

Daniel 4:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:

Analysis

The watcher cries aloud with authoritative command: 'Hew down the tree, cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, scatter his fruit.' This violent imagery depicts comprehensive judgment—not pruning but destruction. Yet remnant remains: 'leave the stump of his roots in the earth.' The stump bound with iron and brass suggests both restraint (preventing regrowth) and preservation (protecting against total destruction). The shift from tree to person ('let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him') clarifies the symbol: this concerns Nebuchadnezzar's coming madness. Seven times (likely years) will pass in this condition. This severe mercy—temporary judgment producing repentance rather than permanent destruction—demonstrates God's redemptive discipline. He humbles to heal, judges to restore, brings low to ultimately exalt (after repentance).

Historical Context

Historical confirmation of Nebuchadnezzar's madness remains debated. No Babylonian records (unsurprisingly) document the king's humiliation—ancient Near Eastern propaganda suppressed any acknowledgment of royal weakness. However, a gap in historical records between 582-575 BC might correspond to this period. The illness described resembles boanthropy or lycanthropy—psychiatric

conditions where patients believe themselves to be animals. Modern medicine would diagnose this as a form of psychotic disorder. Scripture presents it as divinely imposed judgment, using natural means (mental illness) for supernatural purposes (humbling pride). The seven-year duration provided sufficient time for thorough humiliation and spiritual transformation.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Why does God preserve the 'stump' rather than destroying the tree entirely?
2. What does Nebuchadnezzar's temporary madness teach about God's discipline being redemptive rather than merely punitive?
3. How do severe trials sometimes prove to be 'severe mercies' that produce spiritual breakthrough?

Interlinear Text

וְקָרָא	בְּחֵל	כֵּן	וְאָמַר	וַיִּדְוֶה	אֶת־הָעֵץ	וַיִּקְצֹץ
He cried	aloud	thus	and said	Hew down	the tree	and cut off
H7123	H2429	H3652	H560	H1414	H363	H7113
חַיֵּי הַבְּהֵמָה	תֵּינֶנּוּ	אֶת־פְּרִי הָעֵץ	וַיִּבְרֹךְ	וְאֵת־פְּרִי הָעֵץ	וַיִּשָּׁקֵם	וַיִּשָּׁקֵם
his branches	shake off	his leaves	and scatter	his fruit	get away	let the beasts
H6056	H5426	H6074	H921	H4	H5111	H2423
מִן־הָעֵץ	תַּחַת וְהִיא	וְצִפְרֵי אֶת־הָעֵץ	מִן־הָעֵץ	וְאֵת־הָעֵץ		
from	under it	and the fowls	from	his branches		
H4481	H8479	H6853	H4481	H6056		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 3:10 (Parallel theme): And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Daniel 4:23 (Parallel theme): And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him;

Matthew 7:19 (Parallel theme): Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Luke 3:9 (Parallel theme): And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Daniel 3:4 (Parallel theme): Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

Daniel 4:12 (Parallel theme): 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.

