

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel 4:1-18 | Session 9 | B.C. 570

The historical view of Daniel is found in chapters 1-7. Chapters 8-12 contain God's future prophetic view.

- Chapter 1 was an introduction to Daniel's life which spanned from his captivity and royal service in Babylon at the age of fifteen years old, to his final service under Cyrus the king of Persia when he was around 80 years old.
- Chapter 2 was the revealing of The Times of the Gentiles.
- In chapter 3, God miraculously rescued Daniel's three friends from the fiery furnace in which they were cast because they would not compromise their faith.
- In chapter 4 Daniel is going to interpret another of Nebuchadnezzar's God-induced dreams.

Daniel was about 17 years old when he interpreted the king's first dream of the great image (chapter 2). He was zealous for the Lord at a young age. In chapter 4 three decades have passed¹ and Daniel is about 50 years old. Oftentimes, men especially, have a tendency to throttle back their faith, and it may be due to many things, like hobbies, family, or jobs. Men are to be the spiritual leaders in their homes and it is up to all men of God to keep the fire of faith burning both for themselves and their families. This is even more significant if the man is a father. It is his charge to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The mother, of course, takes part in this too, but the responsibility falls on the father. When a man believes in God, it is likely his family will follow him. The same is true when a man stops serving the Lord. The Philippian jailer brought his family along with him in his newly found faith when he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. It appears his entire family followed him in his faith in Christ (Philippians 16:30-32). The impact a Christian man has on his family is tremendously impactful, for good or for bad.

While Daniel was not a husband, or a father, nonetheless in his middle age, he kept going, and as we will see in coming chapters, he continued to serve the Lord well into his 80s and maybe beyond!

A great image as we recall was the subject of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter two: The various parts of the body of the great statue he saw represented the various Gentile empires that would *trample down* Israel known as The Times of the Gentiles. Daniel interpreted the meaning of the great image and stated that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. We said *he was a type* of "the final ruler" (the Antichrist) during *The Times of the Gentiles*. As the **head**, Nebuchadnezzar was representative of all the Gentile nations ruling after him during *The Times of the Gentiles*.

¹ This is according to the dating used in the Scofield Study Bible (which I take to be reliable), although we should take care not to be dogmatic about dates in the Bible.

If we were to summarize this entire book, we might say the purpose is *to cause rulers to know that the “Most High” is sovereign over the kingdoms of men*. If only politicians and rulers would acknowledge Him today!

It is apparent by what we have seen thus far of Nebuchadnezzar that he has not yet humbled himself or acknowledged God’s sovereign authority over his kingdom. God, therefore, attempts to get his attention (again) through a dream.

Chapter 4 then is a proclamation spoken by king Nebuchadnezzar himself and what appears to finally be his acknowledgment and honor of the God of heaven. What he must go through to get to that point is the subject of chapter 4.

4:1-3—THE PROCLAMATION BY THE KING

Unto all the people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth. While Nebuchadnezzar reigned as head, there were other Gentile nations throughout the earth. Did he intend this proclamation to go out to all the world as a warning for all nations? Since this proclamation exists even to this day (we are reading it!), those nations which have ruled after him are given ample opportunity to heed the message given to him in his dream.

Through his dream and the fulfillment of it, **God wrought** (or worked) **signs and wonders toward** Nebuchadnezzar. In the proclamation, the king praised God for His **great signs, mighty wonders**, and the knowledge that **his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation**.

We get a hint in the first three verses that whatever the dream was, it had some life-changing results. It might be good to address this at the very beginning of this chapter: Was Nebuchadnezzar saved?

When we ask that question of someone today, we mean, “Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ?” But of course, that would have been impossible for Nebuchadnezzar to do. He had no idea of Jesus Christ; nor did Daniel for that matter. Also, there was no such idea of individual salvation as we understand it today. Salvation in the Old Testament was national—it required adherence to the Mosaic Law, works, belief in the covenants of promise, and being righteous before God. Salvation came only through the Jewish nation. Gentiles, such as Nebuchadnezzar were strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12). Their only *hope* would be to become part of Israel, to become Jewish.

Nebuchadnezzar was a polytheist; he believed in many gods. His acknowledgment here is merely a statement that God is the **high God**, the highest of many in whom the king believed. Marduk was the patron god of the city of Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar’s primary god. In ancient cuneiform tablets from Babylonia and inscriptions written by Nebuchadnezzar, he praises Marduk over and over as his creator.

While it appears that he became friendly with Daniel's God, and God actually does something for him as an act of his grace, nowhere in this chapter (or anywhere else) do we get the idea that Nebuchadnezzar will stand at the resurrection. God often times has graced people as humans made in His image, but that does not equate to salvation.

We see the grace of God for example in the Gospel of Mark (7:25). Jesus was approached by a Gentile woman asking him to cast a demon out of her daughter. Jesus said to her "Let the children (Israel) first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's (Israel's) bread and cast it to the dogs (Gentiles). That sounds harsh coming from Jesus directed toward a Gentile. But the woman carrying on with the illustration smartly replied, "Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." And Jesus said to her, "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter."

