

04. The Book of Daniel—4:1-37

(4/19/17)

In Daniel 4 we have the culmination of Nebuchadnezzar's spiritual journey.

The Lord had been working on him for thirty years, showing him that the God of Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael was the one and only True God.

The first time God impressed King Neb with this knowledge was when He gave Daniel Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation in chapter 2. (Comment)

The second time that God impressed the king was in chapter 3 when He protected Daniel's three companions Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (their Babylonian names) from Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace.

However, it's one thing to be *impressed*—it's another to be *impacted*, broken and saved.

And that became King Neb's testimony in chapter 4—how God finally broke him and saved him.

And the Lord accomplished this with something called 'Lycanthropy' which comes from two words, *lycos*, meaning wolf, and *anthropos*, man.

The dictionary defines *lycanthropy* as: "*a form of madness involving the delusion of being an animal, usually a wolf, with correspondingly altered behavior.*"

Daniel 4:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Nebuchadnezzar the king, To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. ² I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. ³ How great *are* His signs, And how mighty His wonders! His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion *is* from generation to generation.

This, to me, is the language of a saved man!

Notice how he exalts God and not himself—a big difference from how he previously exalted and honored himself just before God broke him (we'll come to that in a moment).

Also notice how he is 'compelled' to praise God and give Him glory and how he felt compelled to tell others about Him—all are the characteristics of someone who is now saved and filled with God's Spirit.

Acts 18:5 (NKJV)

⁵ When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is* the Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels me...

When the Spirit of God lives in us He compels (not forces but prompts, motivates) us to share Jesus with others by giving us God's love for the lost.

Alright, let's let King Neb tell us, from his own mouth, what God did to break and save him:

Daniel 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace.

The word **‘flourishing’** literally means *“to be green”*—a word that’s used of foliage and green trees.

What he’s saying is, *“I was like a huge tree, flourishing (prospering) in my palace, things couldn’t have been better—I didn’t have a care in the world.”*

It’s interesting that it’s often when we least expect it that the Lord pulls the “rug” out from underneath us to get our attention.

Daniel 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵ I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.

Let me stop and say that, getting dreams from God doesn’t mean you’re more spiritual than anyone else—it might mean you’re less spiritual.

Pharaoh got dreams, Nebuchadnezzar got dreams—and they were both unsaved, hard-hearted, pagan dictators.

Sometimes God will give someone a dream as a way of speaking to them because they’re so hard-hearted and or hard-headed that they won’t listen to anyone else—so God has to speak them thru visions and dreams.

Daniel 4:5-8 (NKJV)

⁵ I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. ⁶ Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise *men* of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. ⁷ Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation. ⁸ But at last Daniel came before me (his name *is* Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him *is* the Spirit of the Holy God)...

It's interesting that here, Nebuchadnezzar, has another dream that troubled him—this one took place roughly thirty years after the dream he had in chapter two.

That first dream that greatly troubled him—none of his wise men, magicians, astrologers, soothsayers could interpret for him.

As we studied in chapter two, that dream was eventually interpreted by Daniel after he and his three friends went to God in prayer and He gave them the dream and its interpretation.

You'd think after he had this second troubling dream he would have by-passed all of his other wise guys (the pagan 'god squad') and gone straight to Daniel for the interpretation of the dream.

The only explanation I can come up with is that Daniel was away on the King's business and Nebuchadnezzar was so burdened to know what his dream meant (so that he could have some peace from the anxiety he was experiencing) that he gave his other wise men a chance to see if they could interpret the dream for him.

David Jeremiah—

“It has been said that no matter how often the wisdom of the world fails, we run right back to the same quacks who have never had the answers. We go to these secular humanist counselors, who don't help, and finally find a Christian counselor to get us straightened out. After we have exhausted all of the human possibilities, we do the thing we should have done in the first place.”

And so the king turns to his wise men to see if they could help him, but as we just read, they couldn't.

But eventually, Daniel got back from his assignment for the king (the “at last” in v.8 suggests Daniel was away and finally returned) and so Nebuchadnezzar brought Daniel in and told him the dream knowing if anyone could give the meaning of it—Daniel, who was full of the Spirit of the Most High God, could!

