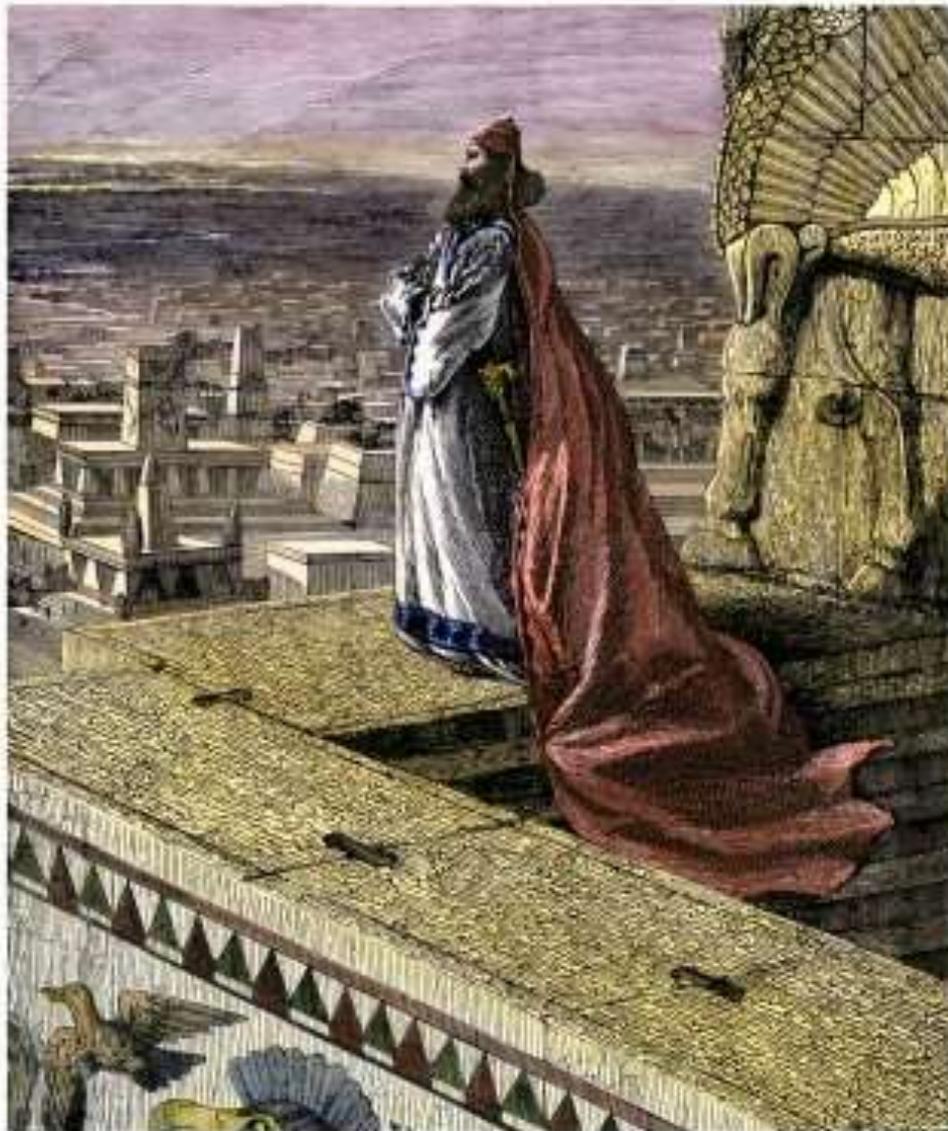


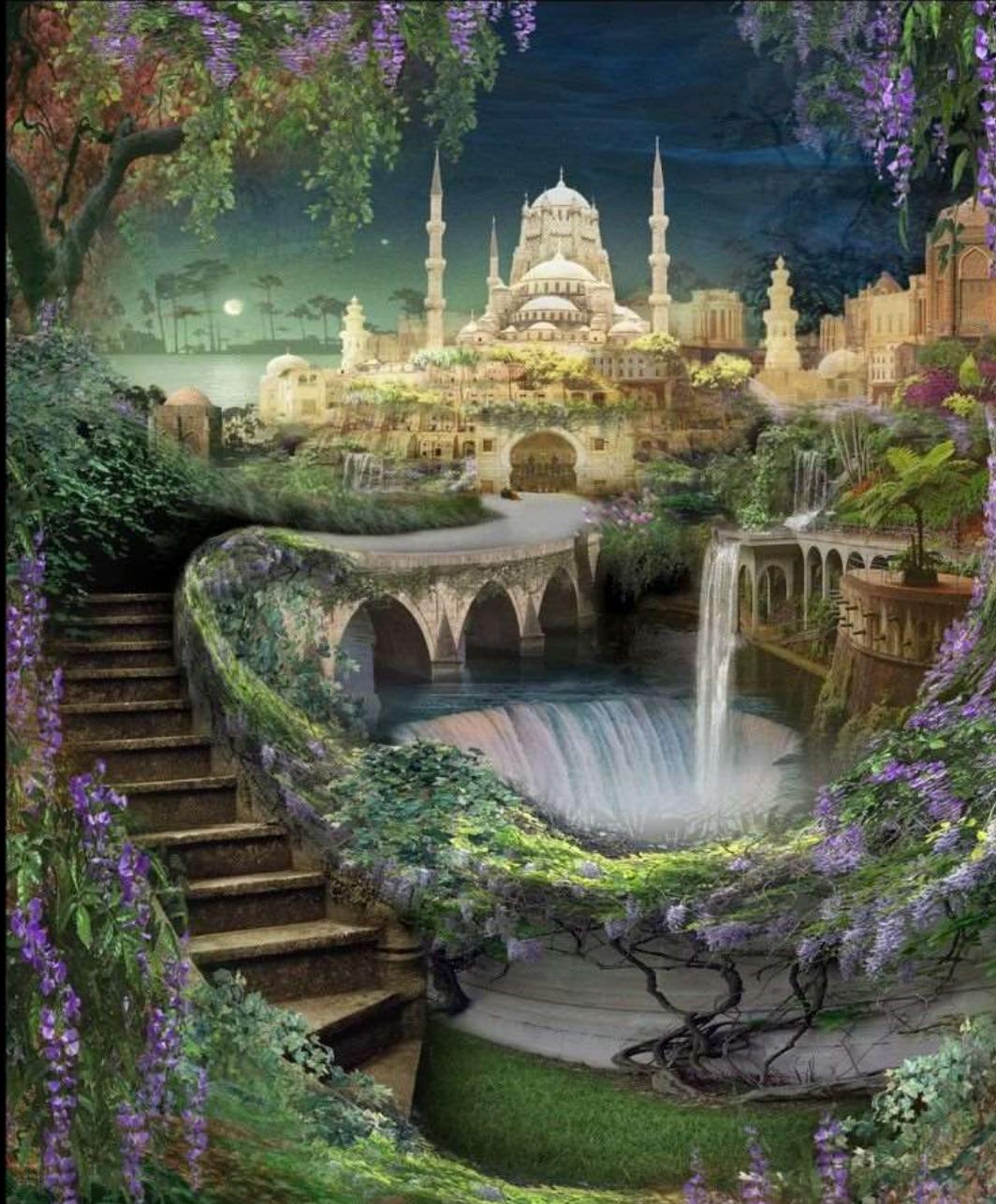
On the day Nebuchadnezzar went mad...



