

Lesson 4 – Daniel 4

NOTES:

Daniel 1:

The Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the historical context of Daniel's deportation to Babylon following Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem in 605 BC. Daniel was among the royal Jewish captives first extradited to Babylon.

Upon Daniel's arrival, he and three companions were confronted with a difficult choice between defiling themselves with the king's appointed ration of choice food and wine or risking their lives by abstaining from the food for the sake of remaining undefiled in the sight of God. God rewards Daniel's righteous decision to abstain by granting him favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials. God also endows Daniel and his three companions with exceptional knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence that results in the honor of entering into the king's personal service.

Daniel 2:

Daniel's Interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's First Dream

Chapter 2 explains God's supernatural equipping of Daniel to reveal Nebuchadnezzar's first dream and its interpretation, demonstrating God's covenant attentiveness to His exiles. The dream reveals four successive Gentile dominions preceding the establishment of God's messianic kingdom that will never be destroyed. After Daniel reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation, Daniel is promoted as ruler over Babylon and chief prefect over all its wise men.

Daniel 3:

Nebuchadnezzar's Command and the Courageous Response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego

Nebuchadnezzar erects a great image of gold, commanding peoples, nations and men of every language to fall down and worship the golden image when hearing musical instruments. The king's decree includes the penalty of being immediately cast into a furnace of blazing fire for anyone refusing to worship the image.

After the Chaldeans report the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to worship the image, Nebuchadnezzar gives urgent orders for them to be cast into a furnace of blazing fire. The three men are tied up and cast into the furnace. When Nebuchadnezzar and his high officials look into the furnace, they are astounded to see four men walking unharmed in the midst of the fire. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego exit the fire unsinged. Nebuchadnezzar then issues a decree forbidding an offensive word to be spoken against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, whom the king causes to prosper.

Daniel 4:

Daniel's Interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream Predicting the King's Insanity

Chapter 4 provides Nebuchadnezzar's narrative of his second dream and Daniel's interpretation of the dream as a prediction of the king's temporary insanity. The dream is of a great spreading tree that a messenger from heaven commands to be cut down. Daniel interprets the tree as Nebuchadnezzar himself, predicting that Nebuchadnezzar would dwell among the beasts of the field for a seven-year period before finally ascribing glory to God. Afterwards, his mental health and kingdom are restored.

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 4 (NASB)

Dan. 4:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound!"² "It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.

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.

Dan. 4:4 "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace."⁵ "I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and *these fantasies as I lay* on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me."⁶ "So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream."⁷ "Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the

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diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me.⁸ “But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, *saying*,⁹ ‘O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell *me* the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

Dan. 4:10 ‘Now *these were* the visions in my mind *as I lay* on my bed: I was looking, and behold, *there was* a tree in the midst of the earth and its height *was* great.

¹¹ ‘The tree grew large and became strong
And its height reached to the sky,
And it *was* visible to the end of the whole earth.
¹² ‘Its foliage *was* beautiful and its fruit abundant,
And in it *was* food for all.
The beasts of the field found shade under it,
And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches,
And all living creatures fed themselves from it.

Dan. 4:13 ‘I was looking in the visions in my mind *as I lay* on my bed, and behold, an *angelic* watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.

¹⁴ ‘He shouted out and spoke as follows:
“Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,
Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit;
Let the beasts flee from under it
And the birds from its branches.
¹⁵ “Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground,
But with a band of iron and bronze *around it*
In the new grass of the field;
And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,
And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.
¹⁶ “Let his mind be changed from *that of* a man
And let a beast’s mind be given to him,
And let seven periods of time pass over him.
¹⁷ “This sentence is by the decree of the *angelic* watchers
And the decision is a command of the holy ones,
In order that the living may know
That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind,
And bestows it on whom He wishes
And sets over it the lowliest of men.”

¹⁸ ‘This is the dream *which* I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell *me* its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.’

