

# Abiding Fruit

*Informing the Mind & Inflaming the Heart*

---

Vol. 2 No. 55

October 7, 2007

---

## **Seven Periods Of Time...Till You Know Daniel 4:25**

The book of Daniel is electrifying. It moves the hearts of young believers and old alike. It confuses the hearts of believers; those well grounded in Scripture and those less so. It moves at a fast pace and it moves slowly. It covers in detail the lives of Daniel and his friends, the lives of ancient kings, and the history of the world. It is breathtaking in its scope. It races across the sands of time using profound symbolism. It is apocalyptic, spelling trouble for some and salvation for others. It brings the heart to a pounding thunder as wicked men seek to overthrow the righteous. In short, Daniel does not lack for one moment a plot.

The thorough removal of Judah from the land of Israel saw noble Daniel and his three friends forcibly uprooted from their homes and transported thousands of miles to the ancient kingdom of Babylon. No doubt this journey was in shackles and probably some died on the journey. Slavery always produces not only an enduring bondage to fellow-men that may be viewed as a spiritual type of death, but it also brings physical death. It is therefore surprising to find in the book of Daniel that there is no mention either by Daniel or others that their enslavement was uncalled for, barbaric or morally wrong. In fact, Daniel and his friends knew that their bondage was the result of the sins of the nation (their sins).

It is even more glorious to read of the young man Daniel and his three friends making a spiritual stand for the God of Israel by refusing to compromise their principles, even in a foreign land upon pain of death, over the question of eating certain food.

Certainly, the righteous character of Daniel is seen early on in the book and his life bespeaks of a future that would be exemplary. The hand of God was upon young Daniel even as he made this bold stand against a violent Babylonian called Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel's education was thus in the schools of Babylon, and when he took his final examination before the king, Nebuchadnezzar was compelled to admit that the Judeans were far superior to his own boys. They were ten times better in every matter of wisdom and understanding than all the enchanters and magicians in the whole realm of Babylonia.

In all of Daniel's encounters with the ancient kings of his day, it is not possible to escape the fact that the clash between ancient empires and the kingdom of God is always a reality. Just as ancient cultures made assault upon the kingdom of God, we ought not to be surprised in our day at the assault that is being made. There is always conflict between Satan's domain and God's Kingdom. There is never agreement. There is never a truce. This conflict is destined to endure until God brings it to an end when it will have served its purpose.

Daniel understood that even though he lived in the midst of an evil and wicked people, his responsibility was to be obedient to God no matter the cost. We see this exemplified in the lives of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as they faced the wrath of an incensed Nebuchadnezzar unflinchingly and were thus cast into the fiery furnace. We see Daniel, who when he hears the news that is designed to prohibit him from praying to God do immediately what he always did. He goes to his room as he did everyday, throws open wide his window, then gets down on his knees and prays to the Lord.

It was not Babylonian culture that dictated to Daniel and his friends how they should live. They were motivated by loyalty to the God of heaven, the only true God. They recognized that all other kingdoms were nothing apart from God. Any power or prestige that they enjoyed came from the hand of God.

The life of Daniel is evidence enough of the sovereign good pleasure of God providentially working in human history. Nebuchadnezzar would experience this first hand in Daniel 4. He had already experienced in Daniel 2, the vision that spoke of the history of the world and where his place was in that world. Daniel told him that there was a God in heaven who revealed mysteries and who controlled history.

Daniel points out in Daniel 2 that it was God who had given to Nebuchadnezzar the kingdom, the power, the might and the glory of his Babylon. All the citizens of his kingdom were likewise given to the king by God in heaven (Dan. 2:37, 38). This is a remarkable set of statements when you consider that Satan considered himself in charge of all the kingdoms of this world. He sought to offer to Jesus during his temptation those very kingdoms (they were not his to give ultimately - see Matt. 4:8, 9; cf. Matt. 12:24 – 29).

Nebuchadnezzar's response to this interpretation by Daniel was to acknowledge that this God of Daniel's, was God of gods, and Lord of kings. As a result of this interpretation, Daniel was promoted as ruler over all of Babylonia, and as chief prefect of the wise men (something they did not like). Daniel 3 follows so closely upon the glorious majesty revealed in chapter 2, that it is understandable that Nebuchadnezzar should seek to glorify himself by building a statue of gold and demanding worship. The fiery furnace episode again proves to Nebuchadnezzar that he was out of his depth in dealing with the God of the universe (and of the furnace – see Dan. 3:1 - 30). The end result of the fiery furnace was promotion for Daniel's three friends.

In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar has another ominous dream where he saw a glorious tree that suddenly was chopped down from its lofty position and a barely recognizable stump or root remained. The king saw a degraded man-beast parading around the fields of Babylon, alone and cut off from society for a period of seven years (Dan. 4:13 – 16). Daniel was greatly disturbed by this dream, but the king encouraged him to give the interpretation. The cut down stump was Nebuchadnezzar himself banished from the society of men for seven years because of the arrogance and pride of his heart. So vivid is this picture of the fall of the king, that Daniel immediately urges him to break off his sins, and begin practicing righteousness. Perhaps God would delay or not bring this about (Dan. 4:27).

What lesson did Nebuchadnezzar have to learn? It is expressed in Daniel 4:25. The lesson was simple – till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will, Nebuchadnezzar would experience this humiliation for seven years. It was not just that God ruled over the kingdom of man, but rather that He rules it. This is nothing short than the Sovereign rule of God over all. Daniel's advice went unheeded and at the end of the year (12 months later) Nebuchadnezzar was walking his rooftops admiring his city. He began to exalt himself as Babylon's builder and that it existed for his own glory. At that moment God struck him. As the words were in his mouth (Dan. 4:31), God spoke His judgment from above. He was driven from his fellow men as a madman and lunatic. At the end of the seven years, sanity was restored to Nebuchadnezzar, and his response was true and right. He lifted his eyes to God and blessed God and acknowledged that God ruled the dominions of men (Dan. 4:34 – 37). His kingdom was returned to him. Significantly, Nebuchadnezzar points out that God does as He pleases in heaven and on earth (Dan. 4:35).

In all of the encounters with this ancient king, we see that God is Sovereign. The kingdoms of men come and go, because God determines that it will be so. In other words; God is not some mere abstract theory, or some far off deistic providence uninvolved in the life of men. No, God is intimately involved in all the kingdoms of this world. The Lord Jesus is busy putting His enemies under His feet and when He at last has finished this work, He shall hand His kingdom over to God who shall be all in all. Then we shall know God.