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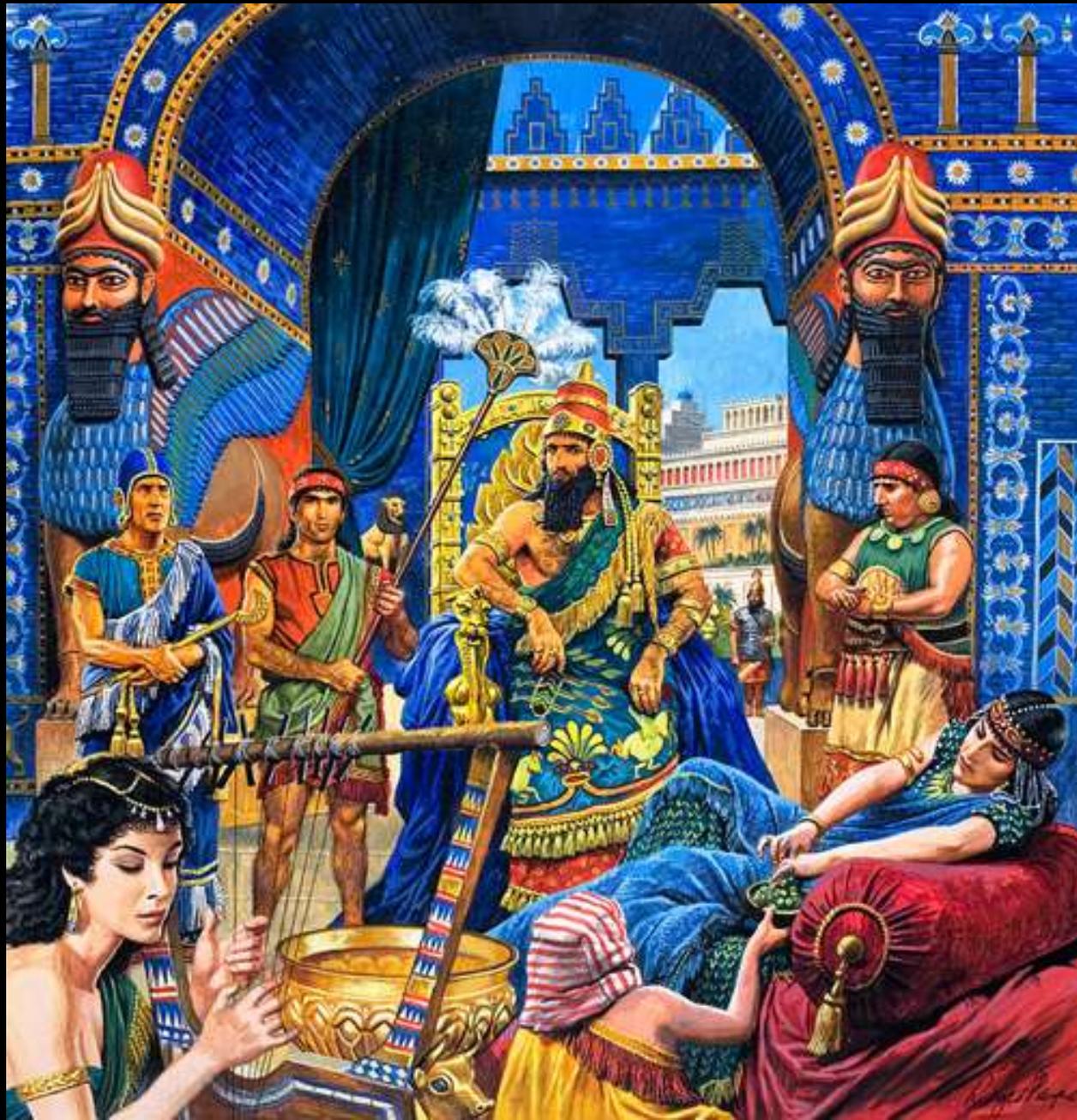
