

***1 Daniel 4 “King Never-Can-Remember”**

This chapter is Nebuchadnezzar’s personal testimony, written by him in the aftermath of his mental breakdown and healing by God.

***2 Daniel 4** ¹ King Nebuchadnezzar sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world:

“Kon š^elām š^egāw” Oh dear I forgot – you don’t speak my language; please forgive me; I will start over.

“Peace and prosperity to you! ² “I want you all to know about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God has performed for me. ³ How great are His signs, how powerful His wonders! His kingdom will last forever, His rule through all generations.

The time of this incident seems to be considerably later than the event recorded in chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar had finished extensive building projects (v. 30). He reigned a total of 43 years (605-562 B.C.). Perhaps it was toward the end of his reign that these events transpired. Pentecost, p. 1341, and Whitcomb, pp. 62–63, estimated that the date may have been about 570 B.C. If so, Daniel would probably have been about 50 years old. ¹

***3** I am King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and Pastor Robert asked me to come here today and tell you my story – I guess you would say; “My testimony”!

I understand he calls me king “Nevercanremember” – unfortunately that nick name fit me well and now I don’t find it offensive. But there was a time when I would have had his head cut off for his insolence; but something has happened in my life that has humbled me and I would like to tell you about it!

You see there were many times in my long reign as king in which I had encountered the God of the Jews – YaHWeH.

I first saw His hand helping me to conquer kingdoms, I had heard about Him through His prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others that I would be successful in my conquests, partly because YaHWeH was using me to discipline His people.

YaHWeH told me through them that He would give Me the nation of Egypt as a reward for obeying Him in conquering Tyre, though it was a long and hard campaign of 15 years. We were paid handsomely in the riches of Egypt.

Later YaHWeH gave me a dream which Daniel interpreted in which I saw a statue and the future coming of God’s Son Jesus to establish His kingdom on earth. He showed me that I was the head of gold – a golden kingdom never to be equaled in history.

¹ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003).

Finally, when I was forgetful of His power and arrogant I built an image for myself to be worshipped. I forced all YaHWeH's people to bow to my image and to worship my gods – but three of them refused to bow – they were part of my staff and in rage I had them thrown into a fiery furnace – but YaHWeH delivered them and I even saw God's Son in the furnace with them. I was a tremendous supernatural event for me and I was humbled and praised YaHWeH – I even made a decree that all people would honor Him.

***4** But I didn't learn the truth from Solomon that **Proverbs 3:34** (Septuagint) The Lord resists the proud; but he gives grace to the humble.

And each time after I encountered the God of heaven, because of my pride, I quickly forgot who He was and lived my life as if He hadn't helped me, as if He hadn't warned me, and sometimes as if I was god myself. I continued to conquer and build Babylon without regard for the Most High.

But there came a time for my big lesson. In my lesson I learned what the Hebrew King David had sung many years before: ***4a Psalm 32:8–10 (ESV)** ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. ⁹ Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. ¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in YaHWeH.

As it turns out – I did become a witless animal like David describes for a season in order to learn that the Most Rules in the Kingdoms of nations!

***5 Daniel 4** ⁴ "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living in my palace in comfort and prosperity ("growing green").

There came a time in my career as the king of Babylon when I was at ease in my palace in the great city of Babylon. I was as we say in our language: "Growing green".

The kingdoms of the Middle East were mine, the people of Assyria, Israel, Egypt and all the other peoples were under my direction and control – I was king of kings on earth. No one dared to threaten me.

My palace was fill with treasure, my haram with the most beautiful women from all over the Middle East and my staff with the cream of the youth of every nation. My most trusted adviser was Daniel a Jew who had been with me for many years and was overseer of the wise men and astrologers of my kingdom.

