

Bible Study Daniel 4

[PPT 1] [PPT 2] A quick review of where we have been in the book of Daniel. A review of the chain of events in Nebuchadnezzar's life. In Chapter 1, King Nebuchadnezzar was ignorant of Daniel's God but recognized the superior wisdom of Daniel.

[PPT 3] In Chapter 2, he learned that Daniel's God was wise enough to reveal the future to men.

[PPT 4] In Chapter 3, he learned that Israel's God is not only all-wise, but all-powerful by way of the fiery furnace incident.

[PPT 5] But in Chapter 4, the God who Nebuchadnezzar previously only knew intellectually, will come to trust and worship Him in a very personal way.

[PPT 6] The overall message of chapter 4 is given in the last vs of the chapter(vs37), that God is sovereign and will not permit men to take credit for His works. God is quite capable to humble those who walk in pride

Vs 1-2) In the first 18 verses of chapter 4 it appears that Nebuchadnezzar is writing these scriptures; so, the question is just who did write chapter 4? It seems that both Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar wrote this account or, it may be that Daniel inserted the king's words from the royal court records. Either way, this is Nebuchadnezzar's testimony.

Vs 3-4) God waited until Nebuchadnezzar was free of all threats so He could bring judgment upon him without Nebuchadnezzar losing rulership of the Babylonian Empire. While it is true he is at rest from war and major construction projects, there is no real rest for any person when they are alienated from the Savior God.

[PPT 7] Dr. Ironside comments on verses 3-4 = *“Think of that! At rest and flourishing while still in his sins and a stranger to God! Ah, there is a deceitful rest, a deceitful peace, which lulls many a soul into a false security. To be untroubled is no evidence of safety. . . . God saw that he needed to be troubled—he needed to be awakened from his sleep of death. It was grace that thus exercised him. And in some way, every soul that is saved has to pass through this period of soul anxiety and concern.”*

Vs 5-9) Since the dream is repeated by Daniel (so the king will know that he understands it accurately) I am skipping to verse 19.

Vs 19) I think Daniel’s appalled not only because he genuinely liked and respect the king but because of the effect this could have on others, especially the Jewish people. Nebuchadnezzar treated the Jews well throughout the last part of his reign. If he were deposed, there would be no guarantee of the same treatment from the next ruler.

[PPT 8] Vs20-22) *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.*

Ancient cultures often used trees to describe rulers of nations (Isa. 2:12-13; 10:34). If Nebuchadnezzar anticipated that the tree in his dream represented himself it may account for his fear in verse 5 because the “tree” was not created primarily for its own greatness or glory which he thought. It was to provide shelter, food, and protection for those who lived under it.

Vs23) The word for watcher means (‘îr), sentinel, one who is awake or does not sleep and so acts as a guard and protector. It can also describe a being who is intelligent and is probably an angelic being who has been watching Nebuchadnezzar and his rule. (Rev. 4:8)

[PPT 9] As to the purpose of the band around the tree stump, the main suggestions are: 1) To temporarily prevent the tree from growing.

[PPT 10] 2) Keep it from splitting and rotting.

[PPT 11] 3) Symbolized the insanity that would bind him.

[PPT 12] 4) His kingdom would be protected while irrational.

Vs 24-25) The title “*Most High God*” emphasizes that God is the highest in every realm of life. It is used six times in this chapter (vs 17, 24, 25, 32, 34) but it has not been used in the Book of Daniel before this. If you look in a concordance you can find where the first time a word or name is used in the Bible (study tool to define its use later). It is first used in Genesis 14 in connection with the story of Abraham’s return from the battle against the kings and his meeting with Melchizedek.

[PPT 13] Gen 14:18 “*Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.*” Abram gave glory for his victory to God Most High by giving Melchizedek a tenth of all that was taken from the battle against the 5 Kings. In doing so he was saying God Most High was in control and provided the victory.

[PPT 14] In Gen 14:20 Melchizedek responds;

“And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.”

[PPT 15] From this we know in Daniel chapter 4 the descriptive term for God is not referring to His role as in chapter 2, One Who has all Wisdom, or chapter 3, One who has the power to deliver. The “Most High” relates to God is in control, His sovereignty.

[PPT 16] In Isaiah 42:8 (KJV) we learn this about God's being in control.
"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another"...

[PPT 17] Nebuchadnezzar will be judged because he refuses to give God the glory.

