

Humbling of Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 4

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Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream, Dan 4: 1-18

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. ⁴ I,

Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. 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), and I told the dream before

him, saying: ⁹ "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, 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. 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. 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.' 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. "

Who wrote Daniel chapter 4?

- This is an autobiography written by King Nebuchadnezzar himself (notice the "I" throughout Chapter 4)
- This is an after the fact account of his experience... Nebuchadnezzar wrote these words about eight years after he initially experienced the humbling in his life and had reacquired his kingdom
- It is believed that Daniel took King Nebuchadnezzar's autobiography from the official archives incorporating it into this Scripture.

What is the difference between this testimony of Nebuchadnezzar and the declaration he made about the God of the Jews following the fiery furnace in Daniel 3:29?

He made a profession about God based on what happened but he had not applied that profession to his life. In this case, he was genuinely converted into a true believer in the Creator-God.

What did Nebuchadnezzar want people to know?

He sends a message of peace to all peoples, nations, and languages of his kingdom.

What kind of peace does Nebuchadnezzar speak of?

Not peace from war, he already had that; this is peace from the heart which comes when one knows he has been accepted by God.

What makes Nebuchadnezzar's testimony personal?

He recognized that God is not just the God of only the Jews. He testifies of God's signs, His wonders, and His dominion acknowledging that God is in control and His kingdom is above his own worldly one.

Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar didn't recognize the Creator-God following the fiery furnace?

- He had not made a commitment of his life to Him; his pride and self-esteem had overshadowed any serious consideration of a relationship with the true God.
- He was still the mighty King of the Babylonian Empire and totally steeped in the Babylonian god worship

Why did God give this Gentile king another opportunity to be in His kingdom?

Grace, God does not give up on anyone giving us multiple opportunities to know Him.

v5 – Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar was troubled by this dream?

There must have been something about the dream that terrified him and let him know it was significant like his previous dream and he probably knows that it pertains to him.

Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar didn't make his wise men tell him the dream as well as interpret it as he did before?

- Maybe he got less demanding in his old age (this was approximately his eighteenth year of reign when this experience began).
- More likely, his older age brought more wisdom and he knew the correct interpretation would resonate as being true and that he'd recognize it.

Why didn't the wise men just make up an interpretation?

- It is likely that his wise men were wise enough to know the king would recognize the truth and thus knew better than to just make something up.
- The dream was fairly easy to interpret; the wise men probably lacked the courage more than insight (it says they did not make it known, not that they could not make it known)

v9 – How did Nebuchadnezzar know the Spirit of God was in Daniel?

Certainly, by Daniel knowing and interpreting the previous dream that disturbed him. And no-doubt there were other indications as well. It is said of Napoleon that he liked surrounding himself with staff who were "lucky" in battle because he knew there was something more than just luck

at work. There is nothing like success to demonstrate that God was with him.

v13 – Who the watchers in Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

They were also called a holy ones and they came down from heaven so they had to be angels.

What was Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

A great tree that had grown to reach the heavens the fed and sheltered the whole earth. An angel commanded the tree to be chopped down and mulched with the roots left intact. Then the tree became a beast of the field for 7 years,

How is verse 17 the key to this chapter?

God is in control and puts on the thrones of this world whom he will; even the "lowest of men." In other words, God gives us the kind of rulers we deserve.

Did Nebuchadnezzar consider himself to be among the lowest of men to be give a kingdom of men?

Probably not when he had the dream but he needed to be humbled as his testimony indicated.

Daniel Explains the Second Dream, Dan 4: 19-27

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.

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 pass over him'; 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.”

v19 – Why did Daniel hesitate to interpret the dream for the king?

It was bad news as the king feared it would be... but he managed to preface his interpretation with a wish that the dream and its interpretation would be of concern to the king's enemies.

- It is clear from this that Daniel had courage and was an accomplished diplomat.

What was Daniel's interpretation of the dream?

Daniel informed him that the tree represented the king himself but the great and mighty king would be brought low!

- For seven years Nebuchadnezzar was to be plagued by an extreme form of insanity where he'd behave like a beast of the field even sustain himself by eating grass. (The insane condition is termed “lycanthrope”.)

v25 – When would the humbling of the king end?

He would behave like an animal until he was sufficiently humbled and acknowledged that God is sovereign over all the kingdoms of men.

- It was his decision to make but it would take him 7 years to make it.

Who is referred to by the “they”?

Certainly, the holy angels executing the will of God but ultimately this is God Himself. The plural here indicating the triune Godhead.

What was the significance of the bound trunk and roots that remained in the earth?

The binding of the trunk was to preserve it and the roots remaining in the earth indicated that the Nebuchadnezzar would be restored as king.

v27 – What hope did Daniel give the king?

He advised him to repent of his sinful pride and show mercy to the poor to delay the dream coming true.

Did Daniel indicate that repentance would keep the dream from coming true?

- Daniel did not say that the prediction and consequences of the dream would not happen if he did repent and renounce his pride.
- Daniel did say “perhaps” the prediction could be delayed

Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation, Dan 4: 28-33

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?”

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.

Why is this section of Chapter 4 written in the third person?

Daniel augmented Nebuchadnezzar's testimony by inserting his explanation of what happened between the interpretation of the dream and Nebuchadnezzar being restored his sanity.

Why did it take 12 months before the dream came true?

Grace – God gave Nebuchadnezzar 12 months to repent.

How did Nebuchadnezzar express pride rather than repentance?

As he surveyed the great city of Babylon (14 x 14 miles), he voiced how wonderful and great he was for building it.

- He attributed everything to himself and acknowledged God in absolutely nothing!
- Babylon with its walls, hanging gardens, temple dedicated to Bel, and the royal palaces made it the greatest city in the world at that time... Babylon was called one of the seven wonders of the world.

What indication was there that Nebuchadnezzar's boasting was going to be shown for what it was?

A voice from heaven reminded him of the interpretation of his dream a year ago.

How quickly did Nebuchadnezzar make the transition from king to beast of the field?

Pretty quick... that very hour (v. 33).

What did Nebuchadnezzar look like after he was driven from the city?

Like a beast – his body dirty and wet from dew, his hair grew long and thick like feathers (probably a substitute for clothing), his nails grew long like a bird and hooked so that he might better grub in the ground for food.

Nebuchadnezzar Praises God, Dan 4: 34-37

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.*

What happened after the seven years were up?

After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar raised his eyes toward heaven and repented, and his sanity was restored!

- A repentant Nebuchadnezzar has his sanity and reason restored to him then he praises God
- His Kingdom, his honor, and splendor were returned to him; he was accepted back into the position as King of Babylon!

What sort of things did Nebuchadnezzar recognize about God?

- God lives forever
- God's kingdom is in every generation and is everlasting
- God does according to His will
- No one can question God or cause Him to not do His will.
- God's works are truth
- God's ways are just
- God will humble those who walk in pride.

What prophetic applications might there be for this story?

- Nebuchadnezzar's madness foreshadows the madness of the present Gentile nations in their rejection of God
- Nebuchadnezzar's restoration foreshadows the restoring of the Gentile nations during the Millennial Kingdom
- God will glorify Himself among the nations. When Nebuchadnezzar captured Judah, he had reason to believe that his gods were stronger than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – he was wrong! (His ways are not our ways, Isaiah 55:8-9)
- When the Antichrist is in control of the world, during the Tribulation Period, it will truly seem like God has abandoned mankind... The pompous, prideful people of this earth will experience "hell on earth"
- Rebellion against an Almighty God is tantamount to insanity!