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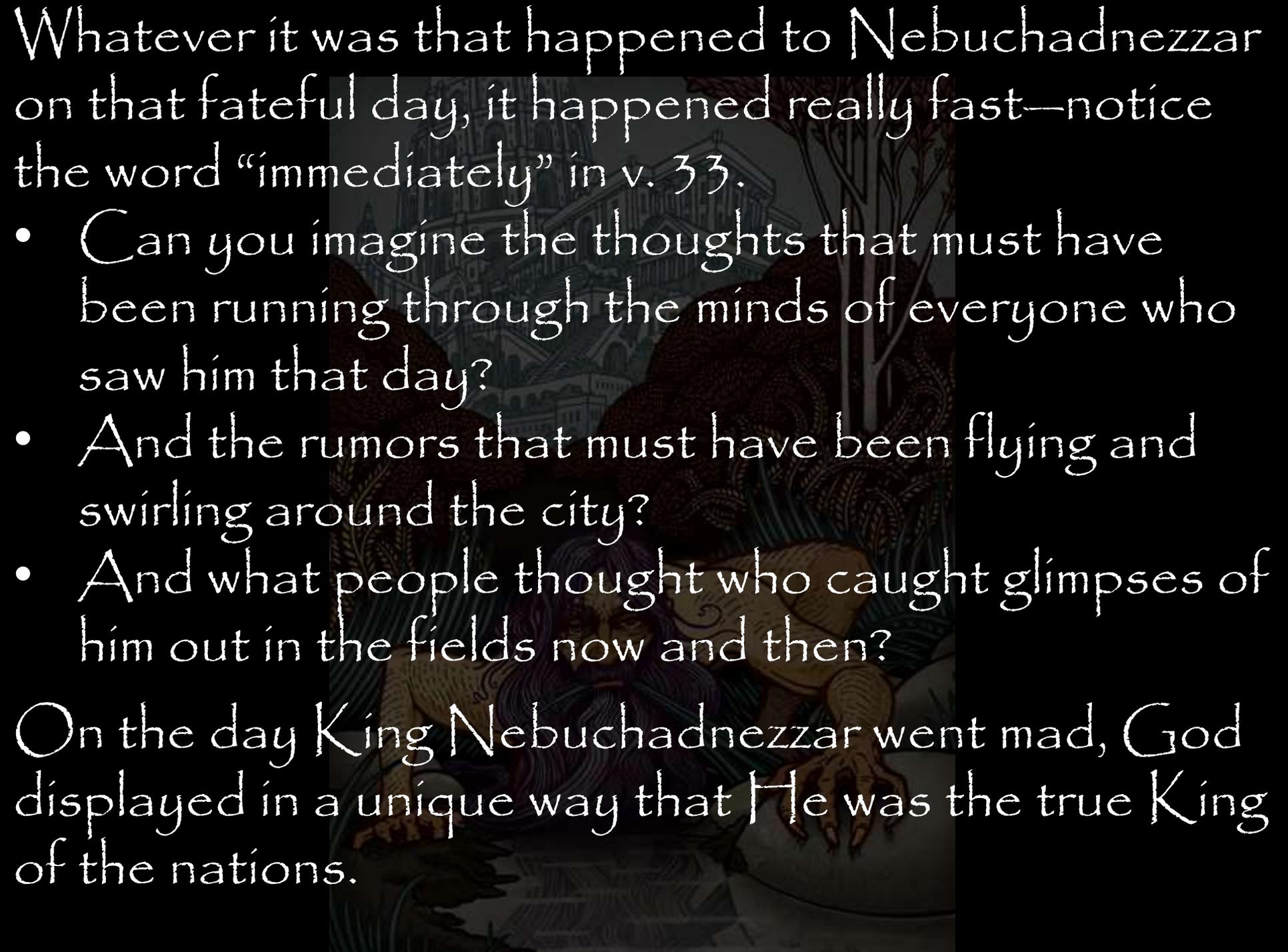


