

Devoted Part 5 - "The Mad King" (8-22-21)

Introduction: Daniel 4 - the perspective shifts, we see things now from Neb. viewpoint . . .

Daniel 4:2 (ESV)

It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.

1) Warning (How do you measure success?)

Daniel 4:4-5 (ESV)

(4) I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. (5) I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me.

Beware: Don't assume that being at "ease" & "prospering" as a sign of success & God's favor!

Nebuchadnezzar is troubled by a dream of warning; this is a part of pattern of God's warning & pursuit . . .

- Daniel & his 3 friends stand as a witness against his kingdom & its excesses (Daniel 1)
- Dream of the image destroyed by the everlasting rock (Daniel 2)
- Fiery furnace - God's rescue of 3 who refuse to bow in homage to him (Daniel 3)

And now He has another dream - Where does he go first?

Daniel 4:6-8 (ESV)

(6) So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. (7) Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation. (8) At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods—and I told him the dream . . .

Note: He turned to God last, & then misunderstood him - associating God with the gods of his culture.

Beware: When faced with a big decision or a difficult circumstance - where do you turn first?

Beware: Don't allow the culture around you to define your image (view) of God!

The Tree Dream

- Powerful Tree - grows tall, fruitful, abundant, visible to the world provides food & shade for all flesh!
- Tree is cut down to the root by a watcher - branches, leaves, fruit scattered, beasts & birds flee!
- Stump remains - "He" becomes like a beast for 7 periods of time (probably years)

Daniel 4:17 (ESV)

The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'

Note: The purpose - that the living may know who really rules!

Beware: We have a real problem with God's judgement in our culture, but it's a truth we need to hear!

Let's consider for a moment Daniel's response to this warning . . .

Daniel 4:19 (ESV)

Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!

Note: Daniel speaks the truth in love - this is God's heart! Notice how few would share this with the King!

- Are we really willing to speak hard truth with deep compassion?
- Are we able to receive truth spoken in love? How do you handle challenging criticism?

Daniel shares the interpretation of the dream, & pleads the king to change course to stay God's judgment!

2) Judgement (Sin = Insanity & Death)

A whole year passes & Neb. stands on the palace roof surveying his kingdom and says . . .

Daniel 4:30-33 (ESV)

(30) . . . "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" (31) While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, (32) and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will." (33) Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws.

Note: Judgement - "until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will"

Romans 1:18, 21-23 (ESV)

(18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness **suppress the truth** . . . (21) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became **futile** in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were **darkened**. **(22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.**

Note: The culture **judges God** - just like Neb. who **suppressed the truth** & became darkened in his thinking

Romans 1:24-28 (ESV)

(24) Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves . . . (28) And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a **debased** mind to do what ought not to be done.

Note: God gives us over to all manner of evil - sexual immorality is described here and the list continues . . .

Romans 1:29-32 (ESV)

(29) They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, (30) slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, (31) foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (32) Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Note: The church **mis-represents God Pt 1** - Are we being loving - or just afraid? Are we hiding behind a false version of God's love to cover our own sin, selfishness, and pride?

The church mis-represents God Pt 2 - Don't assume a position of pride in your opposition to the culture . . .

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (ESV)

(9) Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Note: What's the turning point? The gospel, we are all in the same boat, but the mercy of God!

3) Mercy (Humility = Sanity & Success)

1 Peter 5:5b (ESV)

. . . "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Notes: God opposes the proud! (Here in 1 Peter 5:5 & also James 4:6 - both quote: Proverbs 3:34)

- **Opposes** or resists: means to "set himself in battle array against"
- **See:** Joshua and the Commander of the Lord's Army . . .

Joshua 5:13-15 (ESV)

(13) When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" (14) And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" (15) And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Notes: We need to see mercy contrasted against God's opposition! Don't assume you are on the "right" side!

Back to 1st Peter - we see the path to experiencing the mercy of God . . .

1 Peter 5:5b-6 (ESV)

(5) . . . **Clothe** yourselves, all of you, **with humility** toward one another, for "**God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.**" (6) **Humble yourselves**, therefore, **under the mighty hand of God** so that at the proper time he may exalt you

Note: Contrast the naked insanity of the beast, to being clothed and right minded - Humility is the key!

Conclusion: Here the call of God thru the voice of someone who knows what it means to be humbled . . .

Daniel 4:34-37 (ESV)

(34) At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to 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, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay 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 majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. (37) Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.