

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Chapter 4

Lesson # 5

As we work our way through the book of Daniel, God's sovereignty over the kingdoms of the world and the affairs of men is constantly laid before us. While unbelievers do their evil deeds, God is orchestrating all things for the good of His people and the glory of His name. In chapter 1 we learn how Daniel arrived in Babylon but, because of the grace of God, is elevated and chosen to serve the king. In chapter 2 Daniel's life and the life of his three friends seems to be in peril. But as the story unfolds, we see that God was orchestrating events to have Daniel and his friends elevated to positions of power and influence. In chapter 3 Daniel is absent but his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are forced to disobey the king in order to submit to God. The death sentence is passed on them for the second time and, from what seems like a hopeless situation, they are rescued by God, honored by the king, and God is glorified among all the rulers of Babylon. As we come to chapter 4, we see that Nebuchadnezzar is showing some signs of repentance. Yet as we shall see, he is still a very proud man – but it is God's desire to humble him.

I. **THE REPENTANCE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR** (Read Dan. 4:1-3)

- A. What kind of statement do we find in **vss. 1-3**? Who is the king speaking to and what is the purpose of his utterance?

- B. What do the king's words in **Dan. 4:1-3** tell us about the king when compared to **Dan. 3:13-15**?

- C. In the previous chapter Nebuchadnezzar was promoting himself but now he is promoting the Most High God. What brought about this change? What can we learn about this? Should what changed Nebuchadnezzar change us as well? Why or why not?

- D. In **vs. 3** Daniel lists four attributes of God. List them below and discuss how each attribute should affect you as a believer today.
 - 1.

 - 2.

 - 3.

- 4.
5. Look up the Scriptures below and write down what they teach you about God and how we should respond to Him because of who He is.
 - a. **Ex. 15:11**
 - b. **Deut. 4:32-34**
 - c. **Psa. 77:11-14**
 - d. Why has God done so many great things for us and the people of past generations to witness?

II. **NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAS A DREAM** (Read Dan. 4:4-18)

- A. What two words describe Nebuchadnezzar's condition in **vs. 4** and what do they mean?
- B. In **vs. 5** Nebuchadnezzar uses three words to describe what happened to him as he lay on his bed along with two responses. List them below.
 1. (What happened)
 2. (What happened)
 3. (What happened)
 4. (Response)
 5. (Response)
 6. All of us have dreams at times. What was different about Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

- C. In **vss. 6-7** how did Nebuchadnezzar try to deal with his terrifying dream? Did it work? Why or why not?
- D. In **vss. 8-9** what do we learn about the king's perception of Daniel?
1. What do we learn about the king's perception of the Most High God?
 2. Do you think Nebuchadnezzar was a believer at this time? Why or why not?
- E. Examine **vss. 10-18** and summarize in your own words what Nebuchadnezzar saw and heard in his dream.
1. Write down the definition of an *allegory* and how allegories differ from *parables*.
 2. Why do you think God gave Nebuchadnezzar such a cryptic and difficult to understand dream? Why not just tell him in plain words what was going to happen? Why the "cloak and dagger" allegory?
 3. What do we learn about God from how He communicated to Daniel? How can this encourage and help us today as we read difficult to understand portions of the Bible?

III. **DANIEL INTERPRETS NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S DREAM** (Read Dan. 4:19-27)

A. In **vs. 19** we read that Daniel was “appalled.” What does that mean and why was he appalled?

1. What words did the king speak to Daniel when he saw his response?
2. How did Daniel then respond to the king?

B. Listed In the chart below are the various details of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Write out what you believe are the corresponding interpretations of the details of the dream to the right (See **vss. 20-27**).

| Detail of Dream | Interpretation of Detail |
|---|--------------------------|
| Tree | |
| Large | |
| Strong | |
| High | |
| Visible | |
| Beautiful foliage | |
| Abundant Fruit | |
| Supplying food for all | |
| Providing shelter for beasts of the field | |
| Providing lodging for birds of the air | |
| Tree chopped down | |

| Detail of Dream | Interpretation of Detail |
|--|--------------------------|
| Stump and its roots left in the ground | |
| Band of iron and bronze on the stump | |
| New Grass of the field | |
| Drenched with the dew of heaven | |
| share with the beasts of the field | |
| seven periods of time will pass over you | |

- C. What was God’s three-fold purpose in giving Nebuchadnezzar this dream and revealing its interpretation through Daniel according to **vss. 25-26**?
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 4. Why is it important for us to learn the same lesson God was trying to teach Nebuchadnezzar?
 5. What are some of the consequences of not knowing and/or believing this lesson in the lives of Christians today?
- D. In **vs. 27** Daniel advises the king to stop doing two things and to start doing two other things. What are they and what do they mean?
1. (Stop doing)
 2. (Start doing)

3. (Stop doing)
4. (Start doing)
5. What was Daniel's reasoning behind giving the king this advice?
6. There are times when God promises judgment to those living in sin and yet does not judge them. How can this be? Look up the texts below and write down why judgment was diverted.
 - a. Ex. 32:9-14
 - b. Jer. 26:12-19
 - c. Amos 7:1-6
 - d. Jonah 3:4-10; 4:2
7. In the texts above we have seen instances where God promised judgment but did not send it. Look up the texts below and write down what they teach you about God and His character.
 - a. I Sam. 15:29
 - b. Numb. 23:19
 - c. Ezek. 24:14
 - d. Titus 1:2
 - e. So we have seen that God does not change His mind, relent, repent or lie. And we have also seen that God changes His mind, relents, and repents. Does this mean God is a liar? Why or why not?

