



Silverdale Baptist Church

STAND. A STUDY IN DANIEL • STAND DOWN • DANIEL 4 • 6/20-21/2020

MAIN POINT

People may rule on earth, but God rules the universe. We are not God.

Introduction

Do you enjoy hearing people tell you about what God is doing or has done in their lives?

Outside of your own, whose testimony has impacted you the most? Why?

You are about to study the personal testimony of a pagan Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 4 is his own testimony, written almost 2600 years ago. This ancient document tells the story of one man's miraculous encounter with the God who rules the universe.

Understand

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 4:1-3

What does Nebuchadnezzar tell you this chapter is about?

How does Nebuchadnezzar describe God?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 4:4-18

This is Nebuchadnezzar's second dream. How does he describe what he saw?

How did the king describe the tree in his dream?

Who is speaking in the king's dream?

What does the watcher or holy one order done to the tree?

In verse 15 the description changes from a tree to a man. What happens to the man, and for how long?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 4:19-27

Daniel 1:1-18 is written in the first person. Nebuchadnezzar is describing first-hand what he saw and heard. In verses, 19-33 are written in the third person with someone telling his story for him. Nebuchadnezzar picks up the narrative again in verse 34 and finishes his story.

How does Daniel interpret the dream?

What is the point of the dream?

What is Daniel's advice to the king?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 4:28-33

When does this passage occur in relation to Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

Comparing verse 27 and verse 28, why would God wait 12 months to fulfill the dream?

What does the king say about his kingdom? Immediately, what happens?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 4:34-37

Daniel 4:34-37, written in the first person, is Nebuchadnezzar's personal account of what happened.

How does the king describe God in these verses?

What are the miracles you see in this chapter? How do you see God at work in Daniel 4?

Apply

Biblical application always involves two things: belief and behavior. The Bible is always calling us to believe the truth and modify our behavior accordingly. When you read and study the Bible, you should always ask yourself:

What is the truth to believe?

What is action to take?

From what you have studied in Daniel 4:

What should we believe about God?

What should we recognize about ourselves?

What is God telling you to do differently this week?

Nebuchadnezzar was acting as the god of his own destiny. In what ways do we act like God in our lives?

What would repentance look like in your life this week?

How can you give God the glory this week for some area of your life?

Prayer

Father, may Your name be glorified in our lives and not our own. As the people around us watch our lives, may they see Your hand at work. Keep our hearts tender toward You and our lives glorifying You.

Commentary

| DANIEL 4

4:1–3 These verses come at the end of chap. 3 in Aramaic rather than at the beginning of chap. 4. As an introduction to chap. 4, the miracles and wonders include the dream in chap. 4 and its aftermath.

4:4–36 The text does not indicate when King Nebuchadnezzar had his dream, nor does it matter for the interpretation of the passage, but it was likely some ten years before the end of his forty-three-year reign. Then God in his grace allowed him one year to repent followed by seven years of madness. Once he came to his senses, Nebuchadnezzar lived another two or three years before dying in 562 BC. No doubt, the king did indeed write the letter. But it was Daniel, as author of the book, who most likely wrote the section that speaks of the king in the third person (vv. 28–33) and records his time of mental illness. The chapter is structured in three sections: (1) a prologue in which the king praises the true God (vv. 1–3); (2) a narrative body (vv. 4–34a) that recounts the king's dream, Daniel's interpretation, the king's illness and repentance; and (3) a

concluding epilogue in which the king declares the sovereignty of the true God (vv. 34b–37). The story covers a period of eight years, beginning with the dream, the year afterwards, and then the king's seven-year period of mental illness.

4:7 Nebuchadnezzar called the four classes of wise men to interpret his dream. Unlike the dream of Dn 2, the king told them the dream. But similarly they could not make its interpretation known to him.

4:8 The king recognized that a spirit of the holy gods was in Daniel. The CSB translation reflects the fact that Nebuchadnezzar persisted in believing in a plurality of gods. But since he had recently been chastened (3:24–30) and knew that God alone could reveal what was hidden (2:47), it is possibly correct to translate the phrase alternatively as “a spirit of the Holy God is in him.” Beginning in this verse and throughout the chapter, Daniel is most frequently called by his Babylonian name Belteshazzar, seemingly because this section is written from the perspective of the Babylonian king, not a Hebrew exile.

4:10–12 The king's dream was of a tree whose top reached to the sky. A similar expression was used in Gn 11:4 for the tower of the city of Babylon, the top of which was to reach “the sky.” The tree provided food and shelter for all the creatures of the earth.

4:13 The watcher, a holy one, was an angel.

4:14–17 The fact that the stump with its roots would remain in the ground indicated the continuation of life. The band of iron and bronze pointed to the protection of the stump. The tree plainly represents a man (the king) because the angel declared that his mind would be changed from that of a human to an animal for seven periods of time or for seven years.

4:19 As a loyal servant of the king, Daniel was alarmed about the dreadful discipline that would befall the king.

4:22–25 The tree represented King Nebuchadnezzar, who would be struck with a mental illness that would cause him to live outdoors with the wild animals (or animals of the field) for seven years until he repented of his pride and acknowledged that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms.

4:26 This is the only place in the OT where Heaven is used as a euphemism for God.

4:27 Daniel advised the king to repent (doing what is right) with the hope that this might prevent God's discipline.

4:29–30 Nebuchadnezzar had no less than three palaces in the city of Babylon. He was walking on the roof of one of them when he was overcome with the glory of the city and was consumed with pride. In his exclamation Is this not Babylon the Great that I (lit “I, myself”) have built ... by my vast power and for my majestic glory?, Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed himself the source of majesty. He failed to give God the credit and glory as the ultimate giver of all good gifts. Many years later, the apostle Paul scolded the Corinthians for their pride by asking, “What do you have that you didn’t receive? If, in fact, you did receive it, why do you boast as if you hadn’t received it?” (1Co 4:7).

4:31 Having delayed the execution of his sentence against Nebuchadnezzar for a year (v. 28), God disciplined him the instant he became fully consumed with his pride, even while the words were still in the king’s mouth.

4:33 Nebuchadnezzar may have suffered from boanthropy, a rare mental illness in which people believe they are actually cattle. One modern case of boanthropy resulted in the patient growing long matted hair and thickened fingernails, much like Nebuchadnezzar, whose hair grew like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws. Critics contend that secular history has no record of Nebuchadnezzar’s mental illness. However, it is questionable as to whether an ancient Near Eastern despot would mention his bout with insanity in official court records which were typically devoted to highlighting his accomplishments. Silence about an embarrassing episode is understandable. Moreover, the church historian Eusebius cited Abydenus, a third-century BC Greek historian who referred to a time when Nebuchadnezzar was “possessed by a god.” Also, the third-century BC historian Berosus possibly referred to these events when he spoke of an illness that befell Nebuchadnezzar just before his death.

4:34 Boanthropy does not render its victims entirely unable to reason or understand what has happened to them, so it was possible for the king to realize that his own pride had caused his insanity. Realizing the cause of his state, Nebuchadnezzar repented of his pride and acknowledged the Most High God. His sanity returned to him instantly, a signal that God had lifted his sentence.

4:34–36 As an epilogue to the narrative, Nebuchadnezzar glorified God, using words that describe his realization that God’s dominion is an everlasting dominion and also aptly summarize the theme of the book of Daniel.

4:37 The last sentence of the chapter summarizes the message of the story—that God is able to humble those who walk in pride. Some disbelieve that the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar actually came to a saving knowledge of the true God, but possibly he did.[1]

[1] Michael Rydelnik, "Daniel," in CSB Study Bible: Notes, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1331–1333.