Daniel 4:9-16 (NKJV)

⁹ "Beltshazzar, chief of the magicians [wise men], because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God *is* in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation. ¹⁰ "These *were* the visions of my head *while* on my bed: "I was looking, and behold, A tree in the midst of the earth, And its height was great. ¹¹ The tree grew and became strong; Its height reached to the heavens, And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. ¹² Its leaves *were* lovely, Its fruit abundant, And in it *was* food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, And all flesh was fed from it. ¹³ "I saw in the visions of my head *while* on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. [This 'watcher' was a pagan way of describing an angel] ¹⁴ He cried aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, And the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, *Bound* with a band of iron and bronze, In the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, And *let* him graze with the beasts On the grass of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his heart be changed from *that of* a man, Let him be given the heart of a beast, And let seven times pass over him.

“Seven times” is probably a reference to seven years.

In the Book of Daniel, a ‘time’ is used to represent a year—

Daniel 7:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.

This is speaking of the Antichrist, who reigns by force during the last half of the Tribulation Period (3 ½ years—“a time, times and half a time”), persecuting and killing the Tribulation Saints.

Daniel 4:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ 'This decision *is* by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.'

Again, the ‘**watchers**’ and ‘**holy ones**’ (same group) is a reference to angelic beings.

One author said,

“The ‘angelic watchers’ are widely attested in later Jewish literature of the Hellenistic and Roman eras. Perhaps the best-known example is the ‘Book of the Watchers’ in 1 Enoch 1–36 (speaking of fallen angels). Elsewhere the term refers to righteous or good angels who watch and never sleep (cf. Jubilees 4:15; 1 Enoch 20:1; 39:12–13; 71:7).”

In verse 17 it sounds as if these watchers and holy ones are in charge—they are but only in the sense that they are serving God as those who carry out His bidding (v.24).

And His bidding with regard to King Nebuchadnezzar was to humble him by breaking him of his pride so that he recognized that the God of Israel, Almighty Jehovah God, was sovereign over the affairs of men—

“In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.” (v.17)

Daniel 4:18-22 (NKJV)

¹⁸ "This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise *men* of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you *are* able, for the Spirit of the Holy God *is* in you." ¹⁹ Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, *may* the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies! ²⁰ The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which *could be seen* by all the earth, ²¹ whose leaves *were* lovely and its fruit abundant, in which *was* food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home-- ²² *it is* you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.

So, as Daniel began to interpret the dream, he explained that the tree was Nebuchadnezzar (something I believe Neb had figured out on his own).

Daniel went on to say that God had exalted Nebuchadnezzar and had made his kingdom great so that it spread thru out the known world and its branches covered all nations and peoples (represented by the beasts under the tree and the birds in its branches) who were protected by it.

But because Nebuchadnezzar had not given the God of Heaven glory for what He had done, but instead took glory for himself for all the success he had—God was going to judge the king and humble him until he acknowledged this truth—

Daniel 4:23 (NKJV)

²³ And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, *bound* with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times [seven years] pass over him';

The fact that the 'tree' would be chopped down but the stump and roots would be left—indicates that Nebuchadnezzar wouldn't be destroyed completely, but would be restored and flourish once again.

The iron and bronze band is probably a reference to the shackles kept on the king or the gates that confined him to a certain area near the palace while he was stricken with his madness.

Daniel 4:24-27 (NKJV)

²⁴ this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: ²⁵ They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. ²⁶ And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump *and* roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules. ²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by *being* righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.'

Daniel tells the king that, if he breaks off his sins and starts showing mercy to the poor—maybe God won't bring this judgment right away.

The text doesn't tell us specifically that the king did this—but it's possible that he did take Daniel's advice, because the judgment didn't come for a full twelve months.

Daniel 4:28-30 (NKJV)

²⁸ All *this* came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. ³⁰ The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"

Let me stop and acknowledge that ancient Babylon was a magnificent city—so in that regard Nebuchadnezzar was absolutely right! (Explain)

Where he went wrong was in taking credit for everything God had done in making the king, the city and the whole Babylon Empire great.

