

The dream of the tree – Daniel’s interpretation



In contrast to chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar can this time remember the dream. And again, only Daniel can interpret it, no one else (chapter 4:7-8).

The interpretation which God shows Daniel is as follows: The tree is a symbol of Nebuchadnezzar himself in his dominion over the New-Babylonian Empire (v22). God will take the role of king away from him; not in the sense that the kingdom falls (that happened under his successor Nabonid in 539BC), but that Nebuchadnezzar will be unable to rule the kingdom. He will start behaving like an animal and will be cast out from men, until God restores him and gives the kingdom back to him (vv25-26).

Having interpreted the dream, Daniel then adds some good advice: The king should break with his sins, if his peace should endure (v27).



17. What aim does God pursue with allowing Nebuchadnezzar to “become an animal”?
18. What aim does God pursue by announcing that Nebuchadnezzar will “become an animal”?



However great a man is – be assured: God is even greater.



17. Nebuchadnezzar should recognise that God the Most High rules over the kingdoms of men and gives it to whoever He wants and sets over it the lowest of men (chapter 4:17). If Nebuchadnezzar considers himself to be the greatest, he will be humbled (Luke 18:14). 18. God often announces judgment, discipline or punishment beforehand, so that people start thinking and change their behaviour. It may be that God will not allow what He has announced to happen! It's the same here. Daniel has recognised that and gives the king the good advice to repent.