

Daniel 4:1-9

4 Nebuchadnezzar the king,

To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:

Peace be multiplied to you.

²I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me.

³How great *are* His signs,

And how mighty His wonders!

His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,

And His dominion *is* from generation to generation.

⁴I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. ⁵I saw a dream

which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled

me. ⁶Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise *men* of Babylon before me, that they

might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. ⁷Then the magicians, the astrologers,

the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make

known to me its interpretation. ⁸But at last Daniel came before me (his name *is* Belteshazzar,

according to the name of my god; in him *is* the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream

before him, *saying*: ⁹“Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the

Holy God *is* in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation.

As we continue in Daniel we come to a fascinating chapter. I want us to notice at the beginning of this chapter who the author of this account is. Right here in the middle of the Book of Daniel we have a chapter written by King Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, the man who had led the looting and captivity of the Hebrew Children from Babylon, and the man who in just the previous chapter had set up an image and demanded all of the wise men in the province to bow and worship the image.

Up to this point, Nebuchadnezzar has recognized the excellence of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in chapter 1. Listen to verses 19 and 20 from the first chapter:

19 Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.

In Chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar threatened to put all the wise men in Babylon to death when they were not able to tell him his dream or the interpretation. Only when Daniel came to him with the dream and the interpretation were they spared, and at the end of Chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar gives praise to God, but the praise that he gives to God are in the second person. Listen to verse 47 of Chapter 2:

47 The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret."

God is acknowledged as the God of gods and the Lord of kings. He is acknowledged as a revealer of secrets, but notice God is still referred to in this passage as "your God." He is Daniel's God who reveals secrets, Nebuchadnezzar is still enthralled with his own deities and as we saw in chapter 3 his own power and might. Nebuchadnezzar is learning more about God, but he does not yet know who God is.

In Chapter 3 Nebuchadnezzar sets up a great image in the plain of Dura. He orders all the wise men, and all the officials that are there to bow and worship this image. If they did not bow they would be cast into the fiery furnace. Daniel, we are told at the end of Chapter 2 remained in the gate of the King and he was not there in Dura, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood out among all the officials and all the wise because they refused to bow. Nebuchadnezzar, full of rage and fury has them cast into the furnace and yet his anger is changed to dismay and wonder when he sees a fourth man in the fire with these men.

He goes to the door of the furnace and calls them out and listen to his words in verse 28 and 29:

²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”

He promotes Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and he blesses God, but notice his blessing of God at the end of Chapter 3 are still directed toward the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He even honors them for yielding their bodies so that they should not serve nor worship any other god except their God. Nebuchadnezzar even at the end of chapter 3 makes a decree that no one from any nation, or any language could speak anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, or they would be cut in pieces, and their houses would be made an ash heap. But I want to be clear, even though Nebuchadnezzar has made a good decree, even though he has offered praise and blessing to God, Nebuchadnezzar is still not a believer in the one true God.

But this brings us to chapter 4. We have our text today, and in today’s text we have Nebuchadnezzar once again troubled by a dream. We are not going to look at the dream in detail today, but listen to verse 4 and 5 of chapter 4:

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

The similarity to what happens in chapter 2 is not an accident, and neither is the difference. In Chapter 2 he was troubled by a dream and it troubled him so greatly that he demanded of his wise men that they not only tell him the interpretation, but they had to tell him what the dream was. Here he does not go to such an extreme, and I think the reