

119

GROUP STUDY GUIDE

The Exiled Prophet, Part 5: The Felling of the Great Tree (Daniel 4)

TEACHING SUMMARY

Daniel 4 presents Nebuchadnezzar's account of how God humbled and restored him. Though secure and prosperous, the king is frightened by a dream. His wise men cannot interpret it, so he calls Daniel to explain its meaning.

The dream shows an immense, fruitful tree providing shelter and food. A heavenly watcher commands that it be cut down, leaving its stump. The teaching understands the watcher as an angelic messenger while acknowledging uncertainty about the precise Aramaic term.

Daniel identifies the tree as Nebuchadnezzar and explains that his greatness will be brought low. The king will live among beasts until he recognizes that the Most High rules human kingdoms. The remaining stump points to restoration when he acknowledges Heaven's rule.

Daniel urges the king to stop sinning, practice righteousness, and show mercy to the oppressed. Twelve months later, however, Nebuchadnezzar boasts about Babylon as the product of his own power and glory. The announced judgment then takes effect.

The king lives like an animal until he lifts his eyes to heaven and his reason returns. He praises God's everlasting dominion and receives his kingdom again. His final testimony acknowledges that God's works are right and that God can humble the proud.

The teaching draws two applications from God's sovereignty. Believers need not fear earthly power as though it could defeat God. They should also reject pride in their own achievements, thank God for their abilities and resources, and use what they have for his purposes.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The chapter is presented from Nebuchadnezzar's perspective.
- Prosperity does not prevent the king from receiving a disturbing warning.
- Daniel supplies the interpretation the wise men cannot give.
- The great tree represents the king and his extensive dominion.
- The watcher is understood as a heavenly messenger.
- The tree's felling announces the king's humiliation.
- The preserved stump points to his kingdom's restoration.
- Daniel counsels righteousness and mercy toward the oppressed.
- The king eventually acknowledges God's sovereignty and is restored.
- The application calls for confidence in God, humility, and gratitude.

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Basic

1. The king who dreams about the great tree is _____.
2. The person who interprets the dream is _____.
3. The dream commands that the tree be cut down but its _____ remain.
4. The king is made to eat grass like an _____.
5. Daniel advises the king to show mercy to the _____.
6. God is able to humble those who walk in _____.

Challenging

1. The Aramaic term discussed for the watcher is _____.
2. The stump is bound with a band of iron and _____.
3. The dream specifies _____ periods of time for the king's humiliation.
4. The king's boast occurs _____ months after the warning.
5. The king must learn that the Most High _____ the kingdom of men.
6. Deuteronomy 8 warns that God gives people the power to obtain _____.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the king's continued reliance on Babylonian wise men reveal in the teaching's explanation?
2. How do the tree and its remaining stump communicate both judgment and restoration?
3. Why does Daniel include mercy toward the oppressed in his counsel to the king?
4. What does Nebuchadnezzar's boast reveal about his understanding of his accomplishments?
5. How does the king's testimony change after his humiliation?
6. How can confidence in God's authority be joined with gratitude and humility about your own resources?

ANSWER KEY - GROUP GUIDE

Basic

1. Nebuchadnezzar
2. Daniel
3. stump
4. ox
5. oppressed
6. pride

Challenging

1. ir
2. bronze
3. seven
4. twelve
5. rules
6. wealth