

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Twenty-Fourth Week - Sixth Day

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S PRIDE

"Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.' Belteshazzar answered and said, 'My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies! . . . this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. . . . Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity'" (Daniel 4:19, 24-25, 27).

Nebuchadnezzar was beyond doubt one of the greatest and most illustrious princes that the world has ever seen. His misfortune was that he was but too conscious of his own greatness. When he looked down upon the nations lying at his feet and cast his eyes abroad upon the magnificence he had created around him, his heart was lifted up in kingly pride. He ascribed all that he had achieved to his own strength and the vastness of his own conceptions. He began to deem himself something more than mortal, wholly forgetting the Power by whom kings reign and who had made him what he was and given him all he owned.

One day as he walked in the palace of his kingdom and viewed all around him the glories by which he had rendered Babylon the wonder of the earth, he exclaimed in a burst of imperial pride, *"Is not this great Babylon that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"* And while the word was still in his mouth, expressing the thought of his heart, there fell a voice from heaven pronouncing the terrible words, *"The kingdom has 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 eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."*

That very hour this doom was fulfilled. The mind of a man fled from him and the mind of a

beast entered. He fancied himself a beast of the field, and as such he cast off the robe and refused the food and habitation of a man. He rushed forth into his park and mingled with the cattle that fed there, living upon the herbs of the field, fleeing the face of man, and remaining exposed to the weather day and night, summer and winter, "till his hair was grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws." No doubt he was constantly watched at a distance and his safety duly protected while his son Evil-merodach assumed the regency until his father should be restored to his right mind. This did not occur until the appointed seven years had passed; and then it is the king himself who relates the facts of his recovery in a published proclamation:

And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down. (Dan. 4:34-37)

We wish to add a few words respecting the city of Babylon itself during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. He was not the founder of the city, for it existed from very ancient times; but he improved it so greatly, adorned it with so many grand buildings and rebuilt parts of it so magnificently that he brought it to a very different condition from that in which he found it. Josephus, following Berosus, ascribes to Nebuchadnezzar the adorning of the temple of Bel with the spoils he had taken in war; the embellishments of the ancient city; the triple wall of burnt brick surrounding it; a new palace of extraordinary size and splendor; stone terraces with the appearance of mountains and planted with various kinds of trees; and the celebrated hanging gardens erected to gratify his Median consort, who desired some scenery resembling that of her native country.

It was a custom in Babylon, borrowed perhaps from the Assyrians, that the bricks used in building the ancient cities on the Lower Tigris and Euphrates should be stamped with the name and titles of the royal founder. Now it is a fact that every ruin in Babylon proper, to some distance north of Baghdad, has its bricks stamped with the name of Nebuchadnezzar. Colonel Rawlinson states that he has examined the bricks *in situ* [situated in the original, natural, or existing place or position] belonging perhaps to one hundred different towns within this area of about one hundred miles in length and thirty or forty in breadth, and that he has never found any other royal name than that of Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.