

Daniel

Chapter Four

Daniel 4:1-3

Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound! It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me. How great are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation."

- Only chapter in scripture composed by a pagan—it is like a confession written as an open letter—from Nebuchadnezzar's viewpoint
- Events in chapter 4 took place 8-9 years before the end of the siege of Tyre (573 BC)—so approximately 582-575 BC
- Nebuchadnezzar's dream is the centerpiece of this chapter—This is his second dream and third miraculous encounter with Israel's God
- The opening of this chapter is addressed to a universal audience—because he claims to rule the whole earth
- May your peace abound—personal sense of well-being
- Nebuchadnezzar establishes a decree—to show gratitude for what he explains—God did for him
- Signs and wonders—revelations of divine power—clues God gives in a corrupting world to assure humanity of an ultimate ruler who will establish His kingdom
- Signs and wonders—natural phenomena that because of magnitude or timing is evidence of God's intervention
- Purpose of chapter 4—to tell the greatness and power of Most High God
- "it has seemed good to me"—it is my pleasure/true joy
- Acknowledges that Yahweh's kingdom is enduring

Daniel 4:4-7

"I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners came in, and I related the dream to them; but they could not make its interpretation known to me."

- He begins by stating his prosperity and contentment

- At ease/flourishing—in his prime—resting and exalting in all he had accomplished
- Discipline is designed to bring us to repentance—dreams are giving Nebuchadnezzar a ‘heart check-up’
- Nebuchadnezzar turns first to Babylonian wisdom—continually walks in a fleshly mindset
- Once more Babylonian conjurers/magicians/diviners are unable to give an accurate interpretation
- God gave dream—only God can give interpretation

Daniel 4:8-10

“But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying, ‘O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation. Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great.

- Daniel had not been included in the initial gathering of counselors (both of his names are used)
- Dream: Growth of a mighty tree—great height—dominated landscape—lush foliage—abundant fruit—attracted birds
- Nebuchadnezzar regards Daniel as ‘chief of the magicians’
- In scripture—trees can represent a man (Psalm 1:3)—It can represent a nation (Ezek 31: 3-14)
- Daniel’s qualification for interpreting dreams—indwelling Holy Spirit
- In midst of the earth—implies implications of dream extend beyond the borders of Babylon

Daniel 4:11-12

‘The tree grew large and became strong, and its height reached to the sky, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its foliage was 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 sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it.’

- Tree provides shelter/nourishment/home
- It has magnified proportions—reaching to heaven (statue is 90 feet tall—tree reaches to heavens)
- Tree is symbol of fertility, growth, prosperity
- Nebuchadnezzar gets to observe the growth of the tree—till it reaches current proportions
- Tree was beautiful—fruit was sufficient to feed every creature

Daniel 4:13-18

'I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven. He shouted out and spoke as follows: "Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; let the beasts flee from under it, and the birds from its branches. Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field; and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man, and let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him. This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers, and the decision is a command of the holy ones. In order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes, and sets over it the lowliest of men." This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.'

- Angelic watcher—an order of being that expressed the will of God in the affairs of the world (this word only appears in Daniel 4:13)
- Angel pronounces judgment on tree—cut it down
- Branches are removed/foilage is stripped away
- Nebuchadnezzar knew of and trusted Daniel's understanding of the spiritual realm
- His mind changed from that of a man—his seat of reasoning is under judgment
- Beasts/birds—scatter/flee
- Encircled with bands of iron/bronze—preventing removal (tree imagery and beast imagery are merged)
- Symbolism is discovered—mind of stump to be transformed from man to beast
- Mind=heart—seat of moral reflection, choice of the will, pattern of behavior—not just mental processes, but feelings, affections, motivations
- Period of time—7 years
- Judgment is in order to display sovereignty of God—that human rulers exercise authority only by permission of God
- Job 5:11
- I Samuel 2:7-8

Daniel 4:19-22

Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.' Belteshazzar answered and said, 'My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you, and its interpretation to your adversaries! The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth, and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field

dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged—it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.

