

24.03 Nebuchadnezzar Takes Egypt, Goes Mad (Ezekiel 29:17–21; 30:1–19; Daniel 4:1–37)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures. Likenesses of characters might change with the variety of pictures. Hopefully, this isn’t too confusing to young minds.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print on colorful cardstock and cut apart.

- *to interpret/interpretation*: to explain the meaning of something; the explanation of something
- *Beltshazzar*: Daniel’s Chaldean name
- *dew*: the drops of water seen in the morning on grass and other surfaces
- *sovereignty*: having absolute control over all things that happen

Scripture: (NKJV)

Ezekiel 29:17 In the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me: 18 “Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre. . . . yet neither he nor his army got anything from Tyre to pay for the labor that he had performed against her. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall carry off its wealth and despoil it and plunder it; and it shall be the wages for his army. 20 I have given him the land of Egypt as his payment for which he labored, because they worked for me, declares the Lord God. . . .

30:10 “Thus says the Lord God: “I will put an end to the wealth of Egypt, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. 11 He and his people with him, the most ruthless of nations, shall be brought in to destroy the land, and they shall draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with the slain. 12 And I will dry up the Nile and will sell the land into the hand of evildoers; I will bring desolation upon the land and everything in it, by the hand of foreigners; I am the Lord; I have spoken. . . .

Daniel 4:1 King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! 2 It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. 3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. 5 I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. 6 So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation. 8 At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Beltshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods—and I told him the dream, saying, 9 “O Beltshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation.

10 The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. 11 The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. 12 Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

13 “I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from

heaven. 14 He proclaimed aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. 15 But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. 16 Let his mind be changed from a man’s, and let a beast’s mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him. 17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.’ 18 This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.”

19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, “Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies! 20 The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth, 21 whose leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the heavens lived— 22 it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth. 23 And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven periods of time pass over him,’ 24 this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, 25 that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. 26 And as 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. 27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 and the king answered and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” 31 While the words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, 32 and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” 33 Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers, and his nails were like birds’ claws.

34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason 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 endures from generation to generation; 35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”

36 At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

Introduction/Review:

Ezekiel prophesied in Babylon, far away from Jerusalem. Jeremiah had preached in Jerusalem. Now that

Jerusalem was destroyed, some proud leaders had taken Jeremiah and most of the people to Egypt. There Jeremiah prophesied on the pavement outside Pharaoh's house, saying, "Nebuchadnezzar will come and spread a tent for himself right here. He will destroy all of you who thought you would be safe in Egypt."

Story:

Nebuchadnezzar destroys Egypt

Ezekiel, too, devoted almost two chapters of his book to telling about how Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Egypt. Ezekiel said Nebuchadnezzar would break the arms of Pharaoh and scatter the people of Egypt just as the people of Judah had been scattered.

Now, the Bible doesn't specifically describe the destruction of Egypt at the time it took place, but we know it happened because God, through Jeremiah and Ezekiel, had said it would. Historians tell us ✓Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt in the 34th or 35th year of his rule, about fifteen years after he had destroyed Jerusalem. God prophesied it, and it took place exactly as God had said.

Nebuchadnezzar's tree dream

Sometime after Nebuchadnezzar returned from Egypt to Babylon, he was resting in his luxurious palace when he had a disturbing dream that frightened him greatly. He was so troubled that he could no longer rest but thought constantly and intently about the vision.

"Bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me!" he commanded, "so that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream!"

Just as had happened before when Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed an important dream, all the wise men of the kingdom came in before the king. This time Nebuchadnezzar told the dream to the wise men, but they could not interpret it.

Since no one understood the dream, we can see that one of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men was missing. Who was that wise man? [Daniel.] If he had been able to interpret the king's dream when the king hadn't even told him what was in the dream, surely he would be able to interpret a dream he heard.

