

Daniel Lesson 4 Lecture

Daniel 4

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18

- In Warren Wiersbe's Daniel commentary, he notes that some scholars believe that 20 or 30 years may have elapsed from the episode of the fiery furnace in Daniel 3 to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 4.
 - Nebuchadnezzar was enjoying a period of peace and security at the end of his reign and had embarked on extravagant building projects, after defeating all his enemies.
- You certainly picked up on the key theme of Daniel 4: Nebuchadnezzar's humbling due to the sin of pride. This theme will be repeated in Daniel 5 with King Belshazzar.
 - Specific to Nebuchadnezzar, inscriptions which have survived show his immense pride in building temples and fortifying the city of Babylon.
 - One such inscription compares Babylon to a spreading tree. Compare this to the tree of Daniel 4:11.
 - Mesopotamian temple towers were often described with the phrase "its top touched the sky." Compare this also to the tree of Daniel 4:11.
- In Daniel 2, associated with Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, we were introduced to the truth that there is only one everlasting kingdom, which will be set up by God.
 - In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. Daniel 2:44-45
- In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar confesses this truth again after the restoration of his sanity. In this instance, the confession is formed by the opening proclamation of Daniel 4 and his final praises.
 - His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation. Daniel 4:3

- His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. Daniel 4:34
- These kingdom and dominion truths will be repeated in Daniel 6 and 7.
- As you have discovered in Daniel 4, once again Daniel is called to interpret the king's dream after his other wise men have failed. This pattern will be repeated in Daniel 5.
- We should be asking ourselves at this point in our study why Nebuchadnezzar never calls on Daniel first when he has a dream requiring interpretation. Could it be that he fears the answer he'll receive?
 - Looking back at Daniel 2, you'll recall that Daniel's dream interpretation tells Nebuchadnezzar that, while his kingdom is great and mighty, it won't last forever, suggesting what we already know from history: the Medes conquering Babylon.
 - In Daniel 4, Daniel's dream interpretation tells the king that he will be brought low for a period of 7 times. During that period, he will basically be insane. What king would want to hear such a pronouncement?
 - It's clear after reading Daniel 2 and 3 that Nebuchadnezzar still considers Yahweh just part of the Babylonian god pantheon.
 - Also, Nebuchadnezzar cannot break away from the traditional Babylonian method of interpreting dreams.
 - Daniel, for all his ability to interpret dreams and be 10 times wiser than all the wise men, is not consistently recognized for his God-given ability. Notice Nebuchadnezzar's language in Daniel 4:8b:
 - He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.
- What can we say about the dream in Daniel 4?
 - The main feature is an enormous, tall tree "in the middle of the land."
 - It touched the sky and was visible all over the earth.
 - It provided shade, food, and shelter.
 - This is a cosmic tree, and the king is personified as a life-giver, in the form of the tree.

- Trees are often used in Scripture to symbolize political authority, such as kings, nations, and empires.
 - Listen to the language of Zechariah 11:1-2, which foretells the invasion of the Holy Land by the Romans.
 - Open your doors, Lebanon, so that fire may devour your cedars! ² Wail, you juniper, for the cedar has fallen; the stately trees are ruined! Wail, oaks of Bashan; the dense forest has been cut down!
 - Shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus makes the following statement in Luke 23:31, “For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry? “
 - In this Luke passage, Jesus is saying that Israel was like a green tree during the years of Jesus’ ministry. But Israel rejected Jesus, and became like a dry tree. A dry tree will be cut down or eventually die.
 - To be clear, the tree of life in Genesis and Revelation does not symbolize a king, empire, or nation. Rather, it is the symbol of eternal life.
- As the dream progresses, a messenger/watchman/angel orders that the tree be cut down. However, the tree is not completely destroyed. Its stump and roots remain. The binding of the tree’s remains with iron and bronze may protect what remains, although such interpretation is open to speculation.
 - Starting in verse 15b, we see the personification of the king as the tree clearly. His mind is changed from that of a man to that of an animal, until 7 times pass by for him.
 - Warren Wiersbe’s comment is, “Men and women are made in the image of God, but when they leave God out of their lives and resist His will, they can descend to the level of animals.”
 - The “seven times” is generally understood to be 7 years. Remember that in the Bible, the number 7 signifies completeness.
 - Lastly, the purpose of this is clearly stated in Daniel 4:17:
 - The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.

