

This drama appears longer than the generally intended standard, but a very large part of it is the reading to lead into it; this is necessary to set the scene of Nebuchadnezzar's spiritual journey. The drama moves from a direct bible reading through to dramatized application. The earlier part of the reading (subject of another drama) has not been dramatized here as to do so would make it unnecessarily long and not lead to the main point.

This drama does require a fairly strong actor for the part of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar, dressed in period gear, is on stage from the beginning, sitting very quietly on a sofa (or similar) until his first lines, when he comes alive.

Daniel Ch 3 starting at verse 8

Narrator

Just then, some Babylonian fortunetellers stepped up and accused the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "Long live the king! You gave strict orders, O king, that when the big band started playing, everyone had to fall to their knees and worship the gold statue, and whoever did not go to their knees and worship it had to be pitched into a roaring furnace. Well, there are some Jews here—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have placed in high positions in the province of Babylon. These men are ignoring you, O king. They don't respect your gods and they won't worship the gold statue you set up."

Furious, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be brought in. When the men were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar asked, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you don't respect my gods and refuse to worship the gold statue that I have set up? I'm giving you a second chance—but from now on, when the big band strikes up you must go to your knees and worship the statue I have made. If you don't worship it, you will be pitched into a roaring furnace, no questions asked. Who is the god who can rescue you from my power?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar, "Your threat means nothing to us. If you throw us in the fire, the God we serve can rescue us from your roaring furnace and anything else you might cook up, O king. But even if he doesn't, it wouldn't make a bit of difference, O king. We still wouldn't serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up."

Nebuchadnezzar, his face purple with anger, cut off Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace fired up seven times hotter than usual. He ordered some strong men from the army to tie them up, hands and feet, and throw them into the roaring furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, bound hand and foot, fully dressed from head to toe, were pitched into the roaring fire. Because the king was in such a hurry and the furnace was so hot, flames from the furnace killed the men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to it, while the fire raged around Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Suddenly King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in alarm and said, "Didn't we throw three men, bound hand and foot, into the fire?"

"That's right, O king," they said.

"But look!" he said. "I see four men, walking around freely in the fire, completely unharmed! And the fourth man looks like a son of the gods!"

Nebuchadnezzar went to the door of the roaring furnace and called in, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the High God, come out here!"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked out of the fire.

All the important people, the government leaders and king's counselors, gathered around to examine them and discovered that the fire hadn't so much as touched the three men—not a hair singed, not a scorch mark on their clothes, not even the smell of fire on them!

Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him! They ignored the king's orders and laid their bodies on the line rather than serve or worship any god but their own.

"Therefore I issue this decree: Anyone anywhere, of any race, color, or creed, who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be ripped to pieces, limb from limb, and their houses torn down. There has never been a god who can pull off a rescue like this."

³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

King Nebuchadnezzar to everyone, everywhere—every race, color, and creed: "Peace and prosperity to all! It is my privilege to report to you the gracious miracles that the High God has done for me. ³¹His miracles are staggering, his wonders are surprising. His kingdom lasts and lasts, his sovereign rule goes on forever.

Commentator

Nebuchadnezzar has witnessed a miraculous demonstration of God's power but his words are just lip service - his heart is elsewhere.

Now Nebuchadnezzar was resting on his sofa and thinking to himself

Nebuchadnezzar (*stirring himself to life*)

How great a guy I am. This is my empire and Babylon MY city. Just look at it, a modern city with state of the art buildings and an infrastructure to beat London any day - and hanging gardens to boot. I am so proud of it – this is MY empire, MY city...my city....my city...(dropping volume as he falls asleep – and then a few snores – and then a restless dream time)

Commentator

I think our hero has fallen asleep - and now dreaming – not of his city but something very disturbing, so disturbing he woke with a start

Nebuchadnezzar (*coming to life from his sofa wiping his eyes and scratching his head – nothing too rushed about this – give him time to wake up!*)

“Wow, that was bit of a nightmare! I wonder what it all means – now who could help me work it out? I know – that man of God, Daniel should be able to help – *(to his servants – two men who have been standing by all the time)* – Fetch him

He walkis across stage still scratching his head while Daniel is found and ushered in.

Nebuchadnezzar

Hello Danuel

Daniel

Hello King Nebuchadnezzar, how are you today?

Nebuchadnezzar

Well, to be honest, I'm very perplexed. You see I've had this dream and I'd like if you would interpret it for me – here.

Sit down while we talk about it. *(they both sit)*.

Here, have a coffee. *(short pause while he serves a coffee)*

I dreamt of this massive tree – it was much taller than the Empire State Building. It was massive – it could be seen for miles around and it provided food and shelter for large numbers of birds, animals and people,

Now that was OK until this angel appeared and ordered the tree to be cut down to the stump – which it was – and all the animals birds and people were chased away.

Then he made this announcement

Narrator

Let him be soaked in heaven's dew
and take his meals with the animals that graze.
Let him lose his mind
and get an animal's mind in exchange,
And let this go on
for seven seasons.

Then the angels announce this decree,
the holy watchmen bring this sentence,
So that everyone living will know
that the High God rules human kingdoms.
He arranges kingdom affairs however he wishes,
and makes leaders out of losers.

