

Daniel 4:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth;

Analysis

Daniel begins interpretation by recounting the dream's opening: the great, strong tree growing until its height reached heaven and visibility extended to earth's ends. This restatement serves multiple rhetorical functions: ensuring accurate understanding, providing time for the king to prepare for interpretation, and establishing the dream's details before explaining their meaning. The repetition emphasizes the tree's cosmic scope—'reached unto heaven' and visible 'to all the earth'—highlighting both the glory of the symbol and the pride inherent in such exaltation. The tree's greatness isn't criticized per se; Nebuchadnezzar did achieve remarkable things. Rather, the problem lies in his attitude toward these achievements (revealed in v.30)—attributing them to personal power rather than divine grant.

Historical Context

Daniel's careful recounting of dream details followed ancient Near Eastern interpretive protocol. Dream interpreters were expected to demonstrate mastery of the dream before explaining its significance. This methodical approach also served pedagogical purposes: repetition reinforced the message's gravity. By making Nebuchadnezzar hear again about the tree's cosmic height and universal visibility, Daniel prepared him to understand the fall's magnitude. What seems like unnecessary repetition actually functions as rhetorical amplification, ensuring the king grasps both the achievement's scope and the coming judgment's severity.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why does Scripture often repeat details when delivering important messages?
2. How does the tree's greatness and visibility make its fall more dramatic and instructive?
3. What is the difference between acknowledging real achievements and taking prideful credit for them?

Interlinear Text

אֵילָנָא	דָּ י	כִּי יָרָא	דָּ י	רָבָה	וַיִּתְקַן	וְרוֹמָהּ
The tree	H1768	that thou sawest	H1768	which grew	and was strong	whose height
H363		H2370		H7236	H8631	H7314
יָמָּהּ	לְשָׁמַיִם	וְחִזּוֹתֶיהָ	לְכָל	אֶרְצָא:		
reached	unto the heaven	and the sight	thereof to all	the earth		
H4291	H8065	H2379	H3606	H772		

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