

Oh, What A Fall
Series: The Book of Daniel
Daniel 4
July 4, 2021

Welcome again to worship.

We are continuing our series of the Book of Daniel. It is a beloved of children and youth. The stories of the fiery furnace and the lion's den are favorites. The visions captivate our imagination. But for adults, the book tends to lose its luster and interest.

But when you realize that it is the story of faithful servants of God living in a pagan and evil society, you realize that it is a story that is just as relevant today as it was when it happened.

And that is true for chapter 4 as well, though I must admit, it is harder. Honestly, as I began looking at this chapter, it seemed much harder to apply to today. In fact, I will be honest with you, I thought about skipping this chapter all together, because it is a strange chapter. But I felt the Lord saying to me, "Don't skip this just because it's hard. Wrestle with it. Engage it, no matter where it goes."

So, let's look at Daniel 4. So, turn in your bulletin beginning on page 5, or if you are online, grab your spiritual journal and your Bible as we look at this passage. Again, Daniel 4. Okay, here we go, verses 1-18:

King Nebuchadnezzar sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: "Peace and prosperity to you! "I want you all to know about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how powerful his wonders! His kingdom will last forever, his rule through all generations. "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living in my palace in comfort and prosperity. But one night I had a dream that frightened me; I saw visions that terrified me as I lay in my bed. So I issued an order calling in all the wise men of Babylon, so they could tell me what my dream meant. When all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers came in, I told them the dream, but they could not tell me what it meant. At last Daniel came in before me, and I told him the dream. (He was named Belteshazzar after my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.) "I said to him, 'Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too great for you to solve. Now tell me what my dream means. "While I was lying in my bed, this is what I dreamed. I saw a large tree in the middle of the earth. The tree grew very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see. It had fresh green leaves, and it was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. All the world was fed from this tree. "Then as I lay there dreaming, I saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven. The messenger shouted, "Cut down the tree and lop off its branches! Shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit! Chase the wild animals from its shade and the birds from its branches. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Now let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the wild animals among the plants of the field. For seven periods of time, let him have the mind of a wild animal instead of the mind of a human. For this has been decreed by the messengers; it is commanded by the holy ones, so that everyone may know that the Most High rules over

the kingdoms of the world. He gives them to anyone he chooses— even to the lowliest of people.” “Belteshazzar, that was the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now tell me what it means, for none of the wise men of my kingdom can do so. But you can tell me because the spirit of the holy gods is in you.”¹

I told you this would be weird. Nebuchadnezzar had another one of his dreams, like he did in chapter 2. This time, he told his advisors the dream, but it was so weird that even they could not come up with a meaning. So, once again, Nebuchadnezzar called on Daniel, and told him the dream.

Verse 17 is the key to unlocking the chapter:

For this has been decreed by the messengers; it is commanded by the holy ones, so that everyone may know that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world. He gives them to anyone he chooses— even to the lowliest of people.”²

I want to read you the commentary from the Life Application Bible: One of the most difficult lessons to learn is that God is sovereign. He is above all of those who are above us. He limits the power and authority of all the government, business, and religious leaders in the world. Those who live in freedom and with a relatively high degree of autonomy find this difficult to understand. While we may feel as though we are free to do what we please, God is sovereign overall of our plans and desires.³

That was the purpose of giving the dream to Nebuchadnezzar. That is the purpose for it being placed in Daniel. That is the purpose for it coming down to us 2,500 years later. The Lord is Sovereign. The things that are happening today are by His design. And if these are indeed the last days, then things are going to get harder. There is no way around that.

For those of you who have had knee replacements, or had to deal with chemo, or was on a sports time during the early stages of practice, or learning a new job – you know this truth. There are going to be hard days, days when it hurts, days when you are sick, days when you are tired, days when you are frustrated. There are going to be hard days, but when you are in the midst of those days, you are always looking towards the goal, towards the end, of walking again without pain, of being cancer free, of winning the championship, of succeeding.