***6 Daniel 4** ⁵ **But one night I had a dream that frightened me; I saw visions that terrified me as I lay in my bed. ⁶ So I issued an order calling in all the wise men of Babylon, so they could tell me what my dream meant. ⁷ When all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers came in, I told them the dream, but they could not tell me what it meant.**

This means that what he saw previously with Daniel and the three Hebrew young men was enough to impress him, but not enough to convert him. Being impressed with God isn't the same as being converted. David Guzik

Thus this incident may have taken place about the 35th year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule, or about 570. This would be some 30 years after the experience of the three men in the fiery furnace, about the 50th year of Daniel's life.²

***7 Daniel 4⁸ At last Daniel came in before me, and I told him the dream. (He was named Belteshazzar (prince whom Bel favors) after my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)⁹ "I said to him, 'Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too great for you to solve. Now tell me what my dream means.**

Maybe Daniel was semi-retired? Apparently Daniel was in a position of significant governmental authority and not serving as a counselor to the king. That would explain why he was not included in the invitation given previously to the wise men. Pentecost

So I told Daniel what my dream had been.

Daniel 4¹⁰ "While I was lying in my bed, this is what I dreamed. I saw a large tree in the middle of the earth.¹¹ The tree grew very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see.¹² It had fresh green leaves, and it was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. All the world was fed from this tree.

***8 Daniel 4¹³** "Then as I lay there dreaming, I saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven.¹⁴ The messenger shouted, "**Cut down the tree and lop off its branches! Shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit! Chase the wild animals from its shade and the birds from its branches.**¹⁵ **But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass.** Now let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the wild animals among the plants of the field.¹⁶ For seven periods of time, let him have the mind of a wild animal instead of the mind of a human.

Like most kings – ancient and modern – Nebuchadnezzar wanted to believe that *he* ruled instead of God or anyone else. "Both the Assyrian and the Babylonian kings thought of themselves as rulers over all the earth, so describing themselves in their inscriptions." (Wood)

One of the most difficult lessons to learn is that God is sovereign. He limits the power and authority of all the government, business, and religious leaders in the world. Those who live in freedom and with a relatively high degree of autonomy find this difficult to

² J. Dwight Pentecost, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1341.

understand. While we may feel as though we are free to do what we please, God is sovereign over all of our plans and desires. Life Application Bible

***9 Daniel 4** ¹⁸ "Beltshazzar, that was the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now tell me what it means, for none of the wise men of my kingdom can do so. But you can tell me because the spirit of the holy gods is in you." ¹⁹ **"Upon hearing this, Daniel (also known as Beltshazzar) was overcome for a time, frightened by the meaning of the dream. Then the king said to him, 'Beltshazzar, don't be alarmed by the dream and what it means.'**
"Beltshazzar replied, 'I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies, my lord, and not to you!"

"This verse reveals the heart of Daniel as well as any in the entire book of Daniel. He knew the meaning of this dream and how well Nebuchadnezzar deserved what was to come upon him. Nevertheless, Daniel's heart was concerned for the king and grieved over what he had to tell him. This was the distinctive feature of the true prophets of God: though they often had to predict judgments, they were nevertheless grieved when any of God's creatures were chastised." Tom Constable

I must tell you that at this point my heart sank and melted within me. I realized by the look on his face that the dream was about me and then he said: That tree, Your Majesty, is you.

***10 Daniel 4** ²⁰ The tree you saw was growing very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see. ²¹ It had fresh green leaves and was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. ²² **That tree, Your Majesty, is you.** For you have grown strong and great; your greatness reaches up to heaven, and your rule to the ends of the earth. ²³ "Then you saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, "Cut down the tree and destroy it. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him live with the animals of the field for seven periods of time."

Daniel applied the point without ambiguity. Instead of reaching for a general point (*such as saying, "We all could use a little more humility"*) Daniel brought the truth in love. This was similar to what the prophet Nathan said to King David: *You are the man!* In 2 Samuel 12:7. David Guzik

***11 Daniel 4** ²⁴ "This is what the dream means, Your Majesty, and what the Most High has declared will happen to my lord the king. ²⁵ You will be driven from human society, and you will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like a cow, and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven. **Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone He chooses.** ²⁶
 But the stump and roots of the tree were left in the ground. This means that

you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules.

