

# Daniel 4:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

## Analysis

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The tree's leaves were 'fair' (beautiful), its fruit 'much' (abundant), providing food and shelter for all creation. This depicts beneficent empire—Nebuchadnezzar's reign bringing prosperity, peace, and provision to subjects. The beasts, birds, and 'all flesh' being fed represents universal dependence on the king's power and generosity. While this seems positive, it reveals dangerous dependency: when the tree falls (v.14), all who sheltered under it will be scattered. Human institutions, however beneficent, make unreliable ultimate providers. Only God's kingdom provides unshakeable security. This passage warns against placing ultimate trust in human governments, economic systems, or political leaders—even benevolent ones prove temporary and fragile. The tree's beauty and productivity make its coming destruction more shocking, illustrating that outward success doesn't guarantee divine approval or lasting stability.

## Historical Context

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Nebuchadnezzar did provide considerable benefits to Babylon and subject peoples. His building projects employed thousands; his military victories secured borders, enabling trade and prosperity; his administrative systems organized vast territories efficiently. Subject nations, though conquered, often experienced Pax Babylonica—stability preferable to the chaotic warfare of competing kingdoms.

This made him seem indispensable—a universal provider and protector. Yet this very beneficence bred hubris: receiving adulation and dependence from subjects inflated his self-assessment, leading to the pride God would judge. History shows how even benevolent empires foster dangerous dependencies.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How can leaders' genuine benefits and provisions become spiritually dangerous by fostering ultimate dependence on them rather than God?
2. What is the difference between appropriate gratitude for human leaders' service and inappropriate ultimate trust in them?
3. Why does Scripture warn against trusting in princes (Psalm 146:3) even when they're providing real benefits?

## Interlinear Text

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עָפִי הַ	שָׁפִיר	וְאֹנֶה הַ	שֶׁגַּם יֵא	וּמִזֹּן וְ	כָּל
<b>The leaves</b>	<b>thereof were fair</b>	<b>and the fruit</b>	<b>thereof much</b>	<b>and in it was meat</b>	<b>for all</b>
H6074	H8209	H4	H7690	H4203	H3606
הַ	תַּחַת וְהִי	תַּטֵּל לָ	חַיֵּי ת	בְּכֹ א	וּבְעֵנֶף וְהִי
H0	<b>under</b>	<b>had shadow</b>	<b>the beasts</b>	<b>of the field</b>	<b>in the boughs</b>
	H8460	H2927	H2423	H1251	H6056
צִפֹּרִי	שָׁמַיִ א	וּמִנֵּי הַ	יִתֵּן יֵן	כָּל	בְּשָׂרָא:
<b>it and the fowls</b>	<b>of the heaven</b>	<b>of it</b>	<b>was fed</b>	<b>for all</b>	<b>flesh</b>
H6853	H8065	H4481	H2110	H3606	H1321

## Additional Cross-References

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**Ezekiel 17:23** (Parallel theme): In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.

**Luke 13:19** (Parallel theme): It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

**Lamentations 4:20** (Parallel theme): The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

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