

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

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|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| וְקַרְאָה | צְוָה | אִלְנָא | וְדַעַת | אָמַרְתָּ | בְּמַלְאָכָה | וְלֹא | קָרָא |
| He cried | aloud | thus | and said | Hew down | the tree | and cut off | |
| H7123 | H2429 | H3652 | H560 | H1414 | H363 | H7113 | |
| עַתְפּוּהִי | עַתְפּוּהִי | עַתְפּוּהִי | עַתְפּוּהִי | עַתְפּוּהִי | עַתְפּוּהִי | עַתְפּוּהִי | עַתְפּוּהִי |
| his branches | shake off | his leaves | and scatter | his fruit | get away | let the beasts | |
| H6056 | H5426 | H6074 | H921 | H4 | H5111 | H2423 | |
| מִן | מִן | מִן | מִן | מִן | מִן | מִן | מִן |
| 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.