It went from this...



...to this





Whatever it was that happened to Nebuchadnezzar on that fateful day, it happened really fast—notice the word “immediately” in v. 33.

- Can you imagine the thoughts that must have been running through the minds of everyone who saw him that day?
- And the rumors that must have been flying and swirling around the city?
- And what people thought who caught glimpses of him out in the fields now and then?

On the day King Nebuchadnezzar went mad, God displayed in a unique way that He was the true King of the nations.

Ok—one quick thing first, then back to Daniel...

Why is the book of Daniel in the Bible?

This is one of the major reasons: Rom. 15:4.

But...why is Romans 15:4 in the Bible?

Always think *context* first!

- From Rom. 14:1 through 15:13, Paul is dealing with a concern within the Roman church over a division between those Paul describes as stronger and weaker believers.
- As Paul is nearing the end of his argument, he tells the strong that they have an obligation to “bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (15:1).

Ok—one quick thing first, then back to Daniel...

- In 15:3 he presents Christ as the perfect example of humbling Himself to serve others for the glory of God.
- So, Rom. 15:4 tells us that one of the reasons the OT exists is to encourage us, specifically, to live for the highest spiritual good of others, especially those who are the “weaker” among us.
- We are to *intentionally humble ourselves* for the sake of Christ and the gospel and His sheep.
- The goal is Rom. 15:5-6, and the practical application of his long argument is 15:7.

Alright, back to Daniel: Here's our title – The King of the Nations

Our key verse for the book is 4:34b—“His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation.”

The book divides naturally into two halves...

