

LESSON 6

God's Judgement

Objective: To learn that God's judgements are just and to lead a holy life with fear.

Bible References: Daniel chapter 4 & 5

Memory verses: (NKJV) *Dan 4:37*

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.

Psalms 58:11

So that men will say, “surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely he is god who judges in the earth.”

Introduction

It is very comforting to know that God is love (1 John 4:8). It is also a fact that God is a just judge (Psa. 7:11). This message comes out strongly from the book of Daniel.

Chapter 4 describes how the proud Nebuchadnezzar was brought down from his throne and made to live with wild animals and eat grass like an ox. Chapter 5 describes how the immoral, drunken, idol worshipping Belshazzar was killed suddenly and his kingdom taken away by Medo-Persian army. It is surely justice that sin should be punished.

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream

God revealed His glory and power to Nebuchadnezzar through his first dream and the deliverance of Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego from the fiery furnace. As many people disregard revelations and live without reverence and thankfulness to God, Nebuchadnezzar lived a proud and careless life without any fear of God (Rom. 1:20-21).

Under these circumstances, God warned him through another dream.

The dream

Read Dan. 4:10-17. The king saw a tree growing tall and strong in the middle of the earth and reaching up to heaven. Birds fed on the fruits of the tree and wild animals rested under its shadow. The king saw an angel coming down from heaven and saying:

“Hew down the tree and cut off its branches. — Leave the stump in the earth and let it be wet with the dew of heaven. — Let his heart be changed from man’s and let a beast’s heart be given unto him and let seven times pass over him”.

Meaning of the dream

As the wise men of Babylon could not interpret his dream, the king summoned Daniel to his presence. Daniel was stunned when he heard the dream. He understood the meaning and told it to the king. The tall, strong tree represents the king who has become powerful, rich and exalted. The branches of the tree point to the nations in his control, the leaves point to his military strength and the fruits represent the richness of the kingdom. The birds in ‘the branches and the wild beasts in

the shadow point to the beastly and immoral lifestyle prevailing in the kingdom. As the tree was cut down, Nebuchadnezzar will lose his throne. He will also lose his mental powers and will live like an animal in the forest for seven years. All his servants will be scattered, but his stump will not be uprooted. He will be restored to power when he understands that God Almighty rules over his throne and humbles himself (Dan. 4:20-26).

Daniel rightly utilized the opportunity to advise the king to leave his wayward ways and humble himself before God, but the king did not listen to his advice.

After twelve months, one day, Nebuchadnezzar was walking in his palace and talking to himself: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Immediately there was a voice from heaven: "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will". The words came to pass immediately. Nebuchadnezzar left the palace as a mad man and lived in the forest with animals for 'seven times' ('Seven times' could be considered as seven years. But there are some who think that it could be three and a half years because in one year, there are two times or seasons: winter and summer). After the stipulated time, the king got back his senses when he humbled himself and lifted up his eyes towards heaven. He was restored to his throne. He declared: "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase"

The feast of Belshazzar:

Nabonidus, Nebuchadnezzar's son by his second wife, became king in B.C. 555. But as he was leading a leisurely life outside the capital city, his son, Belshazzar was ruling the country in his place. Daniel ch.5 begins with a great feast and ends in calamity. Belshazzar prepared a great feast for 1000 noble men of his kingdom. He, his wives and his concubines began to drink wine in the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar brought from the Temple in Jerusalem in front of all people and to praise his gods made of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and stone. At that time, a man's hand appeared and wrote some words on the wall. Belshazzar was frightened. The wise men of Babylon could not read or interpret the writing on the wall. Then Daniel, known to all

people as a man with the spirit of God, was brought in and he read the words and interpreted them. The writing was “Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin” which meant: “God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians” (Dan. 5:26-27). Belshazzar was killed in the same night and his kingdom was captured by Medes and Persians. This happened as a fulfilment of the Prophecies recorded many years earlier about Babylon and the Persian king, Cyrus recorded many years earlier (Jer. 51 :6-8; Isa. 45:1-3).

Spiritual lessons

The story about Belshazzar contains many spiritual lessons.

1. The feast of Belshazzar stands for the natural man’s enmity with God, his tendency for lustful merry making, his thoughtlessness and unholy character. The story points to the sudden destruction that befalls those who indulge in lustful celebrations. Remember what happened in the days of Lot and Noah. The wrath of God’s judgement will certainly fall on those who waste their lives in such lustful ways.
2. Belshazzar did not invite Daniel to his feast. Even if he was invited, he would not have participated in the feast. Children of God should never participate in such drunken feasts.
3. Programs during such feasts are such that they lead the participants to commit more sins, more drunkenness, more immoral acts and more idolatry. Belshazzar was tempted to use even the holy vessels of the Temple to indulge more in his drunken behavior.
4. The writing on the wall was the judgement of God. Belshazzar lost his balance, the joints of his loins loosened, and his knees knocked against each other. All his guests were frightened. Celebration turned into fear. No wicked person will be able to stand in front of the judgement of God.
5. The incident exposes the inadequacy of worldly wisdom. The wise men of Babylon could not understand the writing on the wall. Worldly wise men do not understand the judgement of God. The Scripture says: “For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition

of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:5-7). Man cannot escape from God’s judgement by his own merits. God’s judgement is that a man who sins will die and He has provided a way of salvation through Jesus Christ. “He that believeth on him is not condemned” (John 3:18). “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8: 1). Have you received deliverance from condemnation? If not, receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior now.

Questions

1. Bible says that God revealed Himself to Nebuchadnezzar three times. When and how?
2. Describe the tree that the king saw in his dream.
3. a) Explain the meaning of the dream.
4. b) What lesson did God teach through the dream?
5. a) Describe the feast prepared by Belshazzar
b) What was the writing on the wall and its meaning?
6. Prove that God is a just judge citing the incidents in the lives of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.
7. What are the spiritual lessons that we learn from the writing on the wall at the time of Belshazzar’s feast?