

Daniel Chapter 4

Nebuchadnezzar's praise of God (in 4:1-3 and 34b-37), is the theme that brackets the experience the king reiterates in the first person (verses 4-34).

He began and ended the narrative with praise, and in between told why he converted to such worship of the true God.

Daniel 4:1 "Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you."

Nebuchadnezzar is sending a message to the entire world, and not just to his people.

Apparently, some time had elapsed between the events of chapter 3 and those of chapter 4.

Nebuchadnezzar's boast (in verse 30), would not have been spoken until after many of his massive building operations had been completed.

Daniel 4:2 "I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me."

Nebuchadnezzar is convinced the things that Daniel did, and the things that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego did, were signs from God to cause him to believe.

He is convinced that God is the high God, and now, he will proclaim it to all who will believe.

Daniel 4:3 "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."

Nebuchadnezzar is elevating God the only way he knows how.

His words are praising God, and all of His deeds.

The statements are true.

God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

His dominion is of all men, and reaches from generation to generation.

Daniel 4:4 "I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace:"

This is going back to the beginning of the account of his dream and Daniel's interpretation of that dream.

It is an understatement to say that his reign was flourishing.

He was the undisputed ruler of Babylon, and all of their captives.

He was safe in his bed in his palace.

Daniel 4:5 "I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me."

These are speaking of the dream he had of the image that had the golden head.

He not only was frightened by the dream, but forgot the details of the dream, as well.

Daniel 4:6 "Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise [men] of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream."

It was urgent for him to know the meaning of his dream, and he called all of those he knew that interpreted dreams to him.

Surely one of them would be able to tell him of his dream.

Daniel 4:7 "Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof."

We discussed in a previous lesson that their power was from Satan, and was very limited.

They were depending on flesh and Satan.

Neither thing helped with the dream.

They were about to be killed, because they did not know the meaning of the dream.

Daniel 4:8 "But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name [was] Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom [is] the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, [saying],"

Belteshazzar was the name Nebuchadnezzar had given Daniel to honor a false god.

We see that Nebuchadnezzar still believes in many gods at this point ("according to the name of my god").

This reminds us, that it was Daniel who tells the king the meaning of his dream.

It is God in Daniel who tells of the dream.

Daniel 4:9 "O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods [is] in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof."

Master of the magicians was the title the pagans gave him (meaning the name they gave Nebuchadnezzar).

Spirit: The meaning here and (in verse 18; as well as in 5:11 and 14), is rightfully translated by some versions as "the Spirit of the Holy God."

Wording for the true God in the Hebrew of (Joshua 24:19), is equivalent to the Aramaic here.

Some translators believe he meant "a spirit of the holy gods."

This is unlikely, since no pagan worshipers claimed purity or holiness for their deities.

In fact, just the opposite was believed.

And since Nebuchadnezzar was rehearsing his conversion, he could genuinely identify the true Spirit of God.

This verse starts the beginning of a new dream.

This has nothing to do with the last few verses, except they showed why Nebuchadnezzar had confidence in Daniel to interpret this dream.

Notice the title, master.

He had given Daniel that title after he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Nebuchadnezzar has recognized that God is with Daniel and will give him the interpretation.

It is interesting that he used the term (the spirit of the holy gods is in thee).

He feels that no dream is too hard for Daniel to interpret.

(In verses 4:10-17), we see a tree.

This pictures Nebuchadnezzar after 605 B.C.).

The creatures (in verse 12), represent people under his rule (verse 22).

The fall of the tree represents the coming time of God's judgment on him.

Daniel 4:10 "Thus [were] the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof [was] great."

This is a night vision, or perhaps, a dream.

In dreams, trees sometimes mean men.

This, of course, is speaking of Nebuchadnezzar himself, who has found such greatness as king of Babylon.

Daniel 4:11 "The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth:"

We see in this, that Nebuchadnezzar had become great, not only in his own land, but in many other countries that he had conquered, as well.

Daniel 4:12 "The leaves thereof [were] fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it [was] meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it."

This great land under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar had flourished.

God had used them to win battles against His beloved Israel.

They had brought great wealth and many people back with them as captives.

It seemed everything they did prospered.

There was plenty of food for the captives, as well as for the Babylonians.

Daniel 4:13 "I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven;"

This watcher was an angel, a servant of God, who controlled a nation's rise or fall.

Angels often have roles administering God's judgment as shown also (in chapters of Genesis 18, Isaiah 37 and Rev. 16).

Daniel 4:14 "He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:"

This speaks of God looking down on Nebuchadnezzar, and judging him.

It is God who elevates a man up to be king.

It is also, God who judges him, and brings him down.

Daniel 4:15 "Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and [let] his portion [be] with the beasts in the grass of the earth:"

This speaks of judgment without total destruction.

"Brass" always symbolizes judgment.