Finally, Daniel did come in. King Nebuchadnezzar, still frightened, cried, "O Belteshazzar, because I know the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the interpretation of my dream. This was my dream: I saw a very tall tree in the middle of the earth. It grew and became strong: its height reached to the heavens, and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves were lovely, and its fruit was abundant. Beasts of the field found shade under it; the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it."

What was Nebuchadnezzar's dream? [A huge tree with fruit enough to feed all people and animals.]

That was not the end of the dream, however. Listen to what else Nebuchadnezzar said: "I saw in my visions a watcher, a holy one (✓probably an angel), coming down from heaven and crying out, 'Chop down the tree, cut off its branches, strip off its leaves, and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it and the birds from its branches. However, leave the stump and roots in the earth. Put a band of iron and bronze around the stump. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven.'"

What did the angel say to do to the tree? [Chop it down but leave the stump, bound with an iron and bronze band.]

At this point, even we can see the tree represents a person, for now the angel uses the words *him* and *he*. Who is the man, and what will happen to him? Listen as Nebuchadnezzar continues to tell his dream.

"The angel said, 'Let *him* graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let *his* heart be changed from that of a man, Let *him* be given the heart of a beast, And let seven times pass over *him*. God is doing this so that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men. He gives it to whomever He will and sets over it the lowest of men.'"

Nebuchadnezzar finished telling his dream. He said to Daniel, “Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God¹ is in you.”

Daniel’s hesitation and interpretation

Of course Daniel (Belteshazzar) could interpret this dream. He knew exactly what the dream meant. However, for some time (the KJV states “one hour”) Daniel couldn’t speak, for the dream was troubling to him as well.

Finally, Nebuchadnezzar ordered, “Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation no matter what it is.”

Daniel answered, “My lord, the dream will make your enemies glad. That huge tree you saw that was seen by all the earth and had food for all—that tree is you, O king. You have grown and become strong; your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.”

“However, the angel’s coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him,’ has this interpretation: O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, Men shall drive *you* from them, *you* will live with the beasts of the field, *you* shall eat grass like oxen, and *you* will be wet with the dew of heaven until seven years² shall pass—until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses.”

Did you get that? What would happen to King Nebuchadnezzar? [He would become like a beast—getting wet with dew and eating grass like oxen—for seven years, until he realized that God rules the earth and gives kingdoms to the ones He chooses.] Can you imagine a man’s eating grass and living out in the field like a cow? That’s exactly what would happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. For how long? [Seven years.]

Daniel did give some hope that Nebuchadnezzar would not die as a beast-like creature. Listen to the interpretation: “Since the angels gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be returned to you after you come to know that Heaven rules.” Thankfully, Nebuchadnezzar would again become sensible.

At this time, although he saw God’s works and half believed in the true God, ✓Nebuchadnezzar was not a true believer. He, a wicked king, just added the Most High God to the many false gods he worshiped. Therefore, Daniel gave Nebuchadnezzar some advice, saying, “Break off your sins by being righteous and showing mercy to the poor. ✓If you do, maybe this beast-like curse on you will not interrupt your life.”

Would Nebuchadnezzar listen to Daniel’s good advice to behave, to stop sinning, to help the poor?

Fulfillment

One year later Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of his palace in Babylon, ✓looking over the magnificent city with its beautiful gates and its stunning hanging gardens. “Isn’t this great Babylon that *I* have built by *my mighty power* and *for the honor of my majesty* more wonderful than anything?” he asked.

The Bible tells us, “While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice from heaven said, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom has departed from you! You shall be driven from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall eat grass like oxen; and seven years shall pass until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever *He* chooses.’”

“That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with dew until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.” That’s what the Bible states, and that’s what happened to mighty, powerful, proud King Nebuchadnezzar. He lived outside in the fields, eating, thinking, and acting like an animal.

Nebuchadnezzar’s restoration

One year went by. Two years. Three years. Four years, Five years. Six years. Seven years passed. Finally,

Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God's sovereignty in the world. Listen to what he had to say then: "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, No one on earth is like Him; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. (He is sovereign.) No one can stop Him or say to Him, "What have You done?"