- Daniel in the King's courts – chs. 1-6
- Daniel and the King's visions – chs. 7-12

Daniel 4—The Most High rules the kingdom of men

- Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd dream described – v. 1-18
- Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd dream interpreted – v. 19-27
- *Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd dream fulfilled* – v. 28-37

Here's what we're doing with this passage:

The humiliation of King Nebuchadnezzar ~ v. 28-33

- The boasting of the king ~ v. 28-30
- The proclamation of heaven ~ v. 31-32
- The fulfillment of delayed judgment ~ v. 33

The restoration of King Nebuchadnezzar ~ v. 34-37

- The praise of God ~ v. 34-35
- The gifts of God ~ v. 36-37

The boasting of the king ~ v. 28-30

“All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.”

Specifically, that's referring back to v. 25-26. All of it. To the letter.

The boasting of the king – v. 28-30

The first detail Daniel adds is this: “At the end of twelve months...”

The king was given the interpretation of his 2nd dream in 4:19-26, followed by Daniel’s bold counsel to this most powerful king in the world in v. 27...

- ...and nothing happened. The judgment didn’t fall right away, and Nebuchadnezzar let time dull him to the reality of coming judgment—Daniel’s wise counsel went unheeded.
- “At the end of twelve months...” A year went by, God was patient. The king could have humbled himself, but he grew proud and self-absorbed.

The boasting of the king ~ v. 28-30

The first detail Daniel adds is this: “At the end of twelve months...”

Remember—Daniel didn’t want this cruel pagan king to suffer the judgment of God (4:19). It was mercifully delayed to allow the king time to repent.

- The warnings went unheeded, and there are consequences of that—see Prov. 1:24-33, 29:1; 1 Sam. 2:22-25 (also Eccl. 8:10-13; Amos 6:1-3).

Why does God delay judgment?

- Luke 13:6-9
- Rom. 2:1-5
- 2 Pet. 3:8-9

The boasting of the king ~ v. 28-30

The first detail Daniel adds is this: “At the end of twelve months...”

...the king got up one fine morning and went for a walk on the roof of his palace and looked down over the glorious city of Babylon ~

- He saw the amazing intricacy and beauty of the hanging gardens of Babylon—a gift the king had built for his wife.
- He saw the vast city teeming with activity, and all of the people and all of the livestock, the boats, the buildings, the trees—*everything* belonged to him. He was lord of all.

The boasting of the king – v. 28-30

The first detail Daniel adds is this: “At the end of twelve months...”

...the king got up one fine morning and went for a walk on the roof of his palace and looked down over the glorious city of Babylon –

- He saw the massive wall around his city, which was wide enough to enable a chariot driven by four horses to turn around on the top, according to the Greek historian Herodotus.
- And he saw all of it existing for his glory; surely there were no kings—or for that matter gods—who were like him in power, majesty, and glory.

The boasting of the king – v. 28-30

In his mind, Nebuchadnezzar was the center of the universe. And there is always only room for one at the center of the universe.

- “by my mighty power...for the glory of my majesty”
- To simplify: by my power for my glory.
- That may not have been the best thing to say.

Glory is something that God will not share—see Is. 42:8. “He is not one of many; He is not superior among inferior gods; He is not even the best of all; He is the *only* God, and He will have His people know and rejoice in this truth.” – ESV Study Bible note on Is. 42:8

The proclamation of heaven ~ v. 31-32

Well, this must have been a little unnerving: “While the words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven...” (v. 31)

- “The kingdom has departed from you” ~ the judgment was reaffirmed (v. 31)...
- ...and the purpose was reaffirmed (v. 32).

Here’s what was coming for King Nebuchadnezzar:

- His kingdom was removed ~ “you shall be driven from among men”
- His dignity was removed ~ “you shall be made to eat grass like an ox”
- His arrogance was removed ~ “until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men”

The proclamation of heaven – v. 31-32

In the eyes of many (most) in his day, King N. was a great man. From a non-biblical perspective, what are the characteristics of greatness?

So let's shift the question now: Biblically, what are the characteristics of greatness?

- There are many passages of Scripture we could point to, but how about things like Matt. 5:3-12? Or Gal. 5:22-23? Mark 10:45? Luke 9:46-48?
- One that is particularly appropriate in this context is Prov. 16:32. Nebuchadnezzar was “mighty,” and one who took many cities...but he was quick to anger and could not rule his spirit.

The proclamation of heaven – v. 31-32

“The Most High rules the kingdom of men...”

