

# EXILIC & POST-EXILIC PROPHETS OF THE BIBLE

Senior Adults & Friends Bible Study — Summit View Church of Christ  
Winter 2022-2023

## PART FIVE, SECTION 2

### Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Tree

#### DANIEL 4

*Date:* probably 570s or 560s BC — No date is given for Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its fulfillment. Nebuchadnezzar's pleasure with his improvements to Babylon (4:29-30) suggests that the events of chapter 4 took place late in his reign, by which time he had made Babylon one of the largest and grandest cities in the world. He reigned 605-562 BC, so a date in the 570s-560s BC is a good guess. One year after Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the tree, his insanity began (4:29). The 7 "times" of his insanity may indicate a literal seven years, some other seven time periods, or an indeterminate period of "complete" punishment. Ancient history does hint that Nebuchadnezzar suffered from some mental or physical illness late in his life, but the duration of that illness is unspecified.

#### Daniel 4:1-18 — The Dream

4:4 — How was Nebuchadnezzar feeling before he had this dream?

4:13-15a — What happened to the tree in the king's dream?

4:15b-16 — What would happen to the person in these verses? For how long?

4:17 — What was to be the point of this decision and verdict?

#### Daniel 4:19-27 — The Interpretation

4:22 — The tree in the dream represented \_\_\_\_\_.

4:25 — What was decreed for him?

- he would be driven away from \_\_\_\_\_
- he would live with the \_\_\_\_\_
- he would eat \_\_\_\_\_ like the \_\_\_\_\_
- he would be drenched with \_\_\_\_\_
- this situation would last for 7 \_\_\_\_\_

4:25 — This sentence would be enforced until he acknowledged that the Most High is \_\_\_\_\_ and gives them to \_\_\_\_\_.

4:27 — What did Daniel urge Nebuchadnezzar to do in light of this prophecy?

### **Daniel 4:28-37 — The Fulfillment**

4:29-30 — How was Nebuchadnezzar feeling 12 months after this dream?

4:29-32 — What do you think were the sins for which Nebuchadnezzar received this sentence from God?

4:33 — What happened to Nebuchadnezzar during the 7 "times"?

4:34-36 — What happened to Nebuchadnezzar at the end of the 7 "times"?

4:37 — What did Nebuchadnezzar learn about God?

- Why would Nebuchadnezzar's lesson have mattered to Daniel and his fellow Jews?

*food for thought* — Consider verses 25-26, 27, 32, 34-35, and 37. What kind of attitude and conduct does God expect from people—even rulers—who acknowledge his sovereignty as God and the ultimate King?

#### **"Nebuchadnezzar's Madness" — *NIV Archaeological Study Bible, page 1391***

"Inscriptions reveal [Nebuchadnezzar's] great pride over his achievements in building temples and greatly fortifying the city of Babylon. The book of Daniel records that God struck Nebuchadnezzar with a strange affliction in order to humble him. Extrabiblical records deal with his infirmity only obliquely. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus cited a report by the Babylonian priest Berossus that Nebuchadnezzar died following a period of weakness. The Christian writer Eusebius preserved a tradition from the Greek historian Megasthenes (c. 300 B.C.) that Nebuchadnezzar, having ascended to the roof of his palace, became inspired by some god. (In antiquity insanity was looked upon as possession by a deity.)

"The illness described in Daniel 4:22-34 appears to have been a delusional disorder. The typical onset for this kind of malady occurs in later life; it frequently lasts from months to years and remits spontaneously, often without subsequent relapse. Lycanthropy, in which patients imagine themselves to be wolves, is one such disorder. Nebuchadnezzar's condition has been described as boanthropy, or cow-like behavior. However, the imagery implied by his behavior may be related to a figure of the Gilgamesh Epic. This myth, known from the library of Ashurbanipal (668-626 B.C.), tells of Enkidu, a savage, animal-like creature who was hairy, unclothed and ate grass until becoming civilized—the antithesis of what would be expected of a cultured, self-sufficient builder of cities like Nebuchadnezzar."