- f. Does it mean that God is not sovereign over all the affairs of men? Why or why not?
 - g. Does it mean that men are able to change what God has planned to do from before the foundation of the world? Why or why not?
 - h. Does it mean that God does not know the future? Why or why not?
8. You are approached by someone who calls himself a Christian. He tells you that he does not believe in the sovereignty of God, that He is in control of everything, or that He knows the future. He tells you that God responds to men once He sees how they are going to act and that we are in control of our own future. When you object, he takes you to the texts we examined above and says, “*See! God changed his mind and repented of what He was going to do because He didn’t know the future and wasn’t sovereign over the situation.*” How do you answer a person like this?
9. Does the same paradox examined above exist in the New Testament?
- a. Does God promise to judge sinners? (See Rom. 1:18; 2:1-3; II Pet. 3:7)
 - b. Are all men sinners? (See Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-18)
 - c. Does God judge all sinners? Why or why not? (See Jn. 3:18; 5:24; Rom. 8:1)
 - d. Why is it comforting to know how God responds to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ? How is this similar to the advice Daniel gave to King Nebuchadnezzar?

IV. **NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM IS FULFILLED** (Read Dan. 4:28-37)

- A. What is the meaning of **vs. 28**?

- B. In **vss. 29-30** what do we learn about:
 - 1. The time:

 - 2. What the king was doing:

 - 3. What the king was thinking to himself:

 - 4. What do Nebuchadnezzar's thoughts reveal about his heart?

 - 5. Look up the texts below and summarize what they teach us about Nebuchadnezzar's thoughts and actions.
 - a. Dan. 2:46-49

 - b. Dan. 3:28-30

 - c. Dan. 4:1-4

 - d. What happened? Why hasn't Nebuchadnezzar changed? Why is he still proud and boasting about himself and what he has accomplished by his own strength? What do we learn from this?

- C. According to **vss. 31-33** what happened while Nebuchadnezzar was thinking his proud thoughts?
 - 1. What did the voice say was the lesson Nebuchadnezzar needed to learn? Why?

 - 2. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar?

3. The text doesn't say, but what do you think all the rulers of Babylon thought about what happened to Nebuchadnezzar?

 4. Who do you think ruled Babylon during the time God was humbling Nebuchadnezzar?
- D. According to **vs. 34** what do we learn happened to Nebuchadnezzar that caused him to be driven away from mankind and live in the field like a beast?
1. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond after his time of humbling was over?

 2. Do you think God should have to do to everyone what he did to Nebuchadnezzar? Why or why not?

 3. Give some examples of the kinds of things God does to humble men today.
- E. In **vss. 34** and **37** what two names does Nebuchadnezzar give to God and what do they tell us about his character?
- F. In **vss. 34-35 & 37** what ten attributes of God are mentioned, what do they mean, and why do we need to know these things about God?
1. **Vs. 34**

 2. **Vs. 34**

 3. **Vs. 35**

 4. **Vs. 35**

5. **Vs. 35**

6. **Vs. 35**

7. **Vs. 35**

8. **Vs. 37**

9. **Vs. 37**

10. **Vs. 37**

G. We have learned that God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to learn that *“The Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever he wishes.”* Write down how this lesson may apply to the different people below.

1. The CEO in a large company:

2. The owner of a small business:

3. A housewife:

4. A single working mom with two young children:

5. A Jr. High or High school student:

H. Examine the article below from *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts, Revised*. Then answer the questions following.

Assyrian dominance of the ancient Near East came to an end with Babylonian victories at Nineveh (612 B.C.) by Nabopolassar and at Carchemish (605 B.C.) by Nebuchadnezzar II. After defeating the Egyptians who had come to the aid of Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar immediately forced the submission of Judah's King Jehoiakim and other kings of the area. At this time (605 B.C.), certain young men of Jerusalem, including Daniel, were taken to exile in Babylon.

After Jehoiakim revolted, Jerusalem fell again to Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. The temple was looted and the treasures were taken back to Babylon. A third Babylonian siege of Jerusalem followed Zedekiah's revolt (589 B.C.) and the city fell in July of 587 or 586 B.C.

Evil-Merodach, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, ruled Babylon only two years (562–60 B.C.). He released Judah's King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon and gave the deposed king a place of privilege in the Babylonian court (25:27–30).

Nabopolassar 626–605 B.C.

Neriglissar 560–562 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar II 605–62 B.C.

Labasi-Marduk 556 B.C.

Evil-Merodach 562–60 B.C.

Nabonidus (Whose son Belshazzar reigned as vice-regent) 555–39 B.C.¹

1. Was Nebuchadnezzar a believer before he died and do you think we will see him in heaven? Why or why not?
2. Where is Babylon the Great which Nebuchadnezzar built?
3. What happened to the Babylonian empire? (**Isa. 13:17-22**)
4. Do you think what happened to Babylon could happen to the United States? Why or why not?
5. Do you think what happened to Babylon should happen to the United States? Why or why not?
6. If you could summarize the grand lesson of **Dan. 4**, what would it be?

¹Thomas Nelson Publishers. *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts : Old and New Testaments*. "Completely revised and updated comfort print edition"; Includes indexes. Rev. and updated ed. Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1996.