

Daniel 4:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

Analysis

Daniel details the judgment: expulsion from human society, dwelling with beasts, eating grass like oxen, wetness from heaven's dew, and passage of seven times—all 'till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.' This final clause reveals judgment's purpose: not vindictive punishment but pedagogical discipline. God aims to teach Nebuchadnezzar theological truth: the Most High sovereignly governs human kingdoms, distributing authority according to His will, not human merit. The king must learn that his empire came through divine grant, not personal achievement. Reformed theology emphasizes God's absolute sovereignty over nations—He 'removeth kings, and setteth up kings' (Daniel 2:21). This judgment dismantles the king's illusion of autonomous power, forcing recognition of creaturely dependence. The phrase 'till thou know' indicates the judgment's conditional nature: once the lesson is learned, restoration follows.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern royal ideology claimed kings ruled by divine mandate, but typically understood this as partnership—the god(s) chose the king, who then

maintained divine favor through proper ritual, military success, and building projects. Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions repeatedly claim Marduk selected him and enabled his victories. Daniel's interpretation radically reframes this: the Most High alone grants and removes authority; human contribution is negligible. This challenged not just Nebuchadnezzar but the entire ideological foundation of ancient imperialism. The historical pattern has repeated: every empire claiming autonomous greatness eventually learns (often through collapse) its dependence on factors beyond its control. God permits human pride to reach breaking points, then demonstrates sovereign control.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does the phrase 'till thou know' teach about discipline having educational rather than merely punitive purposes?
2. How does acknowledging God's sovereignty over nations challenge modern nationalism and political ideologies?
3. In what ways do we, like Nebuchadnezzar, need to 'learn' God's sovereignty through difficult experiences?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה
H0	That they shall drive	thee from	men	with	the beasts	of the field
	H2957	H4481	H606	H5974	H2423	H1251
וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה
H0	shall be	and thy dwelling	grass	as oxen		
	H1934	H4070	H6211	H8450		
וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה
H0	and they shall make thee to eat	thee with the dew	of heaven			
	H2939	H2920	H8065			
וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה
H0	and they shall wet	and seven	times	shall pass	over	thee till
	H6647	H7655	H5732	H2499	H5922	H5705
וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה
H0	thou know	ruleth	that the most High	in the kingdom	men	
	H3046	H7990	H5943	H4437	H606	
וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה	וְלֹא הָיָה
H0	it to whomsoever	he will	and giveth			
	H4479	H6634	H5415			

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 4:17 (Kingdom): This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

Jeremiah 27:5 (Parallel theme): I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

Psalms 83:18 (Parallel theme): That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

Daniel 2:21 (Kingdom): And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

Psalms 106:20 (Parallel theme): Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

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