At the very same time Nebuchadnezzar's reason returned, he said, "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."

But more important than these words are the words he spoke next: "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, whose works are truth and His ways justice. Those who walk in pride He is able to put down." Proud King Nebuchadnezzar had learned a hard lesson, and he had learned it well.

These are marvelous words of worship and praise to the one true God. ✓ At that time, I think Nebuchadnezzar became a true believer in the Most High God. Do you trust God as he did?

¹Several translations say "*the holy gods*." "[Nebuchadnezzar] not only knew [Daniel's] ability from former experience, but for the reason here given; of which he might have more proofs than one, that the Spirit, not of impure deities, of the gods and demons of the Heathens, but of the one true, living, and holy God [the Hebrew text has *elohim*, the plural form for *God* used throughout the Old Testament for the one, true God] who knows all things, dwelt in him" ([Daniel 4:18 - Bible Verse Meaning and Commentary \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).

²"... not seven months . . . nor seven half years, or three years and a half, as some . . . dividing the year into two parts, summer and winter; and suppose, that seven of these seasons passed over him before he recovered; but seven years are meant . . . as the phrase is used in (Daniel 7:25) (12:7) , so many years the temple of Solomon was building, which Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed, and so long this madness must remain upon him" ([Daniel 4:16 - Bible Verse Meaning and Commentary \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
"The kings of the earth are to their subjects but as the shadow of a great tree; but Christ is to his subjects as the *shadow of a great rock*, Isa 32 2. Nay, because that, though strong, may be cold, they are said to be hidden under the *shadow of his wings* (Ps 17 8), where they are not only safe, but warm" ([Daniel 4 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible \(Complete\) \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).
- Pride: Be careful not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think.
- Half-belief: Half-belief is really no belief and is worthless. Believe and serve God with all your heart.

Activities:

- Play dough: ox; grass; axe; tree stump
- Snack: a tree fruit (e.g., apples, cherries, peaches, etc.)
- Watch a well-done cartoon video, "Nebuchadnezzar, the Proud King Who Said, 'Look at Me,'" at [Bible Stories for the Young : Stories \(biblestoriesonline.com\)](#). (Click on "Stories" and scroll about halfway down the page.)
- Watch a video about the city of Babylon at [Bing Videos](#), and watch a video of one of the seven wonders of the world, the hanging gardens of Babylon, at [Bing Videos](#).
- Pretend to be mad Nebuchadnezzar—crawling on all fours, eating grass, getting wet with dew.
- Review questions: (Game: Print the blades of grass clipart found at the end of this lesson. Back with

flocked paper or paper towel and cut each blade out. For each correctly answered question, a student will place a blade on a flannel board.)

1. Jeremiah had preached that God would destroy Egypt. Who was the king who conquered Egypt? [Nebuchadnezzar.]
2. What was the main object King Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream? [A huge tree.]
3. What happened to the tree? [An angel cut it down.]
4. Was the tree totally destroyed? Explain your answer. [No. The stump remained; it had a bronze band around it.]
5. What name for Daniel did Nebuchadnezzar use? [Belteshazzar.]
6. What was the interpretation of the tree's being cut down? [Nebuchadnezzar would not live like a king but like an animal because of his pride.]
7. After seven years as a creature-like man, what did Nebuchadnezzar say about God? ["I praise and honor the King of heaven, whose works are truth and justice. Those who walk in pride He is able to put down."]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Daniel 4:37: "I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. Those who walk in pride He is able to put down."