This is difficult for us to grasp in our dispensation of grace², but the Gentile woman and Nebuchadnezzar were living under a different dispensation. Even though God was gracious to them as humans made in His image, their only hope of being resurrected to life in the last days was by embracing the covenants of promise.

Likewise, mere belief in God does not save anyone.

4:4-9—THE DREAM

Verses 4-9—

There is nothing wrong with enjoying the fruit of our labor; **resting** and **flourishing**, but when it leads us to forget God then our priorities are out of whack! Nebuchadnezzar, it would appear had forgotten all that God had done in his kingdom since the arrival of Daniel and his three friends (see chapters 2 and 3).

he saw a dream which made him afraid, and troubled.

Still relying on his previous methods of interpreting dreams he called in the wise men. While Daniel does not record how often the wise men appeared before the king, it is likely over the course of the past 30 years the king had called them in often to interpret thoughts and dreams that he had. And, since they were still coming before him, they must have been successful in other interpretations.

Although these wise men are under Daniel's instruction it appears they are still unable to interpret the dream, as they **did not make known unto the king the interpretation thereof**. As we have seen in other sessions, Daniel's influence will eventually take root and the wise men will have the wisdom to seek out the Savior who was to be born by following His star.³

The king was still spiritually ignorant of the True God, otherwise he could have asked God Himself for the interpretation of the dream.

² See Matthew 10:6; 15:24. Jesus's ministry was directed solely to Israel.

³ Matthew 2:1,2

Finally, **at the last Daniel came in before** the king. The statement of Nebuchadnezzar makes fairly clear he had not become a God-fearer; he was a polytheist. First, he addressed him by his pagan name Belteshazzar. He knew **that the spirit of the holy gods** was in Daniel (certainly a pagan statement), for Daniel had expressed earlier his belief in *The Great God of heaven*. The king knew something was different about Daniel. Undoubtedly, it was Daniel's character of purpose, prayer, prophecy, and integrity. Others should see those characteristics in us. The Spirit of God was in Daniel!

4:10-18—THE DREAM IS TOLD TO DANIEL

Verse 10-12—

In his dream, he saw a large **tree, the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth**. This word **end** is used not in a measurement sense, but as *the conclusion*. This tree reached its conclusion, the end of the earth. This was what he saw in his first dream of the great image, the Gentile nations continued until their end (or conclusion) after being struck by the Stone which destroyed them and filled the earth.

This tree in his dream prospered and grew and provided shade, shelter, and sustenance for all that flocked to it.

Verse 13—

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he **saw a watcher and a holy one come down from heaven**. E.W. Bullinger⁴ says this is a figure of speech: *Two words are used, but one thing is meant*. **Watcher** is a Chaldee name for an angelic being. Therefore, an angelic being (who is a holy one) watches over the affairs of men.

Verse 14—

The angel **cried aloud** in a warning...**Hew down the tree...cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, scatter his fruit...** From a positive view, Jesus told a similar story, in a parable of the Kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13:31,32 in which he likened the Kingdom to a tree grown from a mustard seed that grew into a large tree **so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof**. In God's Kingdom, men will flock to it and it will flourish. But in the kingdom of Man, men will flee and the tree is cut down and the **beasts under it, and the fowls from its branches** scatter.

We will see in a moment that the **tree** is Nebuchadnezzar, he will be cut down. And, his mind is about to be altered to that of a beast.

Verse 15,16—

But leave the stump of his roots in the earth...let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him. We discover that the tree, is the picture of a man, and the man is going to become a beast. And he will remain in that state **seven times**. **Seven times** of what? Likely **times refer**

⁴ See his notes in *The Companion Bible: Daniel 4:13*.

to years. Later in Daniel 7:25, we have the same Hebrew word used; *a time and times and the dividing of time* I think it will become evident later in the book of Daniel, and by cross-referencing the book of Revelation that times in 7:25 refers to years (3.5 years). Therefore, it would follow the same word times in **seven times** refers to seven years.

What God is about to do with Nebuchadnezzar is a picture of what God is going to do with Israel in the Tribulation—for seven years. We will see that in Daniel 9:27. Nebuchadnezzar will go through a seven-year ordeal and be restored to his Kingdom, and during the Tribulation, Israel will go through a seven-year ordeal in which at the end, God will restore them as head over the nations in the millennial kingdom.

Verse 17—

Here we have reference to multiple **watchers** (angelic beings). They tell Nebuchadnezzar the purpose of the dream: **that the living may know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.**

The purpose of the dream and the subsequent cutting down of Nebuchadnezzar is to show that God **the most High** is the ultimate ruler, and it is He who sets up even the lowest of men in places of authority among nations. God will still allow nations to exist, even in the Millennium, but they will only prosper if they humble themselves, repent of sins and show mercy to the poor (all kingdom related).

Verse 18—

The king believes Daniel can interpret the dream for him.

We will see if he is able to and what this dream is all about, next week.