

(This is written to give you good things to enjoy, because look again at what Paul told Timothy (1 Tim 6:17-18)! I think he was thinking of us at the time: **17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be conceited and not to put their hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in God, WHO RICHLY PROVIDES ALL THINGS TO ENJOY. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share...**) The following ice breaker is just a starter for your group. The message comes after the second bar. Please enjoy!)

***CROWD BREAKER: Have you ever worked with kids' ministry? What was that like? What do kids need most today? How do we get it to them? — The scribe***

Note: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP. The purpose is to unite, not divide; to fearlessly proclaim the freedom the gospel brings. Any part of these notes might be appropriate as a crowd breaker for your own group. The goal is to create memories from Sunday that will serve for a long time. BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study. This study is also a great devotion, taken slowly through the week.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions raised by Pastor Mark's message from this Sunday. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.**

Pastor Mark says, "In Daniel, we learn a lot about God's nature and how it applies to us." **What has struck you so far?**

### **Nebuchadnezzar Confesses God's Kingdom**

<sup>1</sup>King Nebuchadnezzar,

To the people of every nation and language who dwell in all the earth:

May your prosperity be multiplied. <sup>2</sup>I am pleased to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.

<sup>3</sup>How great are His signs,

how mighty His wonders!

His kingdom is an eternal kingdom;

His dominion endures from generation to generation.

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***Why is it significant that Nebuchadnezzar writes this passage? What kind of message is here? Where have we seen Nebuchadnezzar praise God before? (Look at the end of Chapter 3. Look at the end of Chapter 2.) What was that about? Why is this a recurring theme? Why does Nebuchadnezzar have such a hard time learning his own message?***

### **Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Great Tree**

4I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. 5I had a dream, and it frightened me; while in my bed, the images and visions in my mind alarmed me. 6So I issued a decree that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. 7When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and diviners came in, I told them the dream, and they could not interpret it for me.

8But at last, into my presence came Daniel (whose name is Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods). And I told him the dream: 9“O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery baffles you. So explain to me the visions I saw in my dream, and their interpretation. 10In these visions of my mind as I was lying in bed, I saw this come to pass:

There was a tree in the midst of the land,  
and its height was great.

11The tree grew large and strong;  
its top reached the sky,  
and it was visible  
to the ends of the earth.

12Its leaves were beautiful,  
its fruit was abundant,  
and upon it was food for all.

Under it the beasts of the field found shelter,  
in its branches the birds of the air nested,  
and from it every creature was fed.

13As I lay on my bed, I also saw in the visions of my mind a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. 14He called out in a loud voice:

‘Cut down the tree and chop off its branches;  
strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit.

Let the beasts flee from under it,  
and the birds from its branches.

15But leave the stump with its roots in the ground,  
and a band of iron and bronze around it,  
in the tender grass of the field.

Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven  
and graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth.

16Let his mind be changed from that of a man,  
and let him be given the mind of a beast  
till seven times pass him by.

17This decision is the decree of the watchers,  
the verdict declared by the holy ones,

so that the living will know  
that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind  
and gives it to whom He wishes,  
setting over it the lowliest of men.'

**18**This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because none of the wise men of my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you are able because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

**Notice, this time, Nebuchadnezzar remembers his dream. Why does he trust Daniel with it? Have you ever heard this dream before? If not..., can you guess what the interpretation is?**

### **Daniel Interprets the Second Dream**

**19**For a time, Daniel, who was also known as Belteshazzar, was perplexed, and his thoughts alarmed him. **Put yourself in Daniel's place. How would you feel?**

So the king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you." **Now how would you feel?**

"My lord," replied Belteshazzar, "may the dream apply to those who hate you, and its interpretation to your enemies!

**20**The tree you saw that grew large and strong, whose top reached the sky and was visible to all the earth, **21**whose foliage was beautiful and whose fruit was abundant, providing food for all, under which the beasts of the field lived, and in whose branches the birds of the air nested— **22**you, O king, are that tree! For you have become great and strong; your greatness has grown to reach the sky, and your dominion extends to the ends of the earth.

**Talk about the danger Nebuchadnezzar is facing.**

**23**And you, O king, saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying:

'Cut down the tree and destroy it,  
but leave the stump with its roots in the ground,  
and a band of iron and bronze around it,  
in the tender grass of the field.

Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,  
and graze with the beasts of the field

till seven times pass him by.' **Talk about this. How detailed is the dream? Who are the watchers? What role do they play here? What kind of mercy do you see here?**

**24**This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree that the Most High has issued against my lord the king:

**25**You will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling will be with the beasts of the field. You will feed on grass like an ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass you by, until you acknowledge that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind and gives it to whom He wishes. **What does this word "until" imply?**

**26**As for the command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots, your kingdom will be restored to you as soon as you acknowledge that Heaven rules. **27**Therefore, may my advice be pleasing to you, O king. Break away from your sins by doing what is right, and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed. Perhaps there will be an extension of your prosperity." **What is God offering Nebuchadnezzar? Why is this so**

**significant? What will happen if Nebuchadnezzar repents? (Can you think of another time when a foreign king was offered a chance to repent, and he did, and saved the entire city?)**

(Think of Jonah and Nineveh)

### **The Second Dream Fulfilled**

**28**All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. **29**Twelve months later, as he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, **30**the king exclaimed, "Is this not Babylon the Great, which I myself have built by the might of my power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" (Scribe's note: The hanging gardens of Babylon are said to have been built by Nebuchadnezzar...and were called one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.) **Look closely: What did Nebuchadnezzar do wrong? Why is it so wrong? What has happened already that should have made this easier to avoid? Compare his words about himself with what He said of God in chapter 2.**

**31**While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven: "It is decreed to you, King Nebuchadnezzar, that the kingdom has departed from you. **32**You will be driven away from mankind to live with the beasts of the field, and you will feed on grass like an ox. And seven times will pass you by, until you acknowledge that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind and gives it to whom He wishes."

**33**At that moment the sentence against Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from mankind. He ate grass like an ox, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird. **Re-read what he says of God after this incident, at the opening of this chapter. Does his response to this ordeal surprise you? Look again below:**

### **Nebuchadnezzar Restored**

**34**But at the end of those days I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven, and my sanity was restored to me. Then I praised the Most High, and I honored and glorified Him who lives forever:

"For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
and His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

**35**All the peoples of the earth  
are counted as nothing,  
and He does as He pleases  
with the army of heaven  
and the peoples of the earth.

There is no one who can restrain His hand  
or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

**God says this will be until "you acknowledge that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind and gives it to whom He wishes." How accurate was this dream, and Daniel's interpretation? What has Nebuchadnezzar learned? Look below. What does he say the result of his repentance is?**

**36**At the same time my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne, and surpassing greatness was added to me. **37**Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, for all His works are true and all His ways are just.

And He is able to humble those who walk in pride. **How is this a warning for us? What is your biggest takeaway?**

**Pastor Mark described a wilderness time. Have you known a wilderness time, where you became more attentive to God's work in your own life? Can you describe it?**

**What role does humility play in godly leadership? Can you describe the most humble leader you've worked with? How did they mark you? How does humble leadership speak?**

**Look up Micah 6:8 What are the three things God has shown you? What does the Lord require of you? (Do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.) How does this apply?**

**Look up Luke 12:19-21 How does this remind us of Nebuchadnezzar's experience?**

<sup>19</sup>Then I will say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry!" <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be required of you. Then who will own what you have accumulated?" <sup>21</sup>This is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God."...

**Take time to pray for one another. Be blessed.**

**Follow the Truth wherever He leads you. He has a Name: Jesus. What is your next step? —the scribe**