If these are indeed the last days, then we need to remember God is sovereign, and the goal, the end, will be ruling with Christ in the millennium.

In Nebuchadnezzar’s case, and this is what I want you to write down, **God Troubles Our Hearts to Get Our Attention.**

He makes it hard for us to show us, as Paul said in Romans 8:28:

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.⁴

You may not understand it or like it at the moment, but God is sovereign, therefore all things... all things work together for good.

The second section of Daniel 4 is verses 19-27. Let me go ahead and give you the point. Write this down: **God Exposes Our Sin and Calls Us to Righteousness.** Verses 19-27:

¹ Daniel 4:1-18 (NLT2)

² Daniel 4:17 (NLT2)

³ Life Application Study Bible, Daniel 4:17

⁴ Romans 8:28 (NRSV)

“Upon hearing this, Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar) was overcome for a time, frightened by the meaning of the dream. Then the king said to him, ‘Belteshazzar, don’t be alarmed by the dream and what it means.’ “Belteshazzar replied, ‘I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies, my lord, and not to you! The tree you saw was growing very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see. It had fresh green leaves and was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. That tree, Your Majesty, is you. For you have grown strong and great; your greatness reaches up to heaven, and your rule to the ends of the earth. “Then you saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, “Cut down the tree and destroy it. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him live with the animals of the field for seven periods of time.” “This is what the dream means, Your Majesty, and what the Most High has declared will happen to my lord the king. You will be driven from human society, and you will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like a cow, and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses. But the stump and roots of the tree were left in the ground. This means that you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules. “King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.”⁵

Daniel, the man of God, was stunned and alarmed; the NRSV version says he was severely distressed and terrified. It was not that he feared for his life. Apparently, Daniel cared for Nebuchadnezzar. He may have been a pagan. He may have taken Daniel away from his home. He may have tried to burn his friends to a crisp, but Daniel still cared for him, and that care meant he had to call the king to repentance.

God told Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel:

- You are the great tree, and it symbolizes your greatness.
- You will be chopped down with only a stump remaining.
- You will live like an animal outdoors in the fields until “seven periods of time” pass.
- All of this will happen to teach you a valuable lesson, verse 25: “until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.”⁶
- When you come to your spiritual senses, you will get your kingdom back.
- God is a gracious and loving God who is quick to forgive and show mercy. So stop your sinning and start doing the right thing, stop your wicked injustices and show mercy to the oppressed. If you do, God may be kind and “perhaps there will be an extension of your prosperity.”

God called Nebuchadnezzar to righteousness.

Third, **God Humbles Us When We Are Arrogant and Proudful.**

Verses 28-33:

⁵ Daniel 4:19-27 (NLT2)

⁶ Daniel 4:25 (NLT2)

“But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. As he looked out across the city, he said, ‘Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.’ “While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.’ “That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails were like birds’ claws.”⁷

Can you imagine this? The great King Nebuchadnezzar humbled to the point of madness because he was arrogant and prideful. He said:

“Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.”⁸

Babylon was a majestic splendor. One of the ancient world’s 7 wonders of the world was the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. They were described as a remarkable feat of engineering with an ascending series of tiered gardens containing a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and vines, resembling a large green mountain constructed of mud bricks. So, it was a spectacular place.

But Nebuchadnezzar was arrogant and proud, and therefore, God humbled him.

I want to move to the fourth point here. Write this down: **Our response should be repentance, then praise.**

Verses 36-37:

“When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before. “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud.”⁹

When God removed his judgment on Nebuchadnezzar, He returned his sanity, and the king praised God.

Psalm 121:1-2 says:

I look up to the mountains— does my help come from there? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth!¹⁰

COMMENT

2 Chronicles 7:14 reads:

Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.¹¹

⁷ Daniel 4:28-33 (NLT2)

⁸ Daniel 4:30 (NLT2)

⁹ Daniel 4:36-37 (NLT2)

¹⁰ Psalm 121:1-2 (NLT2)

¹¹ 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT2)