

# Daniel Chapter 4

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## Introduction:

1. There is very little in history, secular or sacred, to corroborate this chapter. Paul Butler devotes several pages in his commentary to possibilities. This event does not conflict with other reports, it is simply not reported by others.
2. “The form of this, as well as of the rest of the chapter, indicates that here is a Babylonian state paper, incorporated by Daniel into Holy Scripture.”  
*(from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press)*
3. The state letter was circulated in the Babylonian Empire long before Daniel included it in his book.
4. This report was written by Nebuchadnezzar after he was disciplined by heaven. God will humiliate him and reverse the arrogance of chapter three.



## NEBUCHADNEZZAR PRAISES GOD

(4:1.) King Nebuchadnezzar sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: "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.

- There is nothing pompous here. **King Nebuchadnezzar** writes in a straight-forward manner with a formal opening.
- He included **peace** in his greeting (vs. 1).
- The great polytheist now writes like a monotheist. The chapter reveals the events that have brought him to a humble position before God.
- **Nebuchadnezzar** admires God's dealings with him (vs. 3). He knows now that it is God's **kingdom** that is everlasting and not his own (vs. 3). **Nebuchadnezzar** had learned that the kingdoms of men were transient, but the **kingdom** of God was permanent and not subject to changes in dynasties (vs. 3).

## NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SECOND DREAM

(4.) "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living in my palace in comfort and prosperity. (5.) But one night I had a dream that frightened me; I saw visions that terrified me as I lay in my bed.

- **Paul Butler** says here:  
The mighty king was at rest (ease) which indicates more precisely that he was feeling secure and completely free from apprehension. His wars were over; his kingdom was tranquil and prosperous beyond his fondest dreams. He had built a magnificent city; gathered about him the wealth and the luxuries of the world and now he was preparing 'to while away the remainder of his life enjoying it all.'"
- **Nebuchadnezzar** tells of his second fearsome dream (vs. 5). **Burton Coffman** makes a potent point here:

God here enlightened the governing head of the whole Gentile world. In keeping with the respect and awe in which the whole pagan world looked upon dreams, God chose exactly that instrument of conveyance for the information that God determined should be imparted to Nebuchadnezzar. It is remembered that the dream was usually the method God chose when speaking to pagans, as for example in the case of Pharaoh (in the time of Joseph.)

**(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.**

- The king was still relying on the old advisers for the meaning of his dreams. They were still failing (vs. 7). Some commentaries suggest that they knew what the dream meant, but wouldn't tell the boss.

**(8.) At last Daniel came in before me, and I told him the dream. (He was named Belteshazzar 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.**

- After trying the rest, he tried the best. **Nebuchadnezzar** even used his Hebrew name **Daniel**, the name that bears the name of the God (*EL*) with whom he is coming to terms.
- Note that **Nebuchadnezzar** was still a polytheist during the time that his formal letter was describing.
- **Daniel** must have been chief-of-staff of the advisers. This agrees with 2:48. **Leupold** thinks a better translation would be "chief of the scholars." (vs. 9).
- **Nebuchadnezzar** knew that **gods** could somehow dwell with men, at least with **Daniel**.

(10.) "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.

- **Nebuchadnezzar** had seen an impressively large **tree**. It was in **the middle of the earth**, and so **tall** that it reached to the **heavens** (vs. 11). This **tree** could be seen from everywhere (vs. 11). It was fruitful and healthy. It served the **animals** and the **birds**, in fact, everyone (vs. 12). Life on earth was grand as long as **the tree** was standing.

(13.) "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.

- The **messenger** is probably a term for angel. The life-giving **tree** is to be cut down (vs. 14), its **branches** cut away. The creatures that live on it and under it will be scattered.

(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.

- **The stump** is to be saved and even **banded** because the **root** does have a future (vs. 15). The figure of the tree is dropped in favor of the direct meaning. Nebuchadnezzar is to be turned out **with the wild animals** (vs. 15).
- Nebuchadnezzar is to bunk **with the wild animals** and forage with them for **seven periods of time** (vs. 16). He is to have **the**

**mind of a wild animal** (vs. 16). It is most reasonable that seven years are meant.

(17.) For this has been decreed by the messengers; it is commanded by the holy ones, so that everyone may know that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world. He gives them to anyone He chooses -- even to the lowliest of people."

(18.) "'Belteshazzar, 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.'

- The punishment is **decreed by the messengers** (vs. 17) because of the arrogance of **Nebuchadnezzar**. The **holy ones** in heaven demanded the braggart's hide.
- *The Message* paraphrase says of God:  
     **"He arranges kingdom affairs however he wishes, and makes leaders out of losers."**
- The regular dream diviners have flunked their test again and **Nebuchadnezzar** wants the straight story from **Belteshazzar** (Daniel) who seems to have the **spirit** of the **gods** inside of him (vs. 18).

## **DANIEL INTERPRETS THE SECOND DREAM**

(19.) "Upon hearing this, Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar.) was overcome for a time, frightened by the meaning of the dream. Then the king said to him, 'Belteshazzar, don't be alarmed by the dream and what it means.' "Belteshazzar replied, 'I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies, my lord, and not to you! (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.

