

10-2018

A Biographical Study of Nebuchadnezzar

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Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "A Biographical Study of Nebuchadnezzar" (2018). *Old Testament Biographies*. 33.
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Nebuchadnezzar

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- I. Nebuchadnezzar and the city of God
 - A. The background—Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish beside the Euphrates River in 605 B.C., thus making Babylon the master of the Middle East (Jer. 46:2).
 - B. The blockades—Nebuchadnezzar then headed west and surrounded the city of Jerusalem on three occasions.
 1. The first siege (605 B.C.)—He punished Judean King Jehoiakim, put the city to tribute, and carried off thousands of Jewish hostages, including Daniel and his three friends (2 Kings 24:1; 2 Chron. 36:6-7; Dan. 1:3-4).
 2. The second siege (597 B.C.)—He enslaved Judean King Jehoiakim, took more tribute money, and carried off additional hostages, including Ezekiel and his wife (2 Kings 24:8-16); Jer. 24:1; Ezek. 1:2).
 3. The third siege (586 B.C.)
 - a. He blinded and enslaved Judean King Zedekiah, burned the city, and destroyed the temple (2 Kings 25:1-21; Jer. 39:1-10; 52:4-16).
 - b. He appointed a Jewish leader named Gedaliah to govern over the people left in Judah (2 Kings 25:22).
 - c. He ordered that Jeremiah the prophet be treated with kindness (Jer. 39:11-12).
 - d. He then removed many of the golden and silver objects from the Jerusalem temple and placed them in his pagan temple in Babylon (2 Chron. 36:6, 10; Dan. 5:2; Ezra 1:7; 5:14; 6:5).
- II. Nebuchadnezzar and the champions of God
 - A. The king and Daniel—The relationship between Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel centered around two dreams experienced by the king.
 1. The first dream (Dan. 2)
 - a. A chronology of the dream—What did the king see? (2:31-35)
 - (1) He saw a huge and powerful statue of a man made up of various materials.
 - (a) Its head was gold.
 - (b) Its breast and arms were silver.
 - (c) Its belly and thighs were brass.
 - (d) Its legs were iron and its feet part iron and part clay.
 - (2) This statue was then utterly pulverized into small powder by a special rock, supernaturally cut from a mountainside, which fell upon it.
 - b. A theology of the dream—What did this all mean? (2:36-45)
 - (1) The statue represented four Gentile world powers.
 - (a) The golden head was Babylon.

- (b) The silver chest and arms were Persia.
 - (c) The brass belly and thighs were Greece.
 - (d) The iron legs and iron and clay feet were Rome.
 - (2) In the days of the final world power, the God of heaven would shatter all earthly kingdoms through his Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ, and set up an eternal kingdom (2:44-45).
 - (3) The final Gentile power (Rome) would be revived during the tribulation and would consist of 10 nations. This was implied, for the great prophecies concerning the fourth power were not fulfilled in the history of ancient Rome.
 - c. An acknowledgment of the dream
 - (1) The king bowed down to Daniel and commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him (2:46).
 - (2) He acknowledged the God of Daniel as being "God of gods" (2:47).
 - (3) He elevated Daniel to the highest office in Babylon, as chief magistrate in the king's court (2:48).
2. The second dream (Dan. 4)
- a. It told how a tree had been corrupted through vanity (4:1-22)
 - (1) Nebuchadnezzar related his dream to Daniel (4:8-18).
 - (a) He saw a large and leafy tree increasing in size until it reached the heavens and was viewed by all. The wild animals and birds were shaded and sheltered by its leafy branches, and the entire world was fed from its generous fruit supply (4:10-12).
 - (b) Suddenly a heavenly figure appeared and ordered the tree cut down and its fruit scattered. Only the stump was to be left, banded with a chain of iron and brass. This felled tree represented a man who would be given the mind of an animal and remain in this pitiful condition for seven years (4:13-16).
 - (c) This all was to be done so the entire world might know that . . . "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (4:17).
 - (2) Daniel revealed the dream to Nebuchadnezzar (4:19-27).
 - (a) The interpretation was so frightful that Daniel observed an hour of shocked silence (4:19).
 - (b) He then revealed the details:
 - a. The tree indeed stood for a man, and that man was Nebuchadnezzar.

- ii. The king would suffer a seven-year period of insanity for his pride. During this time he would act and think like a wild animal.
 - iii. This affliction would end only when he realized that the powers that be are ordained of God.
 - (c) Daniel then begged the proud monarch to “break off thy sins,” but all to no avail.
 - b. It told how this tree would be corrected through insanity (4:28-37).
 - (1) The pride of Nebuchadnezzar—Once, 12 months after the dream, the king was strolling on the roof of the royal palace in Babylon. He gave an arrogant boast (4:28-30): “The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (4:30).
 - (2) The punishment of Nebuchadnezzar (4:31-33)
 - (a) Even while the king spoke his proud words, the judgment of God fell from heaven and he was driven from the palace (4:31).
 - (b) The sad results of his vanity—“He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws” (4:33).
 - (3) The praise of Nebuchadnezzar—Upon restoration his pride turned to praise.
- B. The king and three Hebrew young men (Dan. 3)
1. The king’s command (3:1-7)
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar constructed a golden statue 90 feet high and nine feet wide.
 - b. This was set up in the plain of Dura near Babylon.
 - c. On dedication day, at a given musical signal, all his officials were to bow down and worship the image. Failure to do so would result in a fiery death. “Whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace” (3:6).
 2. The Hebrews’ stand (3:8-23)
 - a. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow.
 - b. This was brought to the attention of the king by some jealous Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar offered the Hebrews another chance. Upon their second refusal the three were bound and cast into a fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter than usual.
 3. The Lord’s own Man (3:24-30)
 - a. Peering into the furnace, an amazed king saw a fourth figure.
 - b. The three friends then walked out of the furnace unharmed, with not even the smell of smoke upon them.

- c. Nebuchadnezzar issued a decree, making it a crime punishable by the death penalty to blaspheme the God of Israel.

STATISTICS

Father: Nabopolassar

First mention: 2 Kings 24:1

Final mention: Daniel 5:18

Meaning of his name: "Nabu protects"

Frequency of his name: Referred to 91 times

Biblical books mentioning him: Nine books (2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, David)

Occupation: King of Babylon (2 Kings 24:1)

Important fact about his life: He was the founder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and the one who cast three Hebrew men into a furnace of fire (Dan. 4:30; 3).