- God’s sovereignty is absolute—He *rules*.
- God’s sovereignty is complete—it is the entire realm of man that He rules.

“...and gives it to whom He will.”

- God’s sovereignty is free—He rules kings, kingdoms, nations, governments, and the destiny of nations. “No one coerces or manipulates His choices.”
- “Because these kings and their subjects thought they were called to their office...by their own gods, Daniel’s assertion that the God of Israel was in fact the originator and grantor of human authority was a tacit denial of any perceived role for the gods of the nations.” ~ Eugene Merrill

The fulfillment of delayed judgment ~ v. 33

Notice when the judgment began: “Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar.”

John Calvin: “If a long period had interposed, it might have been ascribed to either fortune or other inferior means, as a reason; but when such is the connection between the language and its effect, the judgment is too clear to be obscured by the malignity of mankind.”

The judgment was over “seven periods of time.”

Why a long, slow judgment?

“...because pride is not easily tamed in a man of moderate station, how much less then in so great a monarch!” - Calvin

The restoration of King Nebuchadnezzar – v. 34-37

The praise of God – v. 34-35

Back to v. 26—“...it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules.”

How do you know when—or if—you have learned a lesson that the Lord wanted to teach you?

Maybe things like...

- Deeper humility, deeper sense of your own sin
- Greater thanksgiving for the provision of Christ
- A new obedience to the word of God
- More trust in God, less reliance on self

The praise of God ~ v. 34-35

God saw that the lesson had been learned; the appointed time of judgment had come to an end.

“At the end of the days,” Nebuchadnezzar did this: he “lifted my eyes to heaven.” Notice where he was looking both before and after his lesson:

- Before, he is on the roof of his palace *looking down* on the city built by his might for his glory.
- After, he is *looking up* to heaven in humility, praise, submission, and acknowledgement of the true rule of God over the kingdom of men.

At the end of this severe period it wasn't himself he was looking at anymore.

The praise of God ~ v. 34-35

What is the difference between true humility and false humility?

- A false humility is still concerned with self first—"I am such a worm! I am worthless. No one even cares about me." False humility looks at 1 Tim. 1:15 and stops there.
- A true humility results in a look upward—a greater understanding of the twin truths of Scripture: I am as great a sinner as God says I am, and He is as gracious as He says He is. True humility acknowledges the truth of 1 Tim. 1:15, but ends with v. 16. True humility ends with praise of God.

The gifts of God ~ v. 36-37

Look at what Nebuchadnezzar writes:

- “my reason returned to me”
- “my majesty and splendor returned to me”
- “my counselors and my lords sought me”
- “I was established in my kingdom”
- “still more greatness was added to me”

Jain Duguid: “The end result of Nebuchadnezzar’s humbling was even greater exaltation. Once brought low by God, he could safely be elevated back to the heights and restored to control of his kingdom.” The king learned this: “...those who walk in pride He is able to humble” (v. 37).

The gifts of God ~ v. 36-37

But is that it? Is that the point of this chapter? Do we learn a good moral lesson from this humbled king?

Think again of Daniel's audience—who were they? We must always look over the shoulder of the writer to see who he was writing to and when and why.

When the exiled Israelites heard—or read—this section of Daniel's book, written, it appears, by the hand of this humbled pagan king, what did they see?

- Certainly this: that God wields sovereign control over the nation that has taken them into exile.
- Even pagan kings fall under the truth of Prov. 21:1.

The gifts of God ~ v. 36-37

But there's another truth in here for Daniel's readers—both then and now. Go back to Isaiah 6:11-13.

- Some 200-ish years before Daniel's time, God had revealed to His prophet that he would send His people away from their land because of their idolatry.
- Isaiah asks the obvious question: "How long, O Lord?" The Lord's answer is in v. 11-13.
- Notice that God likens His exiled people to a stump—a small remnant, just some roots left. Could they see the implications?

The gifts of God ~ v. 36-37

They are still the heirs of the covenant promises to Abraham, still the heirs of grace, still set apart for the glory of God.

- If this pagan king—the stump—could be forgiven and restored, then so could the people of Israel—also portrayed as a stump.
- It is the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) lived out in the lives of the great king of Babylon, as well as the lives of thousands of nameless Jews removed from their promised land.
- It also reminds us that the gospel—salvation—is a deeply humbling, but profoundly comforting message.