Dan. 4:19 “Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.’ Belteshazzar replied, ‘My lord, *if only* the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!’²⁰ ‘The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth²¹ and whose foliage *was* beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which *was* food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged —²² it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.²³ ‘In that the king saw an *angelic* watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, “Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze *around it* in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time 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 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.²⁶ ‘And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that *it*

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is Heaven *that* rules. ²⁷ ‘Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by *doing* righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.’

Dan. 4:28 “All *this* happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. ²⁹ “Twelve months later he was walking on the *roof* of the royal palace of Babylon. ³⁰ “The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’ ³¹ “While the word *was* in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, *saying*, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, ³² and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place *will be* with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ ³³ “Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ *feathers* and his nails like birds’ *claws*.

Dan. 4:34 “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason 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 *endures* from generation to generation.

³⁵ “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And *among* the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can ward off His hand
Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’

³⁶ “At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. ³⁷ “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Who is Nebuchadnezzar addressing? What seems good to Nebuchadnezzar to declare? By what name does Nebuchadnezzar call God? For what does the king praise God? (4:1-3)
2. Where was Nebuchadnezzar when he saw the dream? How does the dream make him feel? (4:4-5)
3. From whom does Nebuchadnezzar first seek an interpretation of the dream? Who finally comes before the king to interpret the visions? How does Nebuchadnezzar describe him? (4:6-9)
4. (A) From whom do you first seek wisdom and understanding when faced with a mystery?
5. Describe what Nebuchadnezzar sees in the midst of the earth while lying on his bed? What finds shade under it? What dwells in its branches? Who does it feed? (4:10-12)
6. What descends from heaven and shouts? What does he command Nebuchadnezzar to do to the tree? To the stump? With what is he to be drenched? With what is he to share? How will Nebuchadnezzar’s mind be changed? How long will this condition last? (4:13-16)
7. By whose decree is the sentence of Nebuchadnezzar? What is its purpose? (4:17)

(PER) What do the following truths about God mean to you?

- “The Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind” (4:17)
- The Most High “bestows it on whom He wishes” (4:17)
- The Most High “sets over it the lowliest of men” (4:17)

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8. Why does Nebuchadnezzar believe that Daniel will be able to interpret his dream? How does Daniel react to his own thoughts? How does Daniel respond to Nebuchadnezzar’s comment that he should not let the dream or its interpretation alarm him? (4:18-19)
9. Briefly state Daniel’s interpretation of the following images in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream:
The large tree: (4:20-22)
Beautiful foliage with abundant fruit: (4:21-22)
Stump to be left with its roots in the ground (4:23-26)
“Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven and let him share with the beasts of the field” (4:23-25)

What will Nebuchadnezzar recognize when the seven periods of time have passed over him? (4:25-26)
10. What does Daniel advise Nebuchadnezzar to do? Why? (4:27) What happens to Nebuchadnezzar? (4:28)
11. What does Nebuchadnezzar reflect and say twelve months after Daniel’s warning? (4:29-30) What does a voice from heaven say while the word was in the king’s mouth? (4:31) (O) Why do you think it is considered a serious offense against God to take credit for personal prosperity?
12. List the consequences of Nebuchadnezzar’s boast. (4:32-33)
13. What does Nebuchadnezzar do after his reason is returned to him at the end of that period? (4:34)
14. (PER) What do the following truths about God mean to you?
“Praised and honored Him who lives forever” (4:34)
“For his dominion is an everlasting dominion” (4:34)
“His kingdom endures from generation to generation” (4:34)
“All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing” (4:35)
“He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth” (4:35)
“No one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” (4:35)
15. What is restored to Nebuchadnezzar at that time? What is added to him? (4:36)
16. List three reasons why Nebuchadnezzar praises, exalts, and honors the King of heaven? (4:37)
17. What do you learn about God in Daniel 4?
18. How could you apply what you have learned about God this week?

Write a prayer response to Daniel 4.