

Daniel 2:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

Analysis

Nebuchadnezzar's response demonstrates the arbitrary cruelty of absolute power: "For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon." His rage leads to genocidal decree—all wise men must die because some cannot perform the impossible. The Hebrew phrase *baal chitna* (בעל חיטה, "very furious") suggests violent, uncontrollable anger. This reveals tyranny's irrationality—executing valuable advisors solves nothing but satisfies wounded pride.

This decree threatens Daniel and his companions (verse 13), providentially creating the crisis that will demonstrate God's superiority. What appears as disaster becomes opportunity for divine glory. Human rage serves divine purposes—Nebuchadnezzar's excessive decree sets up the dramatic contrast between pagan impotence and Yahweh's revelation. God sovereignly works through evil rulers' decisions, turning intended harm toward redemptive purposes. Joseph's brothers meant evil, but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20).

Theologically, this teaches God's sovereignty over even unjust rulers. Nebuchadnezzar's tyrannical decree, though morally evil, serves God's purposes of glorifying His name and protecting His people. This doesn't excuse the sin—Nebuchadnezzar bears full responsibility—but reveals God's comprehensive control. No human decision, however wicked, ultimately frustrates divine plans. This comforts believers facing oppressive authority—God remains sovereign,

capable of using even persecution to advance His kingdom and vindicate His people.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern kings wielded absolute authority, executing subjects at will. Mass executions of advisors occurred when kings felt betrayed or deceived. Nebuchadnezzar's temper was legendary—he burned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's companions (chapter 3), executed princes who displeased him, and besieged Jerusalem brutally. Yet God controlled even his rage, using it to create opportunities for demonstrating divine power. This pattern appears throughout Scripture—Pharaoh's stubbornness showcased God's plagues, Haman's plot led to Jewish deliverance, Christ's crucifixion accomplished redemption. God's sovereignty encompasses all human actions, even wicked ones.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Nebuchadnezzar's irrational rage demonstrate the arbitrary cruelty of absolute human power unchecked by divine law?
2. What does God's use of this unjust decree to create opportunity for His glory teach us about divine sovereignty over evil human decisions?
3. In what ways should understanding that God works through even unjust persecution comfort believers facing oppressive authority today?

Interlinear Text

שָׁגֵן יְאָדָה עַל־כָּל־הַבָּבֶל
all For this the king was angry furious and very
H3606 H6903 H1836 H4430 H1149 H7108 H7690

בְּבָבֶל: שְׁפִיטִים יְאָדָה עַל־לְהָבֶד הַמְּבָבָל וְאָמַר
and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon
H560 H7 H3606 H2445 H895

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 3:13 (Kingdom): Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.

Psalms 76:10 (Parallel theme): Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Matthew 2:16 (Parallel theme): Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

Daniel 3:19 (Parallel theme): Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.