

Daniel 4:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation:

Analysis

Daniel continues recounting: the tree's leaves were fair, fruit abundant, providing food for all; beasts and birds finding shelter and sustenance under and within it. This section emphasizes the tree's beneficent character—not merely tall and visible, but productive and nurturing. The universal scope ('meat for all') depicts empire-wide prosperity under Nebuchadnezzar's reign. This makes the coming judgment more sobering: even beneficial rule that provides for many doesn't guarantee divine approval if accompanied by pride. The passage warns that outward success and genuine benefit to others can coexist with heart pride that merits judgment. Good works don't justify spiritual arrogance; public service doesn't excuse private pride. This challenges both ancient and modern assumptions that productive, beneficent leadership earns divine favor regardless of heart attitude.

Historical Context

Nebuchadnezzar's reign did bring considerable stability and prosperity to Babylon and surrounding regions. His building projects employed thousands; his military successes secured borders enabling trade; his administration organized vast territories effectively. Subjects benefited from Pax Babylonica—relative peace preferable to constant warfare. This made him seem indispensable, fostering

dependence that fed his ego. The dream's symbolism accurately captured historical reality: the empire was productive, beneficent, and provided for millions. Yet this very success became spiritually dangerous when the king claimed credit rather than acknowledging divine enablement. History repeatedly shows how human achievements, however beneficial, become idolatrous when divorced from recognition of God's sovereignty.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How can genuine good works and benefit to others coexist with heart pride that displeases God?
2. Why doesn't productivity and public service automatically earn divine approval?
3. In what ways might our beneficial contributions to society mask underlying spiritual pride?

Interlinear Text

לְכָל־אָדָם	וְמִזְרָחָ וְמִזְרָחָ	שָׁפֵר אָגָב הַשָּׁפֵר	עַפְּנֵי הַשָּׁפֵר	וְאַגְבֵּת יְאַגְבֵּת	וְאַגְבֵּת יְאַגְבֵּת
Whose leaves were fair	and the fruit thereof much	and in it was meat	for all		
H6074	H8209	H4	H7690	H4203	H3606
וְבָעֵנֶפֶת וְהַיִלְלָה בְּבָעֵנֶפֶת	תְּחִתָּה וְהַיִלְלָה בְּבָעֵנֶפֶת	תְּדֹור	תְּחִתָּה	בְּבָעֵנֶפֶת	וְבָעֵנֶפֶת וְהַיִלְלָה
H0	under	dwelt	which the beasts	of the field	and upon whose branches
H8460	H1753	H2423	H1251		H6056
שְׁמָמָא:	צְפָנָה	וְשְׁמָמָא:	צְפָנָה		
had their habitation	the fowls	of the heaven			
H7932	H6853	H8065			

