

# One Mixed-up King Sorted Out by the **King-of-Kings.**

Nebuchadnezzar (Nabuco for short - after Verdi's opera) wasn't just anybody. He was one of the ablest military generals and strategists produced by history, even while his father Nabopolassar was still on the throne of Babylon. He then reigned for 43 years, proving to be an incredible empire-builder as well, although, towards the end, there was that 7-year interlude when, as Daniel 4 relates, he went mad.

Daniel gives us a lot of insight into this man's life and mindset, i.e. in Daniel's first five chapters, where we find Nabuco's name mentioned - 32 times in all. Jeremiah mentions Nabuco's name even more: 37 times (spread out over 19 chapters), but Jeremiah shows him in relation to God's people, Israel. He is God's chastening rod for his beloved and chosen nation, though not *only* for Israel.

## **Chapter 1: Nabuco - Introduction.**

Daniel's first chapter introduces us not only to Daniel and his book, but also to Nabuco - the conqueror. In his first invasion and conquest of Jerusalem, in BC 606, Nabuco had a group, perhaps a numerous group, of young princes and nobles deported to Babylon to be servants in his palaces, specifically as eunuchs (Isaiah 39:7). Of all of these, it would seem that only Daniel and his three friends were faithful to the God of Israel, and fully committed to Him and his Word.

In all, Nabuco besieged and took Jerusalem on four occasions (from BC 606 to 586), and each time taking captives back with him to Babylon. At the end of his last siege, Solomon's temple, which had stood for more than four centuries, *and* the city, were completely destroyed.

## Chapter 2: The God of Heaven Directs Affairs on Earth, not Nabuco.

The king, totally nonplussed, forgets the fascinating dream that came to him one night. His professional soothsayers prove to be of no use whatsoever in reminding him of the dream and unlocking its mysteries. So the young king is beside himself and on the point of having all of them executed.

Daniel and friends will not be able to escape that same fate, but after prayer to the "God of Heaven", the dream and its interpretation are revealed to Daniel. Most of it concerns the future, and it turns out that Nabuco with his young empire, the glorious golden head of the huge image he saw in his dream, is no more than just the head - a head that has no control over the rest of the body, nor over any future empire-shaking events.

Not only the Babylonian empire is seen, represented as the golden part of the statue, other successive empires are pointed out: Medo-Persia (silver), Greece (bronze), and Rome (iron - later mixed with clay). This last empire will be the longest lasting one. But at the height of its world dominion, one event, seemingly the most insignificant thing that could happen, the birth of a tiny baby in an animal shed, would turn out to be the "Stone" that Nabuco saw, being "cut out without human hands", which then crushed all of the statue, with all of history's pomp, glory and conquest crashing down through its impact. All the gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay is totally pulverized, while the Stone grows and grows, and fills the earth. This is one of the most wonderful prophecies of the Messiah in his Divine Conquest and Millennial Reign.

It is the God of Heaven who knows the future from the beginning. He has it all ordained to happen at the proper times and seasons. Daniel worshipped with these words: *"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are his. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with him!"*

Nabuco, confronted with the One true God and his absolute sovereignty, is so overcome and so deeply impressed, that he falls on his face before Daniel - about half his age - and acknowledges: *"Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets..."* There is recognition of the one true God of Heaven, there is emotion and reverence. Is there also surrender, conversion?

We shall see, as the story of Nabuco's life and attitude unfolds, this time in violent confrontation with the three friends...

### Chapter 3: The God of Heaven is not Impressed by Demonic and Human Prowess.

We must assume that the dream of chapter 2 inspired the action of chapter 3. Daniel had reminded the king of what he had seen in his dream: *"This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome... You are this head of gold."* Surely it was all engraved in Nabuco's memory now, never to be forgotten again.

Time passed, probably years, then, with the golden-headed statue still embedded in his mind, Nabuco, self-possessed as ever, and practical at the same time, must have decided on a way to consolidate and unify all the nations included in his great empire. Could he not alter history, and prevent other lesser empires to succeed Babylon the Great? Surely, he could enlist his "gods", the supernatural... that must be the way to go. Perhaps he uttered those magical words: "Yes, we can!"

Did it mean he made a pact with the devil? It could well be... And, all the while, God never stopped watching him. Let Nabuco make his next move on history's chess board... And Nabuco went ahead: a huge statue was erected. Notice the measurements; they were significant: 60x6 cubits. The statue's head was of gold, but not just the head - **all** of it was of gold!

An incredible "worship team" is assembled, and finally, the crucial moment is there: *"all the people, nations, and languages **fell down and worshiped** the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up."* All of the empire's official representatives were obliged to be there, only Daniel, for some unknown reason is absent. Then... there is that spanner in the works...

It only *appeared* that "all" fell down and worshiped. Three high officials may have blinked an eye, but never bent a knee - they just stood there, stiff as rods... Though soon reported to the king himself, their defiance remained absolute. Yes, their way of addressing his majesty was full of respect, but never greater than their respect towards the God of Heaven.

And it was the God of Heaven who threw that spanner into the works - the spanner of three young men totally committed to HIM, all in spite of the fiery furnace. We know the outcome. The end of the story is that Nabuco exclaims:

*"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they **should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!**"*

## Chapter 4: The God of Heaven can Smash the Proudest Heart

Nabuco had learned great lessons, but now, with old age creeping up, he still has to learn a final lesson, the most important one: to truly and totally surrender to the God of Heaven, who is in control of history, of Babylon and of Nabuco himself.

Once again God speaks to him through a dream. This time he remembers it, but has no idea what to make of it. Neither do the magicians, so Daniel is called in. When he hears the dream, he is unable to speak; the dream spells bad news for the king. He is going to be cut down like the tree he has seen... Then, for seven years, he will lose his reason and live like a wild animal.

If anyone had reason to be proud, it was Nabuco - and he *was* proud! After all his wars, he had settled down and made Babylon, and the whole country, something never seen anywhere in the world. But God hates pride. Dealing with Nabuco means dealing with his proud heart.

Then, in spite of the dire warning, a whole year goes by..., while God is waiting for a sign of contrition and brokenness... Instead, Nabuco utters these fateful words from his heart:

*"Is not this the great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling, by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"*

Immediately God intervenes from Heaven, and Nabuco becomes less than human. For seven years he suffers what may have been an extreme form of lycanthropy. But God is watching and working. His grace is able to do the impossible! After those seven years, Nabuco's heart is truly humbled. He lifts his eyes to Heaven: ***"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."***

They are his last recorded words... God's mills grind on; they may be slow, but they do a complete work!

## Chapter 5: Nabuco - Epilogue.

Three times more his name is mentioned, but only as a distant memory. Daniel, some 20 years after Nabuco, speaks to his grandson, King Belshazzar, who has seen "the writing on the wall"... But there is no repentance and no surrender as there was, at long last, with his illustrious grandfather.

Why is Nabuco in the Bible? Simply for God's glory *and* for our benefit. May we too learn God's lessons, and much quicker than Nabuco!