4:23-37 Although much of the world thought that Nebuchadnezzar was a mighty (even divine) king, God demonstrated that Nebuchadnezzar was an ordinary man. The king would go insane and become like an animal for seven years. God humiliated Nebuchadnezzar to show that almighty God, not Nebuchadnezzar, was Lord of the nations. No matter how powerful a person may become, self-centered pride will push God from his or her life. Pride may be one of the most dangerous temptations you will face. Don't let your accomplishments cause you to forget God. Life Application Bible

Daniel 4 ²⁷ "King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.'

***12** (NASB95) 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.'

Why was God working this way in the king's life? To teach him humility. You will remember that in the king's "image dream" he was pictured as the head of gold; and in chapter 3, the king had made an entire image of gold to attract worship and praise to himself. God would show this proud monarch that he was actually a beast at heart. In fact, in chapter 7, Daniel will have a vision that shows that *all* the empires are nothing but wild beasts. Daniel warned the king to repent and change his ways. "Break off your sins," he begged, "and perhaps the Lord will give you forgiveness and time to serve Him." After all, God had spoken to the king on two different occasions—the dream of chapter 2 and the furnace episode of chapter 3—and it is dangerous to turn a deaf ear to God. ³

I sat in stunned silence as Daniel delivered YaHWeH's message to me. All of my encounters with this God of heaven flashed through my mind and I realized that I had ignored His warnings, forgotten His blessings and lived as if He didn't exist. YaHWeH had confronted me through the dream and through Daniel – and was shaken to my core.

But there was hope in Daniel's message and I resolved to change my ways. I did become a softer man toward those less fortunate in my kingdom. There were times when I kept my mouth shut when others praised me. I really tried to be more humble, but that is hard for a great man, leading a great kingdom and my pride got the best of me.

***12a Daniel 4** ²⁸ "But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ **Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in**

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Da 4:19–27.

Babylon. ³⁰ **As he looked out across the city, he said, 'Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.'**

But my city was the wonder of the world and I boasted about it to everyone who would listen.

Archaeologists have discovered ancient documents in which Nebuchadnezzar boasted of the glory and splendor of Babylon. Archer

***13** “The palace from which he surveyed Babylon was one of the citadels on the north side of the city.

***14** It had large courts, reception rooms, throne room, residences, and the famous hanging gardens, a vaulted, terraced structure with an elaborate water supply for its trees and plants, apparently built by Nebuchadnezzar for his Median queen.

From the palace he would see in the distance the city's 27km outer double wall, which he had built.

***15** His palace stood just inside the double wall of the inner city, which was punctuated by eight gates and encircled an area 3km by 1km, with the Euphrates running through it.

***16** The palace adjoined a processional avenue that Nebuchadnezzar had paved with limestone and decorated with lion figures, emblematic of Ishtar; this avenue entered the city through the Ishtar Gate, which he had decorated with dragons and bulls (emblems of Marduk and Bel).

***17** It continued south through the city to the most important sacred precincts, to whose beautifying and development Nebuchadnezzar had contributed, the ziggurat crowned by a temple of Marduk where the god's statue resided. In Marduk's temple there were also shrines to other gods, and in the city elsewhere temples of other Babylonian gods, restored or beautified by Nebuchadnezzar.” Goldingay, pp. 89–90. Josephus, 10:11:1, quoted the ancient writer Berossus who in his *Chaldaic History* gave a description of Nebuchadnezzar's building activities. See also Whitcomb, pp. 65–66, and Campbell, p. 50, for additional descriptions.

Tom Constable

'Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.'

I must tell I choke now on those arrogant words. Thinking that I was alone responsible for my accomplishments. But soon I came to know that I am but a mere man. As your founding father Benjamin Franklin wrote: *“The greatest monarch on the proudest throne, is obliged to sit upon His own rear end.”*

Daniel knew that the new Babylon was the creation of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:30), something previously thought untrue and only verified by recent archaeology. Nobody in the Maccabean period (second century b.c.) thought Nebuchadnezzar had built the new Babylon. In the British Museum, there are six columns of writing recovered from Babylon with describe the huge building projects of Nebuchadnezzar and His zeal to enlarge and beautify the city. Most of the

bricks found in the excavations of Babylon carry this stamp: “Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, supporter of Esagila and Ezida, exalted first-born son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.” David Guzik

As I was speaking a voice came from the heavens loud and clear

***18 Daniel 4** ³¹ “While these words were still in His mouth, a voice called down from heaven, ‘**O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. ³² You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.**’

***19 Daniel 4** ³³ “That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until His hair was as long as eagles’ feathers and His nails were like birds’ claws.

