

Daniel 4:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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;

Analysis

Daniel recounts the dream's judgment section: the holy watcher descending from heaven commanding the tree's destruction while preserving the stump, binding it with iron and brass. He reiterates the transformation—dwelling with beasts, wetness from heaven's dew, eating grass with cattle, heart changed from man to beast for seven times. This careful recounting ensures the king understands what's coming: comprehensive humiliation (tree hewn down), preservation (stump remains), restraint (bound with metal), degradation (dwelling with animals), and duration (seven years). The repetition of 'seven times' emphasizes the judgment's measured nature—it has defined limits, isn't permanent, and serves redemptive rather than merely punitive purposes. God's goal is Nebuchadnezzar's restoration after humbling, not his ultimate destruction.

Historical Context

The binding of the stump 'in the tender grass of the field' reflects ancient agricultural practice where valuable stumps were preserved for eventual regrowth

by protecting them from damage. This practical detail grounds the vision in recognizable reality while carrying symbolic meaning: God preserves remnant even while judging pride. The seven-year period in ancient Near Eastern thought represented completeness—sufficient time for thorough transformation. For a king accustomed to luxury, the prospect of dwelling outdoors, exposed to weather, eating grass, living among animals represented complete status reversal. Ancient concepts of kingship as semi-divine made such degradation almost incomprehensible, yet Daniel announces it will occur.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does the preservation of the stump teach about God's redemptive purposes even in severe judgment?
2. How does the seven-year duration demonstrate both the thoroughness and the limits of God's discipline?
3. Why is it significant that judgment has defined boundaries rather than being permanent or open-ended?

Interlinear Text

וְיָדָה	מֶלֶךְ	עֵיר	שָׁמֶן	וְיָמָן
H1768	saw	And whereas the king	a watcher	and an holy one
H2370		H4430	H5894	H6922
				H5182
מִן	שָׁמְךָ	אֵלֶּנֶת	וְהַיִלְלָה	עֵקֶר
from	heaven	and saying	Hew	the tree
H4481	H8065	H560	H1414	H363
				H2255
				H1297
				H6136
שָׁרֶשׁ	בָּאָרֶץ	שָׁבַע	לְדִין	פְּרִזְבָּה
of the roots	thereof in the earth	leave	even with a band	of iron
H8330	H772	H7662	H613	H1768
				H6523
וְבָטַש	בְּדִתָּא	בְּרָא	וְבָטַש	שָׁמְךָ
and brass	in the tender grass	H1768	of the field	with the dew
H5174	H1883		H1251	H2920
				H8065
וְאָטַבְתָּ	וְעַמְתָּ	בְּרָא	בְּלִקְתָּה	לְעַד
and let it be wet	be with	the beasts	of the field	till
H6647	H5974	H2423	H1251	H1768
				H5705
שְׁבַע	יַחַלְפֶת	עַלְוָה	וְיָמָן	וְיָדָה
seven	times	pass	over	
H7655	H5732	H2499	H5922	

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 5:21 (Kingdom): And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.