- After Daniel interprets the dream, he encourages the king to mend his ways and says, “It may be that then your prosperity will continue.” Daniel 4:27
- Here we see the opportunity (not accepted) for the king to repent of his overbearing ways and thus, avoid the coming catastrophe.
- Alas, the dream is fulfilled exactly as Daniel interpreted it.
- God could have chosen to destroy Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon at this point. However, he still had prophecy to fulfill for his people and plans for Daniel to execute.
 - God always fulfills his promises, and he stated in Jeremiah 25:11 that the people of Judah would be in exile for 70 years. Everything always happens according to God’s timing.
- Did this really happen to Nebuchadnezzar?
 - There is nothing in Babylonian literature which documents a period of insanity for Nebuchadnezzar, followed by a miraculous recovery.
 - Obviously, the government would have been thrown into a difficult state by the king’s insanity and would not have wanted word of this to be broadcast to his enemies.
 - It is to Nebuchadnezzar’s credit that he created a stable of able administrators throughout the empire who were able to keep the empire together while the king was insane.
- What happened to Nebuchadnezzar?
 - He suffered an acute onset of insanity accompanied by the delusion that he was an animal.
 - The clinical definition of this is lycanthropy (wolf-like behavior) or boanthropy (cow-like behavior), also known as Species Dysphoria. It is a rare, but real mental disorder. The malady tends to present itself later in life and can last from months to years, with a spontaneous recovery.
 - Today, this disorder is treated with anti-psychotic medications and mood stabilizers. Obviously, those did not exist in Nebuchadnezzar’s day.

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1. Read Daniel 4:1-3.
 - a. Whom is Nebuchadnezzar praising and why?

 - b. What is the form of the praise and to whom is it addressed?

2. How do you interpret “the Most High God?”

3. From Daniel 4:4-9,
 - a. What has Nebuchadnezzar’s life been up to this point?

 - b. What has happened to Nebuchadnezzar and how does he react?

 - c. What does Nebuchadnezzar do first?

 - d. Which people were called into Nebuchadnezzar’s presence?

 - e. Would Daniel have been included in this group? Why?

- f. Was the larger group successful in the task Nebuchadnezzar placed before them?
 - g. How is Nebuchadnezzar's task in Daniel 4 different than that of Daniel 2?
 - h. How is Daniel described?
 - i. Does verse 8 change your opinion of the words "the Most High God?"
4. According to Daniel 4:10-18:
- a. Describe Nebuchadnezzar's dream from verses 10-12.
 - b. What does the watcher (some versions use holy one or messenger) decree?

- c. According to verse 17, why has this decree been made?
 - d. Whom do you think the tree represents?
 - e. What do you think the watcher/messenger/holy one is?
5. Read Daniel 4:19.
- a. Why do you think Daniel was terrified/alarmed?
 - b. What words of compassion does Daniel utter?
6. Read Daniel 4: 19-27.
- a. How does Daniel interpret the dream?
 - b. How long will Nebuchadnezzar be in this condition?
 - c. Is the condition permanent?

- d. Based on these verses, do you think Nebuchadnezzar will have any awareness of his situation after he is “cut down/brought low?”
 - e. What advice does Daniel give Nebuchadnezzar?
 - f. What are the implications about Nebuchadnezzar’s rule from this advice?
7. Based on Daniel 4: 28-30,
- a. Did Nebuchadnezzar take Daniel’s advice?
 - b. What sin of Nebuchadnezzar do you see in these verses?
8. According to Daniel 4: 31-33:
- a. What happens next to Nebuchadnezzar?
 - b. How immediate are the events?
 - c. Who is the speaker in verse 31?
 - d. What does he decree?
 - e. When will Nebuchadnezzar be restored?

9. Read Daniel 4: 34-37.

- a. What is meant by “at the end of that time” in verse 34?
- b. What does Nebuchadnezzar’s action in verse 34 signify?
- c. What words does Nebuchadnezzar use to describe God Most High?
- d. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom?
- e. From verse 37, what does Nebuchadnezzar imply was the root cause of what happened to him?