"Iron" is speaking of worldly strength.

The nucleus of the kingdom, still in existence (in verse 26), will later sprout as in nature (Job 14:7-9).

The band is a guarantee that God will protect what remains intact and preserve the king's rule (verse 26).

This is speaking of a time, when Nebuchadnezzar will be no more than an animal.

He will eat grass, and drink of the dew that falls.

Daniel 4:16 "Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him."

This is really speaking of a man who has lost his power to reason.

Perhaps, it is speaking of a mental collapse.

There is a form of the disease called Lycanthropy, in which a person thinks he is an animal and lives wildly, that causes him to eat grass, have thick and unkept nails, shaggy hair and behave inhumanly.

Lycanthropy is a psychosis in which the patient has delusions of being a wild animal (usually a wolf).

This illness that brings this about is a judgment from God (it drops like dew from heaven).

Daniel 4:17 "This matter [is] by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."

This is somewhat interpreted by Nebuchadnezzar.

He is aware of the judgment of God.

He is also aware, that God is proving that it is He that elevates a man to be a king.

It is also God who brings a man down.

God was with Nebuchadnezzar, when he attacked Judah.

The attack was actually a judgment of God.

He went too far in his attack.

He did things God had not told him to do.

Now, it is his turn to be judged.

Daniel 4:18 "This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise [men] of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou [art] able; for the spirit of the holy gods [is] in thee."

Nebuchadnezzar is confident that Daniel can interpret this dream accurately.

He has seen that Daniel interpreted his other dream, when no one else could.

He recognizes the fact that Daniel's power to interpret is from God.

Daniel 4:19 "Then Daniel, whose name [was] Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream [be] to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies."

The astonishment (meaning appalled for a time), of Daniel was at the meaning of the dream.

For one hour he waited to give the interpretation, because he knew it was not a good dream for Nebuchadnezzar.

His thoughts were troubled, because of the reaction Nebuchadnezzar might have to the interpretation.

Nebuchadnezzar encourages Daniel.

He probably, already knows the dream is a bad one.

Daniel explains to him that this dream would please his enemies, and not him.

Daniel 4:20-22 "The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth;" "Whose leaves [were] fair,

and the fruit thereof much, and in it [was] meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation:" It [is] thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth."

This part of the dream will be pleasing to Nebuchadnezzar.

He knows that the message is true.

He has conquered, and become great in the known world.

He was thought of as one of the most powerful kings who had reigned to that time.

There was no more beautiful city anywhere, than Babylon with their hanging gardens.

There were people of many nations living in Babylon at this time.

There was food enough for all.

Daniel 4:23 "And whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and [let] his portion [be] with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him;"

Nothing escapes God.

He knows all that happens in the earth.

The tree is Nebuchadnezzar.

God has judged him, and found him guilty.

He will not die, but will lose his mind, and go to the field as an animal, and eat grass.

The seven times probably means seven years, because the word times refers to years (in 7:25), and because seven days or months would not have been long enough for Nebuchadnezzar's hair to grow to the length of eagle feathers (as mentioned in verse 33).

Daniel 4:24 "This [is] the interpretation, O king, and this [is] the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king:"

The decree in this is speaking of the judgment of God.

God speaks it, and it will be.

It is not the world that judged Nebuchadnezzar, or even Daniel; it is God.

Daniel 4:25 "That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

The purpose in this is that Nebuchadnezzar will recognize God for who He really is.

He must learn that a man is king, because God made him king, and for no other reason.

Grass and water is to be his menu.

The word "times" is sometimes used to mean a year.

A very good example of that is time, times, and half a time; later on in the book of Daniel.

Daniel 4:26 "And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule."

Nebuchadnezzar will not be killed.

God will just humble him.

He will not even lose the kingdom.

He is not banished.

He must learn that God rules everything on the earth, as well as in heaven.

When he learns his lesson, he will be sound of mind again.

Daniel 4:27 "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility."

This is Daniel encouraging Nebuchadnezzar to repent and receive righteousness in his life.

He must do good, and not evil.

Daniel wants Nebuchadnezzar to accept this interpretation with as much eagerness as the first one.

Daniel called for a recognition of sin and repentance.

He was not presenting a works salvation, but treating the issue of sin exactly as Jesus did with the rich young ruler (in Matthew 19:16-23).

The king failed to repent at this point.

Daniel says, if he will quickly repent and show mercy, then God will let him live in peace.

Daniel 4:28 "All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar."

This is not for the nation and its people; this is for Nebuchadnezzar as an individual.

Daniel 4:29 "At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon."

It appears from this that nothing happened in the next twelve months.

Probably, Nebuchadnezzar thought the interpretation would not come about, since it had been this long.

But God does not regard time, as you and I do.

Daniel 4:30 "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?"