- Telling the most powerful man on the planet (and your employer) that he's going to be fired is not the most enticing work that a prophet could do. **Daniel** was **frightened**. (vs. 19).
- Nebuchadnezzar noted Daniel's personal upset over the dream (vs. 19). *The Message Bible* reads:

**"I wish this dream were about your enemies and its interpretation for your foes."** (vs. 19).

- **Daniel** did not say, "Haven't I been telling you . . ." Perhaps the blow was softened some as **Daniel** recited the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar in the dream picture (vs. 20).
- **Daniel** was a man who would not violate his conscience at the **king's** command; but neither would he be disloyal to the **king** when it was not a matter of conscience.
- The **tree** was **Nebuchadnezzar** (vs. 22). This figure of speech is used other places in Scripture. The Lord uses it when speaking to Ezekiel:

**"Son of man, give this message to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and all his hordes: "To whom would you compare your greatness? You are like mighty Assyria, which was once like a cedar of Lebanon, with beautiful branches that cast deep forest shade and with its top high among the clouds." (Ezekiel 31:2-3 NLT)**

- "Ancient Semites were fond of hyperbole and used it without its being misunderstood by anyone. Nebuchadnezzar's realm, in fact, was smaller geographically than either the Persian or the Greek or the Roman empire. It was, however, very large and included most of the well known parts of the world."

(from *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press)

**(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." (24.) "This is what the dream means, Your Majesty, and what the Most High has declared will happen to my lord the king.

- The falling **tree** would make a crash. It would be damaged by the fall and its branches lopped off. Only the **stump** was to remain. God still had a purpose for part of the **tree**.

**(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.**

- **Paul Butler** puts the dream in perspective when he writes:  
The most important part of Daniel's revelation is the focus or purpose of the king's insanity. The intent of the matter is to give mankind, specifically this heathen king and his subjects, and the captive covenant people of God, a proof that the fortunes of kings and empires are in the hand of Jehovah - that His providence perpetually interposes in the affairs of men, distributing thrones and empires, always for the good of the faithful, but according to His will.

**"Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He pleased" Psalm 115:3; "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all. " Psalm 103:9.**

**(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.'**

- **Nebuchadnezzar** had an option. He could repent of his **sins**, put righteousness in his life and show **mercy to the poor**. This might let him continue with the good life he was presently enjoying.
- The predicted punishment would have been conditional **if Nebuchadnezzar** had repented. This repentance included helping **the poor**, some of whom were Hebrews held in Babylon.

### NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S HUMILIATION

(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 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.'

- The Lord allowed a year for **Nebuchadnezzar** to repent and clean up his royal act. When he went on one of his bragging jags (vs. 30), heaven had heard enough and the axe fell. He may have been giving some visiting royalty a tour at the time.
- **Babylon** was a city long before **Nebuchadnezzar**, but he did enhance it greatly. In that sense, he **built** it.

(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.' (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.



- **Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom** was taken from him. His social world was gone. Now it's **grass** instead of gourmet.
- **Nebuchadnezzar** was a great hunter as can be seen from some of the art work of his empire. When he was sent to the fields (vs. 32), he did not join the lions to conquer other animals, but joined the lowly cows to forage for his food.
- His body **drenched with the dew** (vs. 33) may have indicated a lack of clothing.
- **Nebuchadnezzar's hair** would grow long (vs. 33) and there were no manicures for this former potentate.
- This is a known disorder. More can be learned at the U.S. Government website:  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23696338/>



## NEBUCHADNEZZAR RESTORED

(34.) "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. (35.) 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?'

- The seven years passed. **Nebuchadnezzar's sanity** returned and he knew who was in charge of earth. Not him. He **looked up** to God and not down for grass.
- God is **praised and worshiped** (vs. 34).
- God's power and dominion are acknowledged (vs. 34).
- **Nebuchadnezzar** understands armies and he knows that God is commander-in-chief in heaven (vs. 35). **Nebuchadnezzar** knows that God is beyond questioning (vs. 35).

(36.) "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. (37.) "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."

- Daniel and the other advisers kept the Empire together because **Nebuchadnezzar** still had a kingdom after emerging from his grazing period.
- *The Message Bible* is informative here:
 

**And that's why I'm singing – I, Nebuchadnezzar – singing and praising the King of Heaven: “Everything he does is right, and he does it the right way. He knows how to turn a proud person into a humble man or woman.”**
- **Graham Scrobbie** writes :
 

“Here we take leave of Nebuchadnezzar. How does he bid us farewell? Not only as a sane man but as a converted man, The last thing related of him is the

humble public confession which he made, and the noble testimony to the true God, which, for the benefit of all men, he delivered in the edict contained in this chapter.

With the restoration of his reason and his kingdom came the regeneration of his soul. There is nothing in this Book more sublime than this testimony of Nebuchadnezzar. To him light came at eventide, and he turned his throne into a pulpit, and his State papers into sermons, that his erring subjects might learn the wonders of Omnipotence, be led to honor the Most High, and have peace multiplied unto them through His Name.

Nebuchadnezzar's testimony is the political message for all earth's kings and rulers until Christ shall come - "GOD RULES." This is the king's final message to the world.

"Those that walk in pride He is able to abase."

- **Burton Coffman** summarizes the outcome of the chapter:  
The magnificent change wrought in Nebuchadnezzar as a result of his experiences as recorded in Daniel constituted God's bulwark against any attempted annihilation of the Chosen Race during their Babylonian captivity. It is the relationship that Nebuchadnezzar sustained toward Israel during the fateful years of their captivity that accounts for all of the wonders recorded in Babylon.