

Daniel Chapter 4

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Chapter 4 Overview:

Daniel 4 tells of another significant event in the life of Nebuchadnezzar where he has a vision of a tree. God literally caused Nebuchadnezzar to lose his mind and live like an animal out in the field to humble him and to teach him to honor God. The chapter can be divided into three parts: (1) Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the power of God in verses 1-18. (2) Daniel interprets the king's dream in verses 19-27. (3) The fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is recorded in verses 28- 37.

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

- The chapter begins with Nebuchadnezzar sending a proclamation to his entire empire.

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

- Most of the chapter is presented in the first person with Nebuchadnezzar as the speaker.
- Nebuchadnezzar testifies to his entire empire and the rest of the world, for that matter, of the goodness and power of the God of Israel.
- He referred to Jehovah as the most high God.
- Nebuchadnezzar clearly declares the power of God and praises God.

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.*

- Note that these comments at the beginning of the chapter were made in retrospect after all of the events of this chapter had taken place.
- Nebuchadnezzar could only praise the power of God.
- He also acknowledged that the kingdom of God is everlasting and that His realm continues from generation to generation.
- He had come to learn the hard way of the power of God.

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

- Nebuchadnezzar described the circumstances before the dream came.
- He was comfortable at home and things were going well for him.

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.*

- Nebuchadnezzar had a dream one night which frightened and troubled him.
- Though he was the most powerful man in the world, he was still frightened.
- God can give peace and he can also take away peace.

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.*

- Like the scene in chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the wise men of his court to appear before him and interpret his dream to him.

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.*

- The various ‘wise men’ of Babylon were assembled before the king.
- Unlike in chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar told these charlatans what he had dreamed.
- However even when they knew the dream, they could not make heads or tails of it.
- They had no clue what it meant.

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.*

- Nebuchadnezzar then recounted how that after the others had come and failed to interpret his dream, Daniel (a.k.a., Belteshazzar) arrived.
- Nebuchadnezzar freely acknowledged how that Daniel was indwelt by the spirit of the holy gods.
- Notice, Nebuchadnezzar’s clumsy way of describing the power of the Holy Spirit upon Daniel using lower case instead of uppercase when describing Him.
- Though he believed there was a great God of Israel, it is clear that Nebuchadnezzar had little grounding in proper theology.
- He went on to tell Daniel what he had dreamed.

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.*

- Though a man of God, Daniel was described as being the master of the magicians (the head wise man)
- Once again, Nebuchadnezzar described the Holy Spirit’s working in Daniel from his pagan background—“the spirit of the holy gods”.
- The king ordered him to explain the significance and meaning of this dream that he was about to describe to 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.*

- In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a great tree in the midst of the earth, taller than others.

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.*

- In his dream, the tree grew not only in width, but its height reached unto heaven and its branches extended to the end of the earth—as far as the eye could see.

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.*

- Not only was the tree great of size, but it was full of leaves and fruit.
- The creatures of the earth found shelter under it and in its branches.
- And, through its abundance all creatures were fed.

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

- The Aramaic word translated as **watcher** (*iyr*) refers to an angel.
- So, Nebuchadnezzar also saw a holy angel come down from heaven in his dream.

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.*

- The angel ordered the tree to be cut down, stripped of its branches and leaves, and its fruit scattered.
- The creatures taking refuge in and under the great tree were to be driven away.

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.*

- Though the great tree had been cut down, its stump and roots were to be left in place.
- The stump was to be circled with a band of iron and brass, most likely to prevent it from splitting and rotting away.
- The stump was to be kept moist from the dew.
- Notice how the gender of the pronouns changes from neuter to masculine.
- Clearly implied is that the tree/stump represented an individual which indeed they did.
- This individual would now eat from the grass and plants of the ground.

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.*

- Notice again that this heart was from a man.
- However, in being cut down to the earth, this great man was to be given the heart and mind of an animal.
- He would be in this condition for seven years.

