

Daniel 4: Nebuchadnezzar is humbled before the True King

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In the [previous chapter](#), King Nebuchadnezzar witnessed the miracle of the 3 Judean youth unharmed despite being thrown into Babylon's fiery furnace.

King Nebuchadnezzar now addresses everyone and decides to acknowledge God's wondrous works:

[Daniel 4:1-9](#)

["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.” (Daniel 4:1-9,
emphases added)

King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges a difference between his god and Daniel’s “Holy” God.

Verse 2: “I thought it good...” In the NIV, “It is my **pleasure**
to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the
Most High God has performed for me.”, (emphasis added). Daniel
attributes the miraculous signs and wonders to the Most High
God – hierarchically using terminology that makes the claim
that his God is above all other gods.

King Nebuchadnezzar describes another dream

[Daniel 4:10-12](#)

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.” \(Daniel 4:10-12\)](#)

[Daniel 4:4](#) describes how Nebuchadnezzar was flourishing. This dream appears to be describing King Nebuchadnezzar’s current situation at the height of his reign – he is like a tall, strong tree that provides for the kingdom in abundance.

[Daniel 4:13](#)

A message from above:

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. \(Daniel 4:13\)](#)

In Deuteronomy, the Bible describes another time when holy

ones came down:

²He said,

“The LORD came from Sinai

and dawned from Seir upon us;

he shone forth from Mount Paran;

He came from the ten thousands of holy ones,

with flaming fire at His right hand.” (Deuteronomy 33:2, ESV)

Daniel 4:14-15

The tree will be chopped down

¹⁴He 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.

¹⁵Nevertheless 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.” (Daniel 4:14-15), *emphasis added*

Verse 15 reveals and confirms that the tree does indeed represent King Nebuchadnezzar with the verse saying, let “him.”

Daniel 4:16-17

Man to Beast

“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.

‘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.’” (Daniel 4:16-17)

The watchers from the heavenly court have made a very strong decree so that “the living may know that the Most High rules . . . “: King Nebuchadnezzar’s heart will be transformed from that of a man to an animal.

And 7 times will pass.

Most interpret these 7 to be a literal 7 years. 7, again, symbolizes “completion.” In the completion of time, the fullness of time.

Daniel 4:18

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.” (Daniel 4:18)

King Nebuchadnezzar now expects Daniel to give the interpretation! He recognizes that the Spirit of the Holy God is in Daniel.

Daniel 4:19-26

Daniel did indeed receive the interpretation of the dream, but he was very startled by it:

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.

The purpose of the coming trial for King Nebuchadnezzar is for him to “come to know that Heaven rules.” King Nebuchadnezzar had a court, but the court of heaven is far superior to that of Babylon.

In [Daniel 4:20](#), the tree is described similarly to the Tower of Babel: having height reaching to the heavens:

Genesis 11:1-4 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. ² And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. ³ Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. ⁴ And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

King Nebuchadnezzar had the same ambitious spirit.

The tree is to be chopped down, but the stump left in tact and bound up with iron and bronze.

In [Daniel 2](#), iron and bronze represented Rome and Greece, respectively. The Babylonian Empire would remain intertwined – rooted – and even so much as bound up – together with the empires that would follow. Rather than displaying its power and might freely, Babylon would be confined.

Daniel 4:27

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 gives King Nebuchadnezzar some valuable advice: seek righteousness and mercy to break the power of sin in his life. Looking ahead to [Daniel 4:29](#), we see that God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a full year to repent!

Daniel 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.”

King Nebuchadnezzar was afflicted with what modern psychologists call “boanthropy.” This is a mental disorder

that causes its victim to believe he is an ox or a cow. But I think King Nebuchadnezzar had it even worse. I haven't seen anybody have hair like eagle's feathers and nails like claws. God allowed him to experience a pit of shame. Sometimes that's what it takes to get us to not think so highly of ourselves. His pride as Babylon's leader had to be stripped away.

From [1 Peter 5:5](#); . . . ["God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."](#)

We must pray for God's mercy, that we will always remain humble no matter what position we find ourselves in whether it is in ministry or a secular job or any type of leadership.

[Daniel 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."](#)

Once the set time had been fulfilled, Nebuchadnezzar looked up

to heaven and his understanding and reason was given back to him.

Notice he acknowledged Daniel's God. Nebuchadnezzar ["blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever . . ."](#) ([Daniel 4:34](#)). He continued on, in a prayerful manner, confessing God's dominion and power.

[Daniel 4:36](#) tells us that for the glory of King Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, God allowed his honor and splendor to return to him. King Nebuchadnezzar extolled and honored God as the true King.

A lesson for us today

Pride sets itself up so very quickly, and when a person has access to privilege and material possessions, it can be a challenge to remain humble.

Our King Jesus demonstrated humility, as we talked about on Palm Sunday. May the Lord help each of us to always remain humble and give God all the glory in our lives!