[PPT 18] This is also our sin, ours both individually and collectively as a nation. The greatest sin of all is that we take glory for ourselves instead of giving credit to God. When we do well, we think it is our achievement. When we do poorly, we think it is somebody else's fault. America has been greatly blessed financially, culturally, spiritually, and in many other ways. But instead of giving glory to God, from whom these blessings come, as a nation we boast of our achievement, assuming that it is because we are the kind of people we are inherently.

[PPT 19] Back in Daniel 2:38a it reads concerning Nebuchadnezzar:
And wherever the sons of men dwell, [or] the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given [them] into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all.
We see God's poetic justice in His judgment of Nebuchadnezzar. Beasts of the field were originally described as under Nebuchadnezzar's power in chapter 2, but now in chapter 4, he would become like one of them. Representing himself as superhuman in chapter 3 by setting up his statue of gold to be worshipped, he becomes sub-human and temporarily loses all ability to recognize and respond to God, the characteristic separating man from animals. This is the result when men and nations take God's glory for themselves. They become beastlike.

[PPT 20] In Romans 1:24 because men will not give glory to God it says:
Therefore God gave them over, but to what? He gives them over to the working out of the moral laws of the universe that He has created, and those laws decree that if you will not have God and therefore will not have truth, holiness, purity, and all the other good gifts that come from him, in time you will have the opposite.

Vs 26) There would be no coup, or rebellion during the time Nebuchadnezzar was absent from his throne. This is in a day when at the slightest indication of a king's weakness, the next person seeking to rule would attempt to kill the king (Similar to Russia?).

Vs 27) From the words "*from your iniquities by showing mercy on the poor*" it seems that the king's pride had resulted in the oppression of the poor. Today powerful and prosperous people and governments think they have the right to gain at the expense of the poor.

Pride takes the credit (glory) for that which we have not accomplished. Nebuchadnezzar took pride in his rise to power, in his powerful kingdom, and his defeat of the Jews and other nations. All this was God-given, apart from any merit on the king's part. The king thought his prosperity proved him to be better than and superior to others at the expense of the poor.

[PPT 19] This is man's thinking, but the Bible teaches the opposite: Proverbs 14:31 *He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.* God makes men strong and provides wealth so that they can minister to the weak (Rom 15:1-3; Eph 4:28). The king's humiliation will be the cure that results in both justice and mercy.

Vs 28-29a) God delayed judgment for a full year so that Nebuchadnezzar might respond to Daniel's advice to repent and change his ways, yet he remained unrepentant. In this, we find a general principle of God.

[PPT 22] The 12-month delay between the warning and the judgment not only reflects God's patience and mercy but also His preference for restoration over punishment.

In Genesis 6 God held back the global flood for over a century while Noah preached to an unresponsive generation (Gen. 6:3, 2 Pe. 2:5). But, why does God tell Noah to preach for a century, even though He knows that no one is going to respond? Why does God give Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of the dream knowing that for 12 months to seven years, he will not respond? Because one of the principles of God's judgment is grace before judgment and His desire for repentance.

Vs 29-30) [PPT 23] When Nebuchadnezzar spoke these words, Babylon was at the historical peak of its influence and wealth. It is doubtful any other city in the world could compare with the beauty, size, and power of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was one of the wealthiest men of all time, one of the greatest architectural geniuses of all time, a man who led the armies of the Chaldeans against the Assyrians, and the Egyptians, and defeated those great empires. His empire stretched from Egypt to India. All of this filled him with pride.

[PPT 24 READ] Pr. 6:16-17a *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him (what is #1): haughty eyes (pride)* Dan 4:30 is the expression of Nebuchadnezzar's heart and of our hearts apart from the grace of God. Without a relationship with Jesus Christ, we think that we are responsible for what we do and achieve, and we do not recognize that when we achieve anything it is because God, the giver of all good gifts, has given us the ability and opportunity to achieve them.

The words *twelve months later* remind us that God is very, very patient with us, even in our hard heartiness, pride, and rebellion.

[PPT 25] 2 Peter 3:9. *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Vs 31) God is long-suffering with sinners, but when the time comes for Him to act, there is no delay. How quickly God can reduce a person from the peak of power and majesty to the level of an animal. The brilliant mind of Nebuchadnezzar, like the kingdom which he ruled, was his only by the sovereign will of God. Here is a sobering reminder that we are all but a breath or a heartbeat from insanity, or death, but for His grace. It is He who sustains us moment by moment.