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.*

- Nebuchadnezzar added that this entire matter was ordered by the Angels (watchers)
- They had made known to him in his dream that the purpose of the dream was the people would know that the most High God rules over the kingdom of men.
- God can give power and rule to whoever he so chooses.
- God can and does set up men from humble backgrounds to rule on the earth.

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.*

- He then ordered Daniel to interpret the dream for him.
- Nebuchadnezzar freely admitted that the ‘wise men’ could not explain the dream.
- But he knew Daniel could because the Spirit of God was in him

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.*

- Picture the scene at hand.
- Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful ruler in the world of his day.
- The setting likely is in his royal court before his royal throne.
- Daniel stood there before him.
- Upon hearing the king’s dream, Daniel was stunned—he was appalled.
- He apparently stood there for some period of time, visibly shaken.
- God had immediately revealed the dream to him.
- However, he was appalled at its implications.
- He was about to inform the most powerful man in the world that he was about to be overthrown.
- Perceiving that Daniel was deeply troubled, Nebuchadnezzar urged him to speak.
- Daniel warned that he hoped those who hated Nebuchadnezzar and were his enemies would suffer the fate he was about to reveal.

Daniel 4 : 20 - *The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth.*

- Daniel began by acknowledging the tree described in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.
- It was great, strong, reaching to heaven, and extending across the earth.

Daniel 4 : 21 - *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.*

- As described by Nebuchadnezzar, the leaves of this great tree provided food and shelter for the creatures of the field as well as the birds of the sky.

Daniel 4 : 22 - *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.*

- Daniel cut to the chase.
- The great tree seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was none other than Nebuchadnezzar himself.
- God had allowed him, as a powerful king, to extend his empire to the ends of the civilized world.

- And, the greatness of that his kingdom surpassed all other kingdoms and reached, if it were possible, to heaven—at least in Nebuchadnezzar’s mind.

Daniel 4 : 23 - *And whereas the king saw a watcher and an 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.*

- Daniel retold the angel descending from heaven and cutting the tree down.

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.*

- Daniel announced he was about to reveal the interpretation of the dream.
- The decree came from God Himself, and was about to be imposed upon Nebuchadnezzar.

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.*

- Nebuchadnezzar was about to lose his mind.
- He would be driven from his throne as a madman and live like an animal in a field.
- He would eat grass and plants like an ox and be wet with the dew at night.
- In other words, he would live out in the field like an animal.
- This would continue for seven years until Nebuchadnezzar was willing to acknowledge that God Almighty was the ultimate ruler over mankind.
- It was God who gave rule over mankind to whomever He so chose.
- Clearly implied is that Nebuchadnezzar had become over-run with pride.
- He had come to think of himself as deity.

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.*

- Daniel assured Nebuchadnezzar that another king would not take over his throne for good.
- Though the kingdom and rule of it would be taken from him for a time, it would be restored to him again.
- Nebuchadnezzar had been full of pride and God was about to teach him a lesson.
- Nebuchadnezzar like most of us had to learn that the hard way.

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

- Daniel told the king to receive the interpretation.
- He also gave a twofold warning for the king: (1) break off (terminate) your sins and replace them with righteousness and (2) show mercy to the poor.

- Clearly, Nebuchadnezzar was full of the sin of pride and had ignored the poor in his kingdom.
- Daniel told him that if he repented that he may be able to lengthen his reign

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

- The narrative now switches to Daniel as the speaker.
- Daniel now wrote how all that was foretold to Nebuchadnezzar came to pass.

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

- Evidently, God gave Nebuchadnezzar a full year to repent.
- Clearly, he did not repent.
- So one year later, the events foretold to him came to pass.
- Oblivious to what was about to happen, proud Nebuchadnezzar strode through his great palace in Babylon.

