

# Pride Comes Before a Fall

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**Daniel 4:1-37**

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*“Pride leads to disgrace,  
but with humility comes  
wisdom” (Proverbs 11:2)*

# Nebuchadnezzar's Temporary Acknowledgement of God's Power

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**Daniel 4:1-3**



“Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all the peoples, nations and men of every language that live in all the earth. May your peace abound! It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me” (Daniel 4:1-2)

- This declaration by Nebuchadnezzar probably took place around the 35<sup>th</sup> year of his reign (approx. 570 B.C).
  - 1) Probably some 30 years after the events of the “fiery furnace”
  - 2) This would place Daniel’s age at about 50

Daniel's decision to make reference to this official proclamation made by Nebuchadnezzar will show that the king clearly recognized the sovereign power of Almighty God; *"It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me".*

*“How great are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generation to generation”  
(Daniel 4:3)*

- The thing that Nebuchadnezzar learned and is declaring here is that God rules according to His will and He uses those who He chooses to accomplish His will.
- Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that the Kingdom of God is an “everlasting” kingdom which has no end – “generation to generation”.



# Nebuchadnezzar's Tree Vision

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**Daniel 4:4-27**

“I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in my house and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.” (Daniel 4:4-5)

- Nebuchadnezzar has another dream that raised some concerns of fear
- This dream is much different than the earlier dream recorded in Daniel 2 and it comes at a time when Nebuchadnezzar was very comfortable with his reign as the King of Babylon.



“So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not makes its interpretation known to me”  
(Daniel 4:6-7)

- The wise men of Babylon fail the king again and failed in their attempt to interpret the dream for the king.
  - 1) It is important to note there are limitations to our human abilities and even from within the evil/demonic world that many of these magicians and enchanter trafficked in.
  - 2) These “wise men” could not deliver the goods because they lacked true spiritual insight.
  - 3) The authority and ability to interpret such dreams was reserved by God to do as He chooses and bestowed on whom He chooses.

“How great are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generation to generation”  
(Daniel 4:3)

- It is worth noting that although Nebuchadnezzar had acknowledged God for His “*signs and wonders*” - he still trusted in his own ways.
  - 1) To trust in one’s own ways is a very typical response for an “unbeliever” and Nebuchadnezzar was no different.
  - 2) The sad part is even some believers still trust in themselves rather than God



“But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying, O, Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation” (Daniel 4:8-9)

- A few things worth noting from this passage:
  - 1) Belteshazzar is Daniel's Babylonian name
  - 2) Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges his god, trusts in his magicians, still follows his own belief system by naming Daniel after his god, which causes me to conclude that he is still at best a polytheist (one who believes in many gods).
  - 3) Another important notation is Nebuchadnezzar's confidence in Daniel's ability to provide the interpretation.

“But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying, O, Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation” (Daniel 4:8-9)

- Nebuchadnezzar was willing to describe the dream instead of requiring Daniel to describe it to him as he did in his previous dream.
- Nebuchadnezzar refers to Daniel as the; “chief of the magicians” which probably just means he considered Daniel to be wiser than they were.



“Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking and behold there was a tree in the midst of the earth and it was great. The tree grew large and became strong and its height reached to the sky, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth.

Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant and it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches and all the living creatures fed themselves from it”

(Daniel 4:10-12)

“The tree grew large and became strong and its height reached to the sky, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant and it was food for all....”

- The tree was significant because of its size
- The tree was significant because of its beauty
- The tree was significant because it provided food
- The tree was significant because it provided shelter

The next thing that  
Nebuchadnezzar shares; “I was  
looking in the visions of my  
mind, as I lay on my bed, and  
behold, an angelic watcher, a  
holy one descended from heaven.  
He shouted and spoke as  
follow.....” (Daniel 4:13-14a)



“Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from under its branches”  
(Daniel 4:14)

- 1) The tree (which is the focal point of the vision) was to be cut down
- 2) All of the benefits that the tree provided (food and shelter) would be lost

“Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, butt with a band of iron, and bronze around it in the new grass of the field and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth” (Daniel 4:15)

- 1) The stump and the roots of the tree were to remain for future potential
- 2) With the large tree cut down the “dew of heaven” (mist and rain) would be able to reach the stump and roots of the tree for potential new growth.

“Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let a beasts mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him” (Daniel 4:16)

- 1) This part of the vision no doubt had Nebuchadnezzar shook up
- 2) By this time Nebuchadnezzar probably knew the dream was about him



“This sentence is by decree of the angelic watchers and the decision is the command of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High is the ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men” (Daniel 4:17)

- 1) The “angel” made it clear that this command/decreed came from the Lord
- 2) It was the Most High God who was sovereign and not Nebuchadnezzar

“This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you” (Daniel 4:18)

- Nebuchadnezzar's magicians and wise men once again failed him
- Nebuchadnezzar was more than likely a “**polytheist**” (a belief in multiple gods), so he may not have fully grasped the unique and special abilities that the Lord had given Daniel.
- What Nebuchadnezzar did know was that a “spirit of the holy gods” was in Daniel and he came to understand (probably by special revelation from God) that Daniel was the only one within his realm capable of providing its meaning.



“Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said; Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you. Belteshazzar answered and said, my lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies” (Daniel 4:19)

- As Daniel proceeded to explain the meaning of the dream he pauses to describe his own demeanor and by all appearances this dream has him pretty disturbed and even more so than the dream he interpreted in Chapter 2.
  - 1) In the first dream about the large statue, Nebuchadnezzar is shown to be exalted by describing him as the head of gold.
  - 2) This second dream shows Nebuchadnezzar in complete ruin
- Nebuchadnezzar tries to put Daniel at ease by telling him not to be alarmed

“.....Belteshazzar answered and said, my lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies”

- Daniel responded to Nebuchadnezzar by saying that he wished the dream was about his enemies instead of about Nebuchadnezzar himself.
  - 1) Bad news is not easy to deliver – especially to a volatile guy like the king
  - 2) Had it pertained to the king's enemies it may have been easier to deliver



Daniel provides the interpretation of  
Nebuchadnezzar's dream

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**Daniel 4:20-25**

*“The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged – it is you O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky, and your dominion to the end of the earth” (Dan. 4:20-22)*

- 1) Daniel restates the description of the tree, its greatness and its provision
- 2) Daniel interprets the tree to represent King Nebuchadnezzar and makes the connection to the power and vastness of his kingdom.

“In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pas over him”  
(Daniel 4:23)

- 1) Nebuchadnezzar would be driven from his position as king, lose all of his authority and no longer have a lifestyle of plenty.
- 2) The Lord would cause Nebuchadnezzar to experience some form of “insanity” and be driven from his palace to live among the animals for seven years



“This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king; that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes” (Daniel 4:24-25)

- 1) The state of dementia that Nebuchadnezzar experiences, has a modern definition called **zoanthropy** - where a person thinks and acts like an animal.
- 2) This judgment would last until Nebuchadnezzar **submitted** himself to God

Daniel calls on King Nebuchadnezzar  
to repent

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**Daniel 4:26-27**

“And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is heaven that rules” (Daniel 4:26)

- 1) The stump that remained, along with the roots, was evidence that the Lord was not finished with King Nebuchadnezzar.
- 2) Nebuchadnezzar would be restored once he submitted and acknowledged that God rules – and submit to the Lord he will do!



“Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break now away from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity”  
(Daniel 4:27)

- 1) Daniel’s call for the king to repent would have been consistent with the Lord’s requirement of any one who was in rebellion against Him.
- 2) Judgment by the Lord can be averted when true repentance occurs – just read the Book of Jonah.
- 3) Daniel recognized that such a request to repent might have been met with some resistance by the king and it certainly would not have been consistent with the culture of the Babylonians or the character of Nebuchadnezzar.