Proverbs 16:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

The Bible says that God will not share His glory with anyone—and so we read:

Daniel 4:31-33 (NKJV)

³¹ While the word *was still* in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! ³² And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." ³³ That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' *feathers* and his nails like birds' *claws*.

It's interesting the lengths God will go thru at times to humble a sinner and bring them to repentance.

We are not told what happened during the seven years Neb was crazy and living in the fields like an animal—but tradition tells us that Daniel watched over him and made sure he was taken care of.

Maybe, you know a “crazy” person who acts like an animal—don't put them down or write them off—lift them up in prayer and treat them with kindness—God may use you to bring them to their senses and save them. (2Tim.2:26)

Daniel 4:34-37 (NKJV)

³⁴ And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding 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 is from generation to generation. ³⁵ All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?" ³⁶ At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down [humble].

As much as God resists the proud and as harsh as the Lord is when it comes to dealing with those that are proud—He is just the opposite with those who humble themselves before Him.

There's a powerful example of this as recorded in 2Chron.12—

2 Chronicles 12:1-7 (NLT)

¹ But when Rehoboam was firmly established and strong, he abandoned the Law of the LORD, and all Israel followed him in this sin. ² Because they were unfaithful to the LORD, King Shishak of Egypt came up and attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam's reign. ³ He came with 1,200 chariots, 60,000 horses, and a countless army of foot soldiers, including

Libyans, Sukkites, and Ethiopians.⁴ Shishak conquered Judah's fortified towns and then advanced to attack Jerusalem.⁵ The prophet Shemaiah then met with Rehoboam and Judah's leaders, who had all fled to Jerusalem because of Shishak. Shemaiah told them, "This is what the LORD says: You have abandoned me, so I am abandoning you to Shishak."⁶ Then the leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is right in doing this to us!"⁷ When the LORD saw their change of heart, he gave this message to Shemaiah: "Since the people have humbled themselves, I will not completely destroy them and will soon give them some relief. I will not use Shishak to pour out my anger on Jerusalem.

God doesn't want to bring judgment, He'd rather show mercy and will if only a person or a people will humble themselves, confess their sin and turn to Him (receive Jesus as their Savior).

So God dealt harshly with Nebuchadnezzar, and he responded with humility and repentance, and as I said earlier, I believe that this is the testimony of a saved man!

I believe we're going to see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven someday—I look forward to meeting him there!

Let me bring this study to a close by sharing with you what some see in this story from a prophetic point of view.

Yes, the whole story is true from an historical stand point—but, as we often see in Scripture, it has a spiritual and even a prophetic application as well.

One commentator puts it this way—

"There seems to be prophetic significance in this incident as well as in the one in chapter 3. Even though God has appointed Gentiles to a place of prominence in His program during the times of the Gentiles, yet most nations and people walk in rebellion against God. This attitude is graphically described in Psalm 2:1–3. God will deal with the nations to humble them and bring them into subjection to Himself. One purpose of the Tribulation, which will immediately precede Christ's second coming, will be to humble the nations and bring them to the point of subjection to Christ's authority. At the conclusion of God's judgments, described in Revelation 6–19, Jesus Christ, the victorious Rider on the white horse, will descend from heaven and smite the nations. Then an angel will announce that "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our

Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). God’s judgment on Nebuchadnezzar, designed to subject him to God’s authority, seems to prefigure God’s judgment on the nations to subject them to the authority of the One who has been given the right to rule.”

Remember, that the whole point of this chapter was to teach us—

1. God is sovereign over all of His creation including all nations and rulers—He does what He pleases and no one can challenge or change what He has decided to do.

David Jeremiah—

“Nebuchadnezzar’s testimony is a political message for all of our leaders until Christ returns. The message is simple: God rules.”

2. God will deal harshly with the proud—because He loves them and wants to break them so He can make them His sons and daughters.

But once they become His sons and daughters (by receiving Jesus as their Lord and Savior)—He shows them great kindness and blessings (as He did with Nebuchadnezzar).

3. God can restore what sin has robbed us of—in heaven for sure but also here on earth.

Joel 2:25-27 (NKJV)

²⁵ "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. ²⁶ You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the LORD your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame. ²⁷ Then you shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel: I *am* the LORD your God And there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.