- Daniel recognizes what the dream means but is reluctant to interpret
- He voices his desire that the dream not be true regarding the king
- Daniel interprets the dream one feature at a time
- The mighty tree represents the years of Nebuchadnezzar's great national/military success
- The voice of the chapter changes here—while insane, he is no longer able to speak for himself
- There is a relationship expressed between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar
- Daniel is known for his prayers—he is sensitive to the spiritual realm—eyes to see and ears to hear—able to discern the Lord's meaning in spiritual matters
- God raises up/deposes kingdoms according to His will
- A 'great tree' is used elsewhere in OT—Is 2:12-13, 10:34, Ezek 31:3-17

Daniel 4:23-27

And in that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, "Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him"; this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: that you be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes. And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules. Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness, and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity."

- There is a contrast between who Nebuchadnezzar was in his own eyes—and who he would be while under God's judgment
- God chooses to warn Nebuchadnezzar with a dream
- As Daniel interprets the dream—calling the king to repentance—he is acting like other OT prophets (he lays out the course for repentance)
- Once Nebuchadnezzar can proclaim the true Lord—he will have his mind restored
- Judgment: for a period of time, Nebuchadnezzar would forfeit his power to rule/his sanity

- Prolonged humiliation is designed to humble him under Sovereign God—the true King of Kings
- Surviving stump—indication that the king will be preserved during 7 years of insanity (hope—because the stump/root are spared)
- Quite unusual that there will be a restoration of the throne after 7 years incapacitated
- Romans 2:4-5

Acts 4:28-33

All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?' While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.' Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

- Nebuchadnezzar must have had some response to Daniel's appeal—judgment was delayed for 1 year
- Though eager to avoid judgment—Nebuchadnezzar retained his pride
- King's illness begins a year after dream—so allowing for 7 years—must have begun no later than 34th year of his 43 year reign (571 BC)
- Nebuchadnezzar took credit for what God had provided
- I myself have built—He had erected the Ishtar Gate, over 20 temples

Daniel 4:34-37

But at the end of that period I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward 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. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?' At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my

sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

- At end of 7 years—Nebuchadnezzar raises his eyes to heaven—an act of submission/surrender/acknowledgment
- Restored to his right mind—Nebuchadnezzar once more picks up the narrative
- Divine healing/restoration
- Overwhelmed by power/authority of Yahweh—Nebuchadnezzar prostrates himself
- He honors God as ruler—whose kingdom will have no end
- Apart from God—humanity is devoid of true value
- Restoration:
 - 1) Confesses the sovereignty of God—and His covenant relationship to His people
 - 2) Confesses true condition of humanity (vs 35)
 - 3) Confesses truthfulness/righteousness of God
 - 4) God resists the proud/gives grace to the humble

Daniel Chapter Four-----Workbook

Project:

Write down five things a day that you are thankful for (antidote for pride).

Harmonize:

Read Isaiah 14:12-14. This is a description of an earthly ruler who is a type of satan.

Dig:

- 1) Who does Nebuchadnezzar declare is the object of God's signs and wonders?

- 2) God chooses to communicate supernaturally with Nebuchadnezzar. What words are used in this chapter to describe this communication?

- 3) What do we know about the Babylonian name given to Daniel?

- 4) How is the tree described in Nebuchadnezzar's vision? Is there any similarity to the previous vision?

- 5) Do you find God's assessment of Nebuchadnezzar within the vision described in verses 11-17?

- 6) What set Daniel apart from the other wise men in Nebuchadnezzar's mind?

7) How did Daniel call Nebuchadnezzar to repent?

8) What triggers the fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's vision?

9) Is there any cause for hope in this vision?

Discuss:

1) Are there any prophecies from scripture (that are yet to take place) that alarm you when you think about them?

2) Are there any areas where the church gives a clear demonstration of humility? Where the church walks in excessive pride?

3) How did Jesus model humility? How does He call for it in us?

Point of Prayer:

Pray for the Lord to convict you of any ways you walk in self-sufficiency.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) Do you recognize pride in others? Have you ever been convicted of it yourself?
- 2) Have you ever had to give bad news to someone? What helped you to do this?
- 3) Have you studied the major or minor prophets before? Why or why not?
- 4) What is one truth about the Lord from chapter four that you have learned through a lesson in your own life?
- 5) Have you ever experienced humiliation? Is it different from humility? Why?
- 6) When are you most vulnerable to pride?