Handwork:

- Print the coloring picture found at the end of this lesson. Students will color the picture.

interpret/interpretation

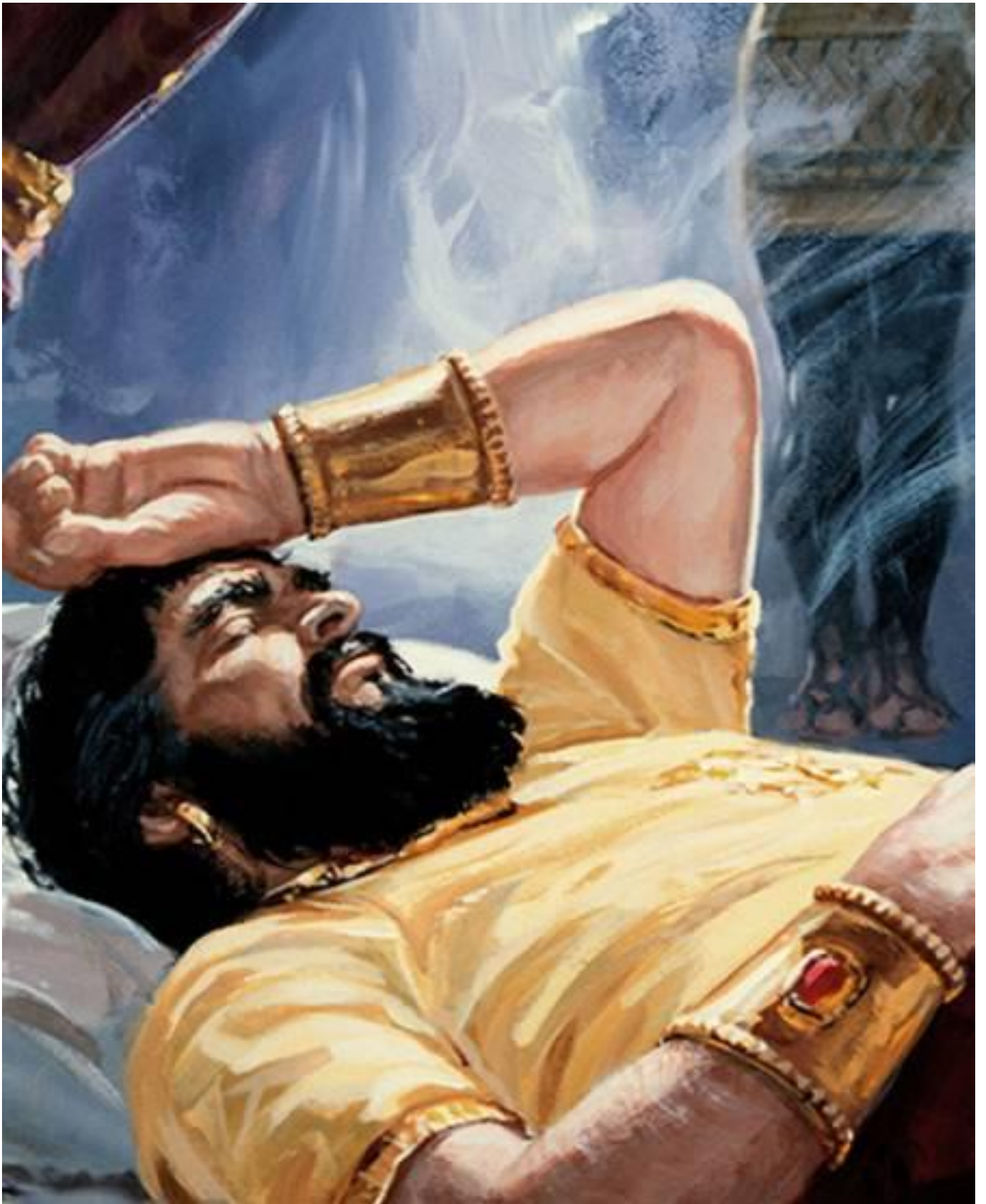
Belteshazzar

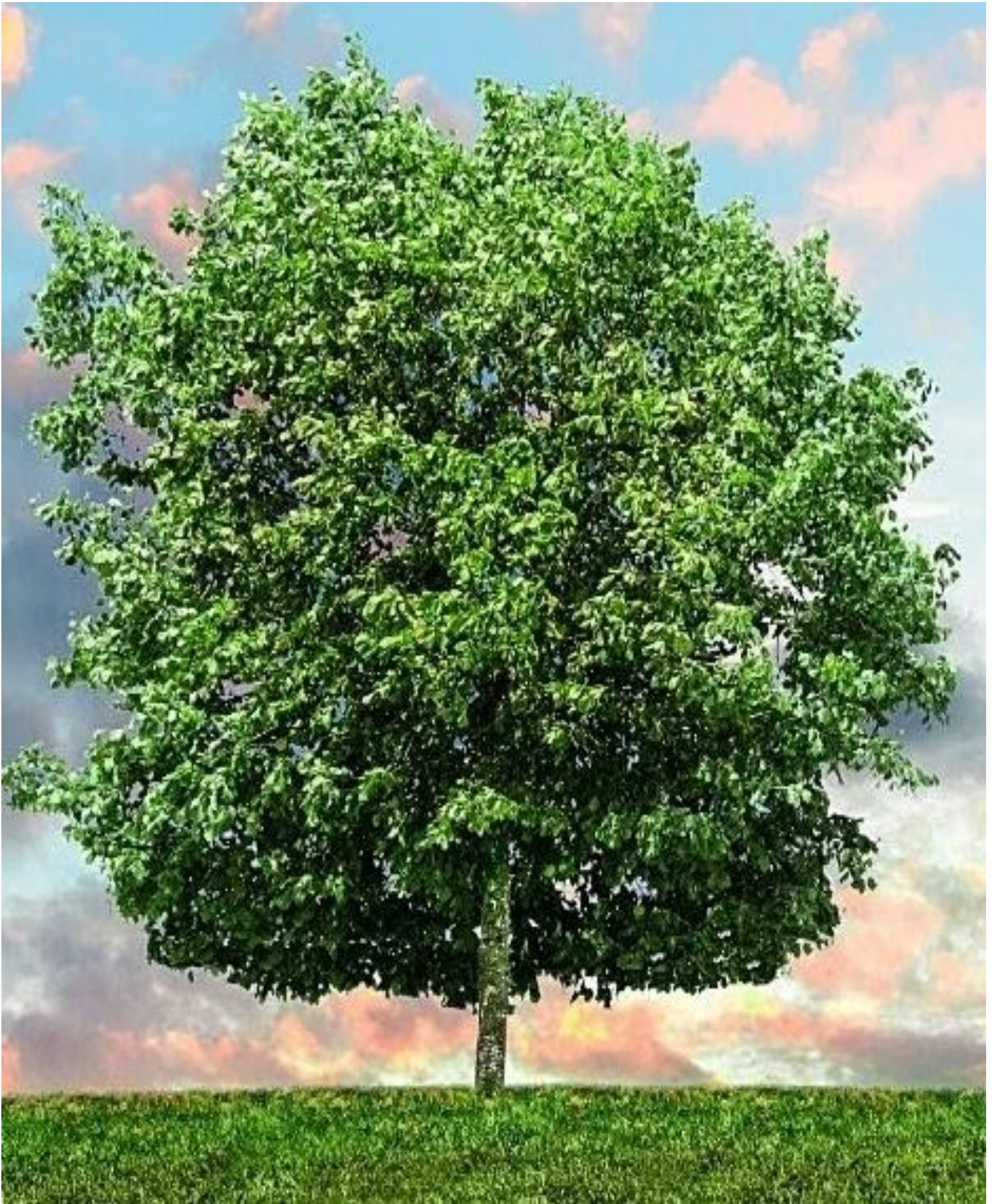