Vs 31b-35) Chapter 4 is a unique chapter in the Bible because it is an official autobiographical document, prepared by the king of Babylon and distributed throughout his kingdom. Once his reason and humanity returned to him the king's lifting his eyes to God suggests both faith and submission. I think the king was willing to publically confess his pride in this document because he wanted his proud nation to repent also. There is no telling the effect of the king's testimony upon his people.

Vs 36-37) [PPT 26] Notice Nebuchadnezzar doesn't question God's character, or complain that his treatment was unjust. Rather in verse 37 he confesses that "all His works are right and His ways are just".

His confession teaches us that God's judgment of an individual or nation always fits and never exceeds the crime, regardless of how severe it may appear to our limited minds.

[PPT 27] Since there is controversy among Bible teachers on the subject I want to list why I think Nebuchadnezzar was saved at this time. As we go through these consider; how does the king's conversion compare with your own salvation story?

[PPT 28] 1) His Honoring God - In previous chapters, Nebuchadnezzar praised and honored Daniel but now his focus is on God alone.

[PPT 29] 2) His Praising God - The praise Nebuchadnezzar directs toward God is very much like the words used by other believers in the book of Psalms.

[PPT 30] 3) His Knowledge of God - The qualities of eternity and sovereignty he mentions in verses 34-35 go far beyond those attributed to Babylonian deities. The king acknowledges the complete sovereignty of God in verse 37, the omnipotence of the true God in verse 35 and he identifies God as King of heaven in verse 37.

[PPT 31] 4) His Transformation - There is evidence of a Godward change in Nebuchadnezzar's worldview. In chapters 1-3 he was not talking like this. In verses 34-37, when Nebuchadnezzar's reason returns to him there is never one expression of any resentment. As an act of submission he accepts God's severe punishment lasting seven years as being perfectly just.

[PPT 32] 5) His Contrast with Belshazzar - In the next chapter, Daniel will contrast the godly repentance of King Nebuchadnezzar with King Belshazzar's pride and failure to humble himself. Nebuchadnezzar was acknowledging in every possible way the infinite superiority and supremacy of Yahweh.

Some concluding remarks (4 minutes):

[PPT 33] 1) Fallen Human Nature is Rotten - Before coming to Christ, we are like Nebuchadnezzar: we think highly of ourselves until God reveals our pride and sinful bent. The Bible tells us that every person is flawed as a result of Adam's fall into sin (Rom. 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; Acts 17:26).

[PPT 34] 2) God's Global Concern for the Lost - Even in pagan Babylon God provided a witness, both Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar's testimony was capable of leading many others to salvation.

[PPT 35] 3) Evangelization Requires Patience - Between chapter 1 and chapter 4 of the book of Daniel, there is a span of about 20 to 25 years. The Holy Spirit took at least two decades to bring Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge God for Who He really is. Although some are, he was not won by a two-minute presentation of the gospel with an invitation to accept Jesus into his heart.

[PPT 36] 4) God Responds to Repentance - When God gives a warning that we continue to ignore, He will bring judgment into our life. However, once we do repent, He quickly responds with forgiveness and restoration. (Ezek. 18:21-23).

[PPT 37] 5) Worship is man's highest calling - Worship sets man apart from animals. Worship sees God for who He is and man for who he is, which results in our seeing life as it truly is.

[PPT 38] 6) Our worship is directly related to our witness - Daniel chapter 4 is King Nebuchadnezzar's personal testimony. He tries to share with others what God has taught him. Witnessing should be to the praise and glory of God. It should be an act of worship. Whether or not those who hear our witness turn to faith in God, God has been publicly praised in and by our witness.

[PPT 39] 7) Sooner or later, all mankind will be humbled before God and acknowledge His sovereignty. Nebuchadnezzar bowed before God after seven years of humiliation.

Have you trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior? I am not talking about just intellectual agreement. Years before the events of Daniel chapter 4 Nebuchadnezzar had recognized the wisdom and the power of the God of Israel. But he had not placed his trust in Him. I am not asking if you know *about* God. I am asking if you know God *personally* so as to trust in Him to forgive you of your sins and give you eternal life. Our response and relationship to Jesus Christ is the most important issue of our life.