

The character of the King is further exhibited in this chapter. As has already been put forward, the idea that Nebuchadnezzar was just a raving out of control megalomaniac is not sustainable. Alone among gentile rulers, he is given a first-person inclusion in the canon of scripture *"I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house....."* This is not coincidence, but a deliberate way of honouring that person whom the prophet Ezekiel called under inspiration the god of the gentiles (el goyim) or as the KJV has it *"the mighty one of the heathen"*. Ezekiel 31v11. This is the last chapter in the record of his rise to a proper spiritual consciousness which is an interesting journey to consider and often more like our own voyage than we might like to admit.

In his personal experience he was gifted a dream, a dream with terrible ramifications. As before he demanded of the "wise" what was the meaning of this heavenly visitation, they all came short as was his expectation, with the exception of Daniel. Now an older man the decades of service to the state had not dulled his spirituality. He had renamed him Belteshazzar, a dishonouring of him by association with Nebuchadnezzar's own god Bel, as the reader is expressly reminded, and as he intended to exercise power over others through their personal humiliation. However, he was unsuccessful in this. Was he sincere when he called him "master of the magicians"? Did he not remember his own experience of blinding vision when both the dream and the interpretation of the image was revealed to him? Had political estrangement separated the ability to interact sensibly with Daniel, a man whom he had elevated and could have been his friend? No, he remembered! *"The spirit of the holy gods is in thee"*. *"No secret troubleth thee"*. He knew.

The tree is a symbol of a nation. It is rooted in the ground, and it towers over mere men, a bridge to a high place, a heavenly. Heaved up above the mundane, many elevated to positions of power do not attribute their rise to the creator God but to their own efforts and their own successes. He was that tree, the power base he had constructed, which he had organically grown, was to be cut down.

The immense tree grew visible to all the earth its height unto heaven itself. It was a glorious kingdom, the best run country under the control of a cautious and careful ruler, truly a "head of gold". It was an imitation of the divine Kingdom, but only an imitation, its substance was fatally flawed, its head was not based upon the refined gold of tried faith in the God of Israel, but there was still a belief in the achievement of self. Nebuchadnezzar did have a sizeable ego!

The stump of the smitten tree was to be banded with iron and brass. These metals had been used before in the earlier dream. Brass for the third inferior power, which was subsequently associated with the Greek dominion. Iron the last metal, and the last power to exercise crushing might over inhabited Israel, indicative of the iron grip which Rome exercised over the Holy Land before its inhabitants were dispersed into the four corners of the earth.

Both these have continued as a restraining limitation of the return of a Babylonian golden age where the dictates of a benign supreme ruler could provide a peaceful habitation for the many fowl that flock the earth and reside in its sturdy branches. The democratisation of the tree of the Kingdom of men might seem like a good thing and in many ways it is, as it prevents the rising of an obnoxious tyrant, but ultimately the world

needs the return of a benign dictator, not as before when the whims of a failing individual would corrupt the outworking of glory to all, but because that future individual would have earned the right to rule by first demonstrating his personal credentials. That individual who will occupy the throne of the dictatorship will of course be the Lord Jesus Christ of whom Nebuchadnezzar is, in at least one way, typical.

The book of Daniel deals with a number of heathen rulers:

1-4 Nebuchadnezzar

5,7,8 Belshazzar

6,9,11&12 Darius the Mede

10 Cyrus

Two are Chaldean (head of gold) and two are Medo-Persian (chest and arms of silver). As can be seen from the table above, the book is not presented in chronological order, the last chapter in time is actually chapter 10. Chapters 11 and 12 are not only linked together by a conjunction (And) but the opening phrase conveys a continuation of the same context "*And at that time*". Nor is there any repetition of the name of the King at the commencement of this final section, as new chapters have previously illustrated.

Daniel knew all these rulers but it would seem that he knew the first, Nebuchadnezzar, the best, as not only were they contemporary for the full 43 years of his reign, but Daniel was captured by him at the time of the first captivity in 3520AM, when he was co-ruling with his father Nebopolassar, before taking him and other royal princes back to Babylon.

