

- I. Verses 1-3 of Daniel 4 opens with a prefatory hymn of praise from Nebuchadnezzar.
  - A. The *Interpretation Commentary for Preaching and Teaching* says this about the hymns of praise to the God of Israel by foreign kings,
    - 1. The proposal here is that these little benedictions uttered by foreign kings can best be understood when taken together as a group: Daniel's prayer (2:20–23); Nebuchadnezzar's prayers (2:47; 3:28–29; 4:1–3, 34–35); and the prayer of King Darius (6:25–27). When one looks at these texts all together one is struck that the great hymnic tradition of Israel, particularly as it is expressed in the so-called wisdom psalms such as Psalms 1 and 112, has been placed in the mouths of non-traditional speakers. (In the case of Daniel 2:20–33, the prayer is uttered in the hope that a foreign king might experience God's power.) The prayers focus the point of the narratives roughly as follows: God's decision to allow evil its hour of ascendancy will be vindicated before the eyes of all the nations when good ultimately triumphs; this vindication will come about because of God's own transcendent power and endurance; to this fact the evil powers of the world will themselves be obliged at last to testify (Towner, "The Poetic Passages of Daniel 1–6," pp.2 322–23).
- Towner, W. S. (1984). *Daniel* (p. 61). Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press.
- II. Nebuchadnezzar retells his troubling dream to Daniel. (4:4-18)
- III. Daniel is the bearer of bad news as he interprets the king's dream. (4:19-27)
  - A. We ought to recognize here that Daniel is not pictured as a main character in the scene of chapter 4. Towner points this out here, "The real focus and center of this story is Nebuchadnezzar himself; here even Daniel lacks personality and character and functions merely as a

conduit for the message of the Most High. In this sense, it can be said that the real protagonists of this narrative are two sovereigns, one in heaven and one in Babylon."

Towner, W. S. (1984). *Daniel* (p. 59). Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press.

- B. Therefore, we can see chapter 4 as a sort of "tale of two sovereigns." Particularly where the sovereign of heaven makes known His supreme sovereignty over all things and His unlimited freedom to do as he pleases with the kings and kingdoms of men.
- C. Since Daniel is structured as a Chiasm (a form of Hebrew poetry) with chapter 7 as the thesis or main point of the whole book, this means that everything before and after that thesis is supporting points.
  - 1. Here in chapter 4 then we see something that is recapitulated in chapter 7 this is actually in some sense true of most of the historical portion of Daniel (chapters 1-6). The confrontation of the sovereign in Babylon by the greater Sovereign in heaven is recapitulated in chapter 7 as the Father and the Son will break the dominion of the antichrist and establish their own over the earth inviting the saints to become participants with them.
  - 2. Isaiah and Ezekiel contain examples of a similar kind of recapitulation where judgment is pronounced on the king of Babylon, the king of Assyria, or the King of Tyre (Isa 10, Isa 14, Ezek 28) who serve as types of the antichrist to come at the end of the age.
- IV. The king's dream comes to pass. (4:28-33)
- V. The king is restored to his right mind as he praises the God of Israel (4:34-37).

- A. "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; 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?” (Dan 4:34b-35 ESV).

- B. The scene of Daniel 4 drives home the point of God’s sovereignty.
  - 1. God’s sovereignty is the attribute of His being that describes His absolute unlimited freedom to do whatever He pleases to do. Because He knows all things and has all power, there is nothing that limits or prohibits Him from doing whatever He pleases.
  - 2. He may have given man a measure of freedom, but it is precisely that- measured. There cannot be two unlimitedly free beings in existence since two completely free wills will ultimately collide. God has given man a measure of freedom and allows the consequences of man’s freedom to persist for a time. Yet He will ultimately establish His reign the weight of which will crush all obstinacy to His leadership and all human pride- just as we see with Nebuchadnezzar.