*“Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break now away from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity”*  
(Daniel 4:27)

- 4) The actions of repentance were not easy ones for the king, but in order for it to be genuine; he needed to break away from his sinful life, start doing acts of righteousness, and show mercy to the poor.
- 5) Nebuchadnezzar was to totally submit to the Lord in faith, admit that God is sovereign, and turn from his wicked ways. Had he done this, he might have been spared judgment and instead given some form of prolonged prosperity.

Nebuchadnezzar will  
not submit or repent as  
he was challenged by  
Daniel to do, so he will  
experience the  
judgment exactly as was  
told to him.



Nebuchadnezzar's Test  
He failed it!

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**Daniel 4:28-30**

*“All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. Twelve months later he was walking on the roof top of the royal palace of Babylon” (Daniel 4:28-29)*

- Daniel’s interpretation of the dream went unheeded by Nebuchadnezzar
- Nebuchadnezzar continued in his sinful behavior and he did not repent

*“The king reflected and said, is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty” (Daniel 4:30)*

- The king was a complete egomaniac and he actually considered the city of Babylon as his personal possession and something he built and sustained.
- How quickly he forgot the warning by Daniel and after 12 months of boastful arrogance – he would face judgment and his rule as king would be interrupted.



# Nebuchadnezzar's Time Out

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**Daniel 4:31-33**

*“While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven saying, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes” (Daniel 4:31-32)*

- Nebuchadnezzar's dream became his nightmare and before he could finish his boasting about all of his accomplishments – he lost everything and was driven from his role as supreme leader of Babylon to a man who lived with the wild donkeys.  
(Daniel 5:21)
- Nebuchadnezzar may well have become insane (a mad man), or perhaps suffered some form of dementia that resulted in him living as an animal.
- This mental state lasted for seven periods - probably best understood as 7 years



“Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles feathers, and his nails like bird claws”  
(Daniel 4:33)

- He ate grass like the cattle which was both an abnormal function for a human but certainly out of character for Nebuchadnezzar who had all of the food and delicacies any person could want.
- We are told that Nebuchadnezzar’s hygiene was so bad that his hair grew as long and course as eagles’ feathers and his nails became like the claws of a bird.

# Nebuchadnezzar's Trust in the Lord as Sovereign

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**Daniel 4:34-37**

*“But at the end of that period, I  
Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward  
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 of the inhabitants of the earth  
are accounted as nothing, but He does  
according to His will in the host of heaven and  
among the inhabitants of the earth; and no  
one can ward off His hand or say to Him, what  
have You done” (Daniel 4:34-35)*



*“But at the end of that period, I Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward 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”  
(Daniel 4:34)*

- At the end of the 7 year period – Nebuchadnezzar was given another chance
- The conclusion by Nebuchadnezzar was simple – God is sovereign, man is answerable to God, and no one has the right to question God’s authority.

“At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me, for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride” (Daniel 4:37)

- The Lord restored the king's sanity and allowed him to return to his throne
- Nebuchadnezzar finally made his confession to the Lord (See - Psalm 2:1-12)

*“Why are the nations in an uproar,  
and the peoples devising a vain  
thing? The kings of the earth take  
their stand and the rulers take  
counsel together against the Lord  
and against His anointed saying, let  
us tear their fetters apart and cast  
their cords from us!” (Psalm 2:1-3)*



*“He who sits in the heavens laughs,  
the Lord scoffs at them. Then He  
will speak to them in His anger and  
terrify them in His fury, saying, but  
as for Me, I have installed My King  
upon Zion, My holy mountain”  
(Psalm 2:4-6)*

*“I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give you the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall shatter them like earthenware” (clay pots)  
(Psalm 2:7-9)*

*“Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him”  
(Psalm 2:10-12)*