

THE STORY OF DANIEL

by

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“Aunt Hattie’s Bible Stories” for Boys and Girls

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CHAPTER FIVE

NEBUCHADNEZZAR PUNISHED AND RESTORED

A NUMBER of years passed and King Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in his own house and his kingdom was flourishing. He was well satisfied with himself and his achievements, a dangerous time in any life.

One night he had another very unusual dream, a dream sent from God. This time he remembered what it was, but when he related it to his wise men, astrologers, and magicians, they could not interpret it for him.

Our friend, Daniel, was still in the palace occupying a place of responsibility. After the others had given up trying to interpret the dream Daniel was called into the king’s presence and to him the king related his dream in detail.

He said he dreamed that he saw a tree standing in the midst of the earth, and while he looked upon it the tree grew until it reached up to heaven. It was very strong and seemed to spread over the whole earth.

It had beautiful leaves upon it and a great deal of fruit. The animals of the fields stood under its shade and the birds of the air lodged in its branches and all fed upon its fruit.

As he continued to gaze upon this scene, some angels, called Holy Ones, came down from heaven and one of them cried in a loud voice saying—

“Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off the leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts go away from under it, let the dew fall upon it; but leave the stump of the tree and put a band around it; let the dew fall upon it.”

Then the angel spoke as if the tree were a man and said,

“Let his portion be with the beasts and let his heart be changed from a man’s heart to the heart of a beast and let this continue for seven years, that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

“And now Daniel,” said the king when he had finished, “I have asked all of my wise men to tell me the meaning and they are unable to do so. But I know you can for the spirit of the gods is in you.”

Daniel had listened very attentively while the king told his dream and, as God made the meaning known to him, he was so astonished and troubled that for an hour he said nothing.

He disliked to tell the king the meaning, for it was not good news. But finally he said, **“My lord, the dream be to those who hate you and the interpretation is to your enemies.**

“The tree which you saw that grew so strong and as high as heaven, whose leaves and fruit were fair, and under which the beasts fed and in whose branches the birds lodged, is an illustration of you and your world-wide kingdom.

“And whereas the king saw a watcher and a Holy One coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Hew down the tree, and destroy it; yet leave a stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, until seven times pass over him.’

“This decree comes from the God of heaven and is to come upon my lord, the king, and this, O king, is the meaning—

“Your mind will go from you and you will go out and live in the field and eat grass like the cattle, and for seven years this will continue until you know that God rules in the kingdom of men and giveth the kingdom to whomsoever He will.

“You dreamed, O king, that the stump of the tree was left; therefore, even though you will be away from your kingdom during your insanity, yet after you acknowledge that God rules over you, then you shall be restored and reign again over your kingdom.”

And then, Daniel, great man of God that he was, begged the king to listen to his counsel and break off from his sins and iniquities by showing mercy to the poor that his days might be peaceful.

For twelve months God waited for Nebuchadnezzar to turn to Him but the king grew more and more boastful and selfish. I think he said to himself, “It is a year since Daniel told me that God would send judgment upon me if I didn’t repent of my sins. In all of this time nothing has happened. I guess he was mistaken.”

Then one day as he walked in the palace he said to himself, **“Is not this great Babylon that I have builded for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?”**

The words were scarcely spoken when he heard a voice from heaven saying—

“O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from you, and they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; they shall make you to eat grass as the oxen and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

At that same hour King Nebuchadnezzar’s reason left him and for seven years he was a maniac living with the beasts and eating their food. It has been supposed that during these dreadful years he was taken away from the palace and few of his subjects knew of his serious condition.

The king, himself, told the story of his restoration in these words,

“And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes unto heaven, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation.

“And when my reason returned unto me then the glory of my kingdom, my honor, and the brightness returned also, and my counsellors and my lords came again to seek me and I was established in my kingdom and I was greater than ever.

“Now instead of honoring myself I praise and honor the King of heaven. All His works are truth and His ways judgment and those that walk in pride, like I did, He is able to make humble and to abase.”

These are the last words we have from Nebuchadnezzar and, except by reference, we hear no more of him in the Bible story. His punishment was severe but it brought him to believe in God with all of his heart and I believe he died a God-fearing man.

None of us like to be punished. Therefore, we should have humble hearts and live righteous lives.

The apostle Paul says that if we would judge ourselves, then we would not have to be judged of God. If Nebuchadnezzar had listened to Daniel he would not have spent those terrible years with his reason gone.

“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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