Nebuchadnezzar was known for his building projects, such as a 400 foot high mountain terraced with flowing water and hanging gardens for his wife (one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world), as a place for cool refreshment.

For such pride, judgment fell.

Nebuchadnezzar is almost mocking God in this statement.

He says Babylon is still here, and I am still king.

Where is the fulfillment of this dream you interpreted?

Notice in this verse, Nebuchadnezzar gives himself credit for building his kingdom.

It is interesting too, that all of this was not done for the glory of God, but for the glory of Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 4:31 "While the word [was] in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, [saying], O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee."

He did not heed the voice of Daniel, who interpreted his dream.

This voice does not speak through Daniel.

This voice came from heaven itself.

This judgment is unquestionable.

It does not come from the mouth of man, but the mouth of God.

Daniel 4:32 "And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling [shall be] with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

These are the same Words Daniel had given him.

He will eat grass and live like an animal, until he realizes it is God who makes kings.

Daniel 4:33 "The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' [feathers], and his nails like birds' [claws]."

This is an instant fulfillment of the judgment.

His nails, having not been cut for seven years, would be like bird's claws.

His hair would grow extremely long and straight in a period of seven years, also.

This is the description of a man who has lost his mind.

Seven speaks of spiritual completeness.

Two important questions arise from this incident:

- (1) Could it happen to a man; and
- (2) Could it have happened to Nebuchadnezzar?

The answer to both questions is yes.

There is a mental illness known as zoanthropy in which a man thinks and acts like an animal.

It is also called boanthropy, more specifically, when a man thinks of himself as an ox.

In answer to the second question, this illness is not mentioned in Nebuchadnezzar's annals, but one would not expect such a humiliating experience to be chronicled.

On the other hand, his long reign of 43 years is more than long enough to include the lengthy sickness.

Daniel 4:34 "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion [is] an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom [is] from generation to generation:"

When the judgment was complete, Nebuchadnezzar's mind was restored, and he worshipped God.

His spiritual growth is complete.

He now worships and praises the One True God.

God's grace enables a person to do this.

Daniel 4:35 "And all the inhabitants of the earth [are] reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and [among] the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Now, Nebuchadnezzar knows that nothing, or no one, has any control, except God.

God commands the sun to shine, and it does.

Heaven and earth must bow before Him.

He alone is God.

Deuteronomy 4:39 "Know therefore this day, and consider [it] in thine heart, that the LORD he [is] God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: [there is] none else."

Ephesians 4:6 "One God and Father of all, who [is] above all, and through all, and in you all."

Daniel 4:36 "At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me."

The root of the tree (Nebuchadnezzar), has been watered from heaven.

He now springs to life.

His kingdom is restored to him, as well as honor as king.

The difference is that Nebuchadnezzar, now knows God.

His wisdom now, is of God.

God will greatly bless him.

Daniel 4:37 "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works [are] truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

We, now, see a humble man who happens to be king.

He is now, aware that what we are is because of God.

He brings us up, or takes us down.

God does whatever it takes to make us realize our need for Him.

God punished him for his own good.

He did it to make him seek God.

He now understands the sovereignty of God.

Daniel Chapter 4 Questions

1. Who sends the message in verse 1?
2. What does Nebuchadnezzar believe were signs to him from God?
3. What understatement does Nebuchadnezzar make in verse 4?
4. Who had Nebuchadnezzar first called to interpret his dream?
5. Who interpreted the dream?
6. What was Daniel's Babylonian name?
7. What request does Nebuchadnezzar make of Daniel in verse 9?
8. In dreams, trees sometimes are speaking of _____.
9. Who is the tree speaking of?
10. Who is the Watcher of verse 13?
11. What did the Watcher say to do to the tree?

12. Who elevates kings, or brings them down?
13. What is verse 15 speaking of?
14. What does "brass" symbolize?
15. How do we know Nebuchadnezzar will be no more than an animal?
16. Having a beast's heart is saying, he has lost his power to _____.
17. Judgment comes on him like what?
18. Why is this happening to Nebuchadnezzar?
19. The attack on Judah was actually a _____ of God.
20. Why does Nebuchadnezzar believe Daniel can interpret his dream?
21. Why was Daniel astonished at the dream?
22. How long did he wait to give the interpretation?
23. Who is the tree in the dream?
24. "Times" often means what?
25. What is the decree?
26. Why is this judgment coming against Nebuchadnezzar?
27. What is Daniel encouraging Nebuchadnezzar to do?
28. How many months passed with nothing happening?
29. How does he nearly mock God?
30. Describe how the judgment came?
31. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar's hair and nails during this long time?
32. These are descriptions of a man who has _____ his _____.
33. When was his mind restored?
34. What was restored to Nebuchadnezzar?
35. How was he restored?
36. What is different about Nebuchadnezzar, now?

37. Why did God punish him?

38. He now understands the _____ of God.