

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

בָּרָא	חִינַּת	וְעַם	אֲנָשָׁא	מִן	שְׁרֵדָא	וְלָ
of the field	the beasts	with	men	from	they shall	That
H1251	H2423	H5974	H606	H4481	H2957	H0
לְהַנְּהָרָה	לְנֶגֶד	לְנֶגֶד	לְנֶגֶד	לְנֶגֶד	לְנֶגֶד	לְנֶגֶד
and thy dwelling	as oxen	as oxen	as oxen	grass	and thy dwelling	shall be
H4070	H8450	H0	H6211	H1934	H4070	H0
וְמִטְעָם	לְשָׁמְמִיא	לְשָׁמְמִיא	לְשָׁמְמִיא	וְמִטְעָם	וְמִטְעָם	וְמִטְעָם
to eat	of heaven	of heaven	of heaven	thee with the dew	thee with the dew	and they shall make thee to eat
H2939	H8065	H0	H2920	H2920	H0	H2939
מִצְבָּעָה	עַל יְמִינְךָ	עַל יְמִינְךָ	עַל יְמִינְךָ	עַל יְמִינְךָ	עַל יְמִינְךָ	מִצְבָּעָה
and seven	times	times	times	times	times	and seven
H7655	H5732	H0	H2499	H5922	H5705	H6647
תִּתְּנַחֲמֵד	עַל יְמִינְךָ	עַל יְמִינְךָ	עַל יְמִינְךָ	עַל יְמִינְךָ	עַל יְמִינְךָ	תִּתְּנַחֲמֵד
thou know	in the kingdom	in the kingdom	in the kingdom	in the kingdom	in the kingdom	thou know
H1768	H4437	H0	H5943	H5943	H0	H3046
אֲנָשָׁא	בְּמָلֹכָה	בְּמָלֹכָה	בְּמָלֹכָה	בְּמָלֹכָה	בְּמָלֹכָה	אֲנָשָׁא
men	men	men	men	men	men	men
H606	H606	H0	H6634	H6634	H0	H4479
וְלִמְנָן	וְלִמְנָן	וְלִמְנָן	וְלִמְנָן	וְלִמְנָן	וְלִמְנָן	וְלִמְנָן
it to whomsoever	and giveth	and giveth	and giveth	he will	he will	it to whomsoever
H1768	H5415	H0	H6634	H6634	H0	H4479

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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