10. Read Proverbs 6:17-19 and James 4:6. How do these passages relate to Daniel 4?

11. How does 2 Peter 3:9 relate to Daniel 4?

12. What does Daniel 4 say about God keeping his promises?

13. If the exiled Israelites in Babylon heard about Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and the subsequent events, how would they have reacted?

14. What does Genesis 11 teach us about pride?

15. Read Psalm 73:3-12. What thoughts does the psalmist have about human pride?

16. Paul speaks about Jesus and pride in Philippians 2:6-11. What lessons are here?

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1. Read Daniel 4:1-3.
 - a. Whom is Nebuchadnezzar praising and why?
 - The Most High God
 - The miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has done. His kingdom is eternal, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.
 - b. What is the form of the praise and to whom is it addressed?
 - It is a proclamation.
 - It is addressed to the nations and people of every language, who live in all the earth.
2. How do you interpret “the Most High God?”
 - God
3. From Daniel 4:4-9,
 - a. What has Nebuchadnezzar’s life been up to this point?
 - Nebuchadnezzar was at home in his palace, contented and prosperous.
 - b. What has happened to Nebuchadnezzar and how does he react?
 - Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which made him afraid. The images and visions terrified him.
 - c. What does Nebuchadnezzar do first?
 - He commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before him to interpret the dream.
 - d. Which people were called into Nebuchadnezzar’s presence?
 - Magicians, enchanter, astrologers, and diviners
 - e. Would Daniel have been included in this group? Why?
 - Yes. Daniel oversaw all the wise men of Babylon. He was ten times wiser than all the other wise men and God had granted him the ability to interpret dreams and visions of all kinds.

- f. Was the larger group successful in the task Nebuchadnezzar placed before them?
 - No
 - g. How is Nebuchadnezzar's task in Daniel 4 different than that of Daniel 2?
 - In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar had not told the dream to his wise men or to Daniel. In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar does relay the dream to the wise men and to Daniel.
 - h. How is Daniel described?
 - He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him. Daniel 4:8
 - Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Daniel 4:9
 - i. Does verse 8 change your opinion of the words "the Most High God?"
 - No. The proclamation of Daniel 4:1-3 and later, Daniel 4:37, are given after the dream interpretation and the subsequent fulfillment of the dream.
4. According to Daniel 4:10-18:
- a. Describe Nebuchadnezzar's dream from verses 10-12.
 - These are the visions I saw while lying in bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. ¹¹ The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. ¹² Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.
 - b. What does the watcher (some versions use holy one or messenger) decree?
 - He called in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. "Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him. Daniel 4:14-16
 - ¹⁷ "The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all

kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.’ Daniel 4:14-17

- c. According to verse 17, why has this decree been made?
 - The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.
 - d. Whom do you think the tree represents?
 - Nebuchadnezzar
 - e. What do you think the watcher/messenger/holy one is?
 - An angel
5. Read Daniel 4:19.
- a. Why do you think Daniel was terrified/alarmed?
 - Daniel realized the meaning of the dream. Out of compassion, he did not want to tell Nebuchadnezzar what was about to befall him.
 - b. What words of compassion does Daniel utter?
 - Belshazzar answered, “My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries! Daniel 4:19
6. Read Daniel 4: 19-27.
- a. How does Daniel interpret the dream?
 - The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar, who was great and strong and whose dominion extended to the far parts of the earth.
 - The tree will be cut down, leaving only the stump, bound with iron and bronze.
 - God has decreed that the king will be driven away from his people and kingdom. He will live with the wild animals, eat grass like an ox, and will be drenched with dew.
 - b. How long will Nebuchadnezzar be in this condition?
 - Seven times will pass by Nebuchadnezzar.