dew

sovereignty



<https://mungfali.com/explore/King-Nebuchadnezzar-Dream-Tree>





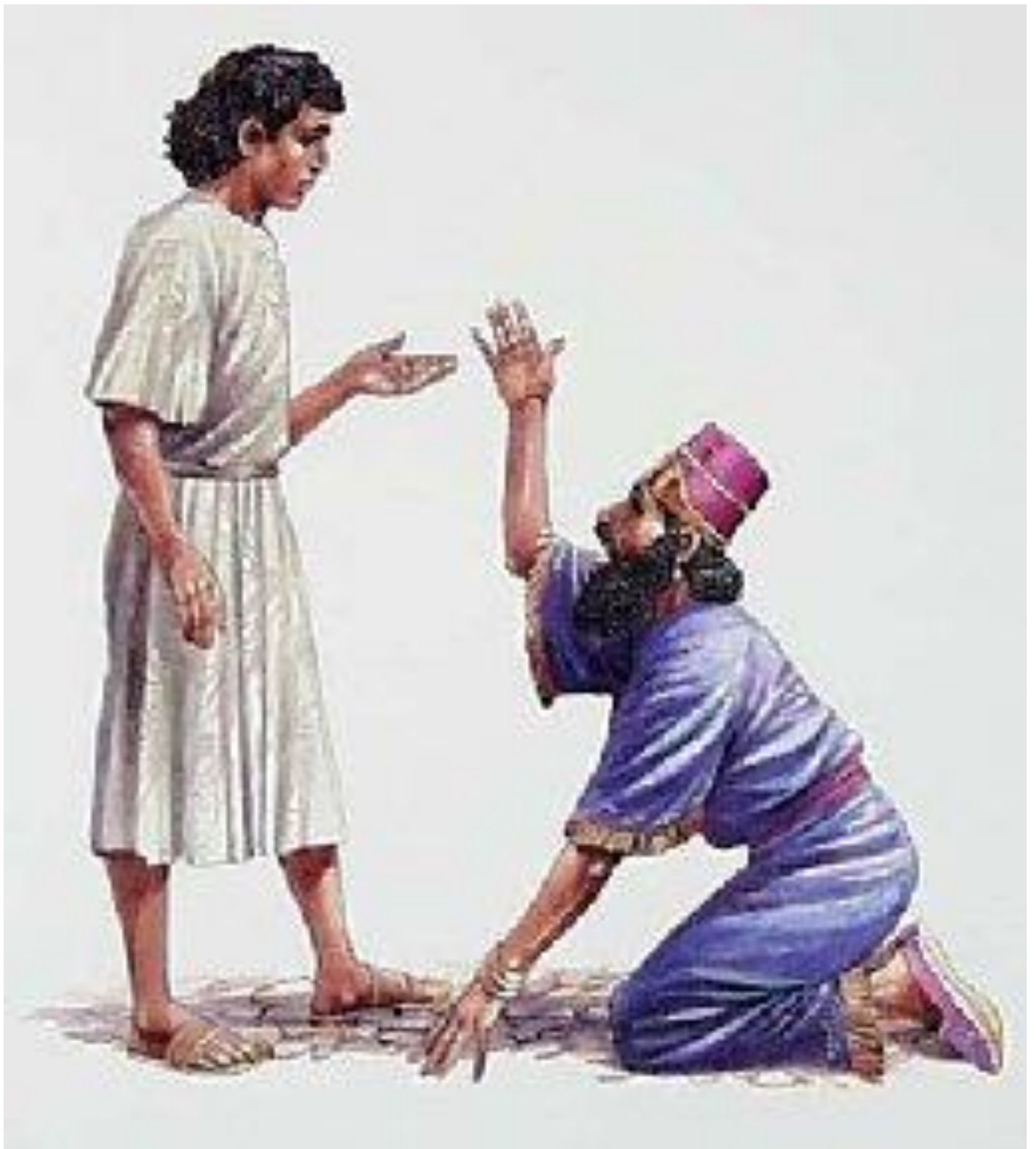
[nebuchadnezzar's tree dream - Search Images \(bing.com\)](#) (altered)



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[Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Tree \(Dan Ch4\) | Quizizz](#)





"I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. Those who walk in pride He is able to put down." Daniel 4:37: