languages. Significantly, the name of the place was called Babel (v. 9), the origin of the name Babylon, the city of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar was warned of his coming humiliation in a dream, which depicted the cutting down of a mighty tree that represented himself; and the dream foretold the period of his humiliation as being seven times, that is, seven years of 360 days. A hint of an extended meaning to the dream is given by the fact that the stump of the tree survived with a band of iron and brass around it, which must surely connect with his earlier dream of a metallic image in which brass represents Greece and iron Rome. Furthermore, time periods in Daniel are representative ones, on a day-for-a-year basis, so that the seven times of Daniel 4—2,520 days—represent 2,520 years.

Without going into the details of time period fulfilment, 2,520 years from the time of the Babylonian Empire brings us to our times, and, though the Greek and Roman Empires have long since passed away, their influence permeates our society more than we care to think. And significantly, we have seen in our own times the boastfulness of man asserting itself more than

ever before. The year 2000 was marked by forecasts of how science was going to overcome all the problems that face mankind, including the curing of all diseases and even reversing aging. Man has reached to the heavens literally by sending rockets into space, and talks of exploring the universe by hitherto unknown means of propulsion.

Just as Nebuchadnezzar with all his pretensions was humbled, so mankind today is destined to be humbled from its pride: "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low . . . when [God] ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:17,19). Though there will be extensive earthquakes across the world when Christ returns, especially in the Middle East, earthquakes are also symbolic of revolutionary change. The overthrow of the kingdoms of men and all human institutions will be a far more revolutionary change than anything that has occurred before, indeed "a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great" (Rev. 16:18). The pride of man in his own achievements, exhibited by the men of Babel and by Nebuchadnezzar, and more than ever today, will be overthrown once and for all.

After his humiliation Nebuchadnezzar declared: "I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all Whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase" (Dan. 4:37). The time will come when all mankind will have to recognise the truth of this.

In his dream of the cutting down of the tree Nebuchadnezzar heard an angel say: "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men" (v. 17, RV). This is surely prophetic of the one who was born in a stable and died a criminal's death, the one who "humiliated himself, and became obedient unto death", the one who because he did not exalt himself was "highly exalted" by God (Phil. 2:8,9) and made ruler over the earth. If we follow the way of our Lord Jesus Christ, humbling ourselves before God, and seeking to serve others, we too will rule with him in the Kingdom that will replace the rule of men over the earth.

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