- c. Is the condition permanent?
 - No. When Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that God is sovereign over the earth's kingdoms, gives them to anyone he wishes, and that Heaven rules, then Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom will be restored to him.
 - d. Based on these verses, do you think Nebuchadnezzar will have any awareness of his situation after he is "cut down/brought low?"
 - He would have to have some kind of awareness of his situation at the end of "seven times", to raise his head to heaven and acknowledge God's sovereignty and power.
 - e. What advice does Daniel give Nebuchadnezzar?
 - Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue. Daniel 4:27
 - f. What are the implications about Nebuchadnezzar's rule from this advice?
 - Certainly, his rule has been prosperous. However, Nebuchadnezzar's rule has not been characterized by justice and kindness. He has been sinful and has oppressed his subjects.
7. Based on Daniel 4: 28-30,
- a. Did Nebuchadnezzar take Daniel's advice?
 - No. 12 months later, Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of his royal palace, lauding his power, glory, and beautiful residence.
 - b. What sin of Nebuchadnezzar do you see in these verses?
 - Pride
8. According to Daniel 4: 31-33:
- a. What happens next to Nebuchadnezzar?
 - Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you.³² You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes." Daniel 4:31-32

- b. How immediate are the events?
 - **Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled.** He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird. Daniel 4:33
 - c. Who is the speaker in verse 31?
 - God
 - d. What does he decree?
 - Your royal authority has been taken from you. ³² You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox.
 - e. When will Nebuchadnezzar be restored?
 - Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. Daniel 4:32
9. Read Daniel 4: 34-37.
- a. What is meant by “at the end of that time” in verse 34?
 - At the end of “seven times”
 - b. What does Nebuchadnezzar’s action in verse 34 signify?
 - Enough of Nebuchadnezzar’s sanity returned that he was able to lift his eyes to Heaven and acknowledge the power and sovereignty of God.
 - c. What words does Nebuchadnezzar use to describe God Most High?
 - He lives forever.
 - His dominion is eternal.
 - His kingdom endures from generation to generation.
 - All the peoples of earth are regarded as nothing.
 - He does what he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of earth.
 - No one can stay his hand or ask him, “What have you done?”

- d. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom?
 - At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Daniel 4:36
 - e. From verse 37, what does Nebuchadnezzar imply was the root cause of what happened to him?
 - His pride
10. Read Proverbs 6:17-19 and James 4:6. How do these passages relate to Daniel 4?
- haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community. Proverbs 6:17-19
 - But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble. James 4:6
 - Both passages deal with the same topic as Daniel 4: the sin of pride.
11. How does 2 Peter 3:9 relate to Daniel 4?
- The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9
 - Daniel advised Nebuchadnezzar to use justice and kindness in his rule, particularly towards the oppressed. Then God gave Nebuchadnezzar a window of 12 months in which to do so. When the king continued to praise himself and express his sinful pride, God brought him low by fulfilling the dream.
12. What does Daniel 4 say about God keeping his promises?
- God always keeps his promises.
13. If the exiled Israelites in Babylon heard about Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and the subsequent events, how would they have reacted?
- Fearful about who would rule the kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar’s absence.
 - Reminded of the power of God.
 - Reminded that even the mighty can be brought low by God.
 - Not sure what would happen when Nebuchadnezzar was restored to power.
 - Reminded of the consequences of the sin of pride.

14. What does Genesis 11 teach us about pride?

- Genesis 11 is the story about the tower of Babel. God destroyed the tower and scattered the people because they wanted to build a tower that reached to heaven, and they wanted to make a name for themselves. This was the sin of pride.

15. Read Psalm 73:3-12. What thoughts does the psalmist have about human pride?

- Arrogant
- Prosperous
- Wicked
- No struggles; free of care
- Healthy and strong bodies
- Free from common human burdens and human ills
- Pride is their necklace
- Violent
- Callous hearts
- Evil imaginations
- Scoff and speak with malice
- Threaten oppression
- Mouths that lay claim to heaven but tongues that possess the earth
- People turn to them and drink whatever they offer
- Don't expect God to know about them or anything else

16. Paul speaks about Jesus and pride in Philippians 2:6-11. What lessons are here?

- Jesus was the very nature of God, but he did not consider equality with God as something he should use to his own advantage.
- Jesus took on the form of a servant.
- Jesus became human.
- Jesus humbled himself.
- Jesus was obedient, even to death on the cross.
- Therefore, God exalted Jesus to the highest place and gave him a name that is above every name. At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow (in heaven, on earth, and under the earth) and every tongue will acknowledge Jesus is Lord.
- Jesus clothed himself in humility.