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 honour of my majesty?*

- He certainly hadn't repented of any of his pride "*great Babylon, that I have built*"
- As he thought about his great realm, he reveled in how he had built it all.
- It was by his might and power and for his honor and majesty this great kingdom of the world's system stood—or so he thought.
- Nebuchadnezzar was full of pride.
- Some ancient historians claim that the walls of the city of Babylon were sixty miles in circumference and stood 300 feet tall.
- It was the capital city of the world of that day, no doubt beautiful with its hanging gardens.
- No nation of that day or since could come close to the size, power, or majesty of Babylon the great.
- And, Nebuchadnezzar claimed all the glory thereof to himself.
- In his mind, he had built it all and made it the great city and empire it was.

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.*

- While the braggadocious claims of the previous verse were still in his mouth, a voice from heaven fell upon him announcing that the warning given a year earlier remained.
- But now it was too late.
- His kingdom was now taken from him.
- God had given him space to repent over the previous year, but he had not repented.
- Now the fate foretold by Daniel fell upon him suddenly.

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.*

- As Daniel had warned a year earlier in interpreting his dream, the voice from heaven told Nebuchadnezzar that he now would be driven from the presence of men to live like an animal of the field.
- He would now eat grass and plants of the ground like an oxen for the next seven years until this proud and arrogant king learned the hard way that God Almighty ruled the kingdom of men.
- It was God's prerogative to give rule over men to whom He chose.
- Nebuchadnezzar was about to learn that the hard way!

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.*

- The prophecy foretold a year earlier suddenly came to pass.
- He lost his human mind and was driven from his throne, perhaps by his court advisors.
- He wound up in a farmer's field eating grass like an ox, sleeping under the stars at night.
- His hair grew long and unkempt.
- His finger nails and toe nails became like bird's claws.
- He had basically gone insane.
- He became like an animal and lived accordingly.
- It is believed that his grandson Belshazzar assumed rule over the kingdom in his father's absence.

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 honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation.*

- When the seven years foretold by Daniel were accomplished, Nebuchadnezzar lifted up his eyes to heaven—perhaps for the first time in his life.
- It was only when he was willing to finally look to God that his understanding returned to him.
- In that day, he blessed, praised, and honored the most High God.
- Nebuchadnezzar had learned his lesson the hard way.
- He honored the God of heaven whose kingdom is eternal.
- His realm, unlike human kings is forever.
- Nebuchadnezzar had come to learn that God Almighty, the God of Israel was omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal.
- He alone is worthy of all praise.

Genesis 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?*

- Nebuchadnezzar had learned the hard way that *all* the inhabitants of the earth, including himself, were as nothing before the Almighty God.
- God Almighty is sovereign and does according to His will, whether in heaven or on earth.
- The army of heaven likely refers to the angelic hosts.

- No one in heaven or earth can withstand Him or question his actions.
- Nebuchadnezzar had learned the hard way that God is sovereign and omnipotent alone.
- He himself was nothing when compared to the Almighty.

Daniel 4 : 36 - *At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour 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.*

- When Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself before God and glorified Him, then at that same time, his right mind was restored to him.
- God also restored to him his throne and as king over Babylon.
- He was once again honored as king.

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

- Nebuchadnezzar concludes his story by praising, exalting, and honoring the King of heaven.
- All His works are in truth and all His ways are in judgment (righteous).
- Finally, Nebuchadnezzar bore witness from first-hand experience that *“those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”*
- God is not only able to humble those who walk in pride, He likely will do so.
- **Matthew 23:12** - *And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*
- And so ends the history of Nebuchadnezzar as far as the Book of Daniel is concerned.
- One of the great debated questions of history is whether Nebuchadnezzar actually believed in Jehovah as his Saviour.
- Or did Nebuchadnezzar actually get ‘saved.’
- He certainly came to believe in Jehovah as God and he certainly praised and honored Him but did he ever go beyond knowing who God was and trust in Him and Him alone for eternal life?
- Smarter people than me debate this one to this day.
- I guess we will find out when we get to heaven!