I don’t remember much of what happened next for I lost my human reason. Your scientists have a name for what happened to me – because I became an ox in my mind. I became the horse and the mule that king David referred to.

I do remember Daniel’s concerned face and his gentle touch on me as they led to grass in some field – it was fenced and I remember night and day for what seemed like eternity looking down at the grass and eating – night and day. Now I know it was 7 years of humiliation – naked humiliation.

“Zoanthropy” – mental illness in which a human thinks he or she is an animal!

The form of insanity in which men think of themselves as animals and imitate the behavior of an animal has been observed. Some call it generally *insania zoanthropica* and more specifically in Nebuchadnezzar’s case, *boanthropy*, the delusion that one is an ox. Walvoord quotes a Dr. Raymond Harrison of Britain, who in 1946 had a patient suffering from boanthropy, just as Nebuchadnezzar suffered. David Guzik

There is no corresponding record of this seven-year (**seven times**) period of insanity in the secular Historical records of Babylon – exactly as we would expect, considering the customs of that time. Nevertheless, Abydenus, a Greek Historian, wrote in 268 b.c. that Nebuchadnezzar was “possessed by some god” and that he had “immediately disappeared.” (Wood)

Some dismiss this account of Nebuchadnezzar’s madness as unhistorical, but there is no Historical record of His governmental activity between 582 b.c. and 575 b.c. This silence is deafening, especially when we keep in mind how Near Eastern leaders liked to egotistically trumpet their achievements – and hide their embarrassments.

** His judgment is a sobering reminder that we are all but a breath or a heart-beat from insanity or death but for God’s grace. It is He who sustains us moment by moment. **John 15:5 (AMP)** ⁵ I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do (are able to do) nothing.

The humbling of proud rulers is a common theme in Scripture (cf. Deut. 17:14–20; Ps. 92; Prov. 16:5–7, 12; Isa. 10:5–11:10; 14:4–23; Ezek. 17:23–24; 19:10–14; 28; 31:5–6, 12–13; Acts 12:23).
Tom Constable

***20 Daniel 4³⁴ “After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting, and His kingdom is eternal.**

***21 Daniel 4³⁵** All the people of the earth are nothing compared to Him. He does as He pleases among the angels of heaven and among the people of the earth. No one can stop Him or say to Him, ‘What do you mean by doing these things?’

He is the same Lord of heaven who foretold through His prophet Isaiah that I would come.

***21a Isaiah 46:9–11 (NASB95)⁹** “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me,¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;¹¹ **Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country.** Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it*, *surely* I will do it.

“The ability to recognize God is the fundamental difference between beasts and men. In any age, the glory of man is to recognize God and to take his place relative to the Sovereign of the universe.” Daniel Feinberg

***22 Daniel 4³⁶ “When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before.**

Ke ahn anah nebuchadnezzar mesabbah meromem mehaddar melek semay yaa
Ops sorry – I was caught up in His majesty.

***23 Daniel 4³⁷** “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All His acts are just and true, and He is able to humble the proud.”

***24 Philippians 2 (NIV84)⁵** Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,⁷ but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!**

***25 Philippians 2⁹** Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth

and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

***26 Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords**

The abiding lesson is plain: *God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble* (James 4:6 “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” NIV). There have been many who rise from humble origins to great glory, and then fall. Perhaps it is better to have never been raised up than to rise and then fall. Most, if not all, fall through pride; and a *proud look* is number one on the list of God’s most hated sins. **Proverbs 6:16–17 (NASB95)** ¹⁶ There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ Haughty eyes, a lying tongue... David Guzik

“Sanity begins with a realistic self-appraisal.” Baldwin