Belshazzar only reigned for 3 years (as co-rex) Darius for two (not the same Darius as in other books) and Cyrus for 7 years. We are not told when the prophet died but he did live to see Cyrus enthroned in 3589AM.

The BC or BCE dates are heavily disputed, so we have avoided them but those most commonly accepted are from 605 – 536. The Jewish and Greek records differ by 82 years during the Persian period, that's a long time for a major discrepancy between the two systems.

The first chapter is written in Hebrews and then chapter 8-12 revert back to that language, but the intervening chapters 2-7 are written in Aramaic or Chaldee. (Begins at 2:4b). It is significant that it is these chapters which deal with the outworking of God's purpose with the wider nations, and no longer so Israel centric.

It seems fitting that the madness of the king mirrors the madness of the nations at large and the return to sanity, echoes the future acceptance of Christ by the conquered nations at his promised return.

The period of seven times is interesting. It is stated three times, v16,25 &32. Taking the chaldee cycle of 360 as one time, $7 \times 360 = 2520$. If we use the day for a year principle, then a period of 2520 years has a recent possible fulfilment if we start at the emergence of Babylon as a desolating power against Jerusalem as 605BCE – 1917CE the liberation of Jerusalem from the desolating Moslem power. Starting the count at the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562 gives 1959 or adding on the 82 years re the Jewish reckoning gives 2041, the death of the last autocrat? Using the end of the Babylonian dynasty in

536 gives 1985 or 2067 the final establishment of the replacement of that dominion with a better under Jesus Christ.

There are some interesting phrases which catch the attention of the reader.

“Let a beast’s heart be given him”. The King was not literally given an animal’s heart, although this was tried in the 1960s but tissue incompatibility proved fatal to the recipient. It is more that the mental aspect of Nebuchadnezzar broke down and he resorted to animal behaviours which isolated him from his fellow men. There is a gap of several years in the records when the King was inactive and was said to have retired to the desert. The Bible gives the explanation as to why this occurred.

“Saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven”. An angel from the celestial realm which observes all that takes place upon the earth, separate and separated from the condemned race of Adam intervened in the affairs of man, a rare event indeed, and for the benefit of all mankind by revelation, not just the immediate recipient, the King. These expressions are also given in the plural *“the decree of the watchers”* *“the word of the holy ones”*, a reminder of the many angels which God employs to effect His business, not utilising just one as He could have done, but many reflecting the multitude which would ultimately issue forth from His creative force, in the New creation, born from above!

“Seven times shall pass over thee”. To be understood both literally referring to the period of estrangement from civilisation of seven years, and symbolically of the long period of the centuries of gentile madness whilst still nominally in power!

“Break off thy sins by righteousness”. The need to actively move away from transgressions by replacing them with doing righteousness. A positive behavioural profile has a major impact in keeping bad behaviours down.

“Break off.....thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor”. This echoes the highlighted necessity of forgiving others when they sin against you.

“The army of heaven”. The false idea held by Nebuchadnezzar that the God of the Bible was just one of many deities in a theological heaven.

“The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men”. The policies of heaven pervade all aspects of human government and everyone in power, is only there because God permits it to be so.

The King was reassured that because the roots remained in the stump *“whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, thy Kingdom shall be sure to thee, after that thy shalt know that the heavens do rule”* v26, that he would not be permanently removed in ignominy and obscurity.

If this is a dual prophecy receiving a personal fulfilment in the lifetime of the King with a literal seven years of madness, and a spiritual fulfilment in 2520 years of epochal madness then perhaps this indicates a return to some sense of wider mankind and possibly even the King himself after that longer period has been endured and then recovered from. Will Nebuchadnezzar be raised to future glory because he truly repented from his foolishness and stubborn resistance against God?

Let us consider the concluding words that are recorded of him *“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven all whose works are truth and His ways judgement and those that walk in pride He is able to abase”*. The words of a man touched by truth?