Nebuchadnezzar

This is what I dreamed. Now, It's your turn, Daniel—interpret it for me. None of the wise men of Babylon could make head or tail of it.

Daniel gets up, looking worried and walks a few paces to and fro and starts to speak falteringly

Daniel

....Er, well.... your Highness..... I mean.....this is not good news.

Nebuchadnezzar

Come on man, out with it.

Daniel

There is no need to fear the meaning of it if you will just acknowledge God in your heartyou see this applies to you – you are the tree and what is decreed will happen to you. But this need not happen if you respond to God

You have grown great and strong. Your royal majesty reaches sky-high, and your sovereign rule stretches to the four corners of the world. But, like the tree, you will be cut down to size.

And the bit about being reduced to animal level for a time—this, O king, also refers to you. It means that the High God has sentenced my master the king: You will be driven away from human company and live with animals. You will graze on grass like a cow. You will be soaked in heaven's dew. This will go on for seven seasons, and you will learn that the High God rules over human kingdoms and that he arranges all kingdom affairs.

The part about the tree stump and roots being left means that your kingdom will still be there for you after you learn that it is heaven that runs things.

So, king, take my advice: stop gloating about your power and authority and turn to God and none of this will happen to you.

Daniel walks off stage

Commentator *while Nebuchadnezzar struts up and down,*

God left Nebuchadnezzar for twelve months - a whole year - to think about this but he didn't change – just kept putting it off.,

Just look at what I've achieved. See my strong financial system, my public transport that beats any LUAS and my law enforcement regime which everyone fears – and everybody reveres me. My nation prospers and I am getting richer all the time!

This is my empire which I, myself, have built and Babylon, MY city.

Commentator

With that, all that had been proclaimed against Nebuchadnezzar happened – he was destroyed. He has lost everything and was reduced to a peasant and had a total nervous breakdown and became unfit to live in human company. (Nebuchadnezzar crawls around on his hands and knees, acting a bit strangely). This continued as long as it took for Nebuchadnezzar to learn that God rules human kingdoms and puts whomever he wishes in charge." Then, and only then, God restored him to his kingdom, a changed person

Narrator *(during this, Nebuchadnezzar picks himself up and dusts himself down – just in time for his next lines)*

His sovereign rule lasts and lasts,
his kingdom never declines and falls.
Life on this earth doesn't add up to much,
but God's heavenly army keeps everything going.
No one can interrupt his work,
no one can call his rule into question.

Nebuchadnezzar

I have been restored! I am respected by all those who knew me before.

That's why I'm singing—I, Nebuchadnezzar—singing and praising the King of Heaven:

Everything he does is right and he is now in control of my city.

Commentator

Now that Nebuchadnezzar had responded to God, he could take his place among God's worshipping people (*Nebuchadnezzar walks down and sits in the front row*)

But there are other people from Nebuchadnezzar's city among around too. See, here comes O'Brien. He is a successful entrepreneur and an important person in this city. He buys and sells businesses, sits on boards of financial institutions and his purchasing power can affect share prices on the stock market. He can manipulate national affairs to his advantage and his dealings are often at the expense of ordinary people. (his entry should be from the congregation, dressed in a business suit, broly and brief case, *timed so that he arrives on stage as his name is announced. While the commentary is being delivered, he puts down his briefcase and makes a call on his mobile. When the commentary is finished, he ends his call and walks to front stage, saying*

O'Brien

That'll teach him! He will have to learn how powerful I am (*pause*) – this is my empire, MY city (*last phrase is a punch line and needs real impact*). O'Brien walks back and sits in the congregation.

Commentator

But Gerry is also from this city but not in the same league as O'Brien. He runs his own little business of which he is very proud. He works hard and drives very tough bargains to survive. He has managed to ride out recessions. He has modest trappings, a nice car, two foreign holidays each year, good social circles. (*same entry procedure as O'Brien. At end of commentary, he is chatting to another person and shakes hands as in concluding a deal saying*)

Gerry

I'll take possession in six weeks – thank you. (*then turns to walk off stage stopping briefly to front stage to deliver the punch line*)

I've earned that – after all, it's my prosperity, MY city (*exit same as O'Brien*)

Commentator

But there's also the more modest Julian. He has a pretty ordinary job which is fairly secure. He is proud of the promotion he got and his package, albeit modest. He has a pension fund and while it's declined a bit recently, it's still reasonable towards his retirement. And he has a little nest egg too. He is very popular everywhere he goes, work, pub, golf club, church – and he networks well to maintain that image. He could be your local politician if he chose. At church he commands an authority and not many changes happen without his influence. (same procedure as the last two)

Julian (*sitting talking to another person, then gets up and parts with the following*)

Yes, well OK – that's great, we'll work on that. (*then turning to walk centre stage and pausing*)

That was a great contact – I do have to maintain my image of man about town and look after my security – that's MY city.

As Julian finishes, Nebuchadnezzar, O'Brien and Gerry join him on stage, Nebuchadnezzar facing the other three

Nebuchadnezzar *(punch line)*

I had to sort my city out with God – what will you do with yours??

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