

## Lesson 4: Chapter 4 – Royal and Rude to Repentant and Restored

We are back to Nebuchadnezzar's active dream life, and Daniel reappears in the story. This time, though, we start out at the end of the tale. Chapter 4 opens with King Nebuchadnezzar's royal proclamation: "It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation" (Daniel 4:2-3). What an odd declaration from a pagan king! How did this come about?

Day 1: Read Daniel 4:1-9.

1. At first glance, it seems strange that Nebuchadnezzar would refer to the God of Daniel and the Jews in such a commendable manner. Babylon, cosmopolitan and home to exiles from many of the conquered territories of the Babylonian empire, boasted a large pantheon of hundreds of gods. Adding a new god to the chaos was not generally a problem. The God of the Hebrews, though, was not like those counterfeit gods. Remember Daniel's praise to God in Daniel 2:20-23? Contrast that to the psalmist's words about false idols in Psalm 115:4-8.
2. Daniel and other Old Testament saints had faith in the promise of redemption. We now know the fullness of that promise in the person of Jesus Christ, who descended from heaven and lived the perfect life that we never could, died on the cross in our place and rose again, giving us the right to become children of God. Daniel knew that the God of his fathers was the only God with wisdom and power. We also know that there is only one name that can bring salvation. Memorize Acts 4:12, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Day 2: Returning to Nebuchadnezzar's story, he must have witnessed something powerful indeed to accord such dignity and honor to the God of Daniel. Read Daniel 4:10-18.

1. Draw the image that Nebuchadnezzar sees in vv. 10-12.
2. Redraw the image after reading the words of the holy messenger from heaven that appears in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (vv. 14-15). What a difference!
3. Halfway through v. 15, Nebuchadnezzar reveals that the tree symbolizes a person. Describe the characteristics of the man we read about in vv. 15-16.
4. Before we read Daniel's interpretation of the dream, Nebuchadnezzar announces the message of the dream in v. 17. What did Nebuchadnezzar learn from his dream?

Day 3: Read Daniel 4:19-27.

1. In verse 19, Daniel says he was “greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him.” Why do you think that his thoughts about the dream made him afraid?
2. After Nebuchadnezzar’s reassurance, Daniel interprets the dream.
  - a. Who or what does the tree symbolize?
  - b. Contrast the description between the first image of the king in vv. 20-22 with the changed image of the king in vv. 22-25.
  - c. Despite such a bleak prophecy, Daniel offers King Nebuchadnezzar some hope in vv. 26 and 27. What hope is that?

Day 4: Twelve months after the dream occurred, and doubtless by then it was far from the mind of the powerful but rash ruler, the fulfillment of the dream begins.

1. Read Daniel 4:28-30. What behavior of the king do you think precipitates God’s prophesied judgement?
2. Human arrogance has always been an offense to the sovereign God. Read 1 Samuel 2:3. Think of your actions this past week or month – have there been any times that you have been tempted to arrogance and pride?
3. Read Daniel 4:31-33. What do you think God intended Nebuchadnezzar to learn from his seven years (“seven times”) in the wilderness?

Day 5: As we finish the story, we come to understand the reason for the lofty language with which King Nebuchadnezzar speaks of God – after seven years of anguish in the wilderness, he has been restored to his sanity and his throne!

1. Read Daniel 4:34-37. What realization about God does Nebuchadnezzar finally come to?
2. In the very last sentence of the chapter, Nebuchadnezzar says, “And those who walk in pride he is able to humble” (v. 37c). Humility is a characteristic that permeates the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. Copy and meditate on these verses about the importance of being humble.
  - a. Matthew 20:26-27
  - b. Philippians 2:8
  - c. 1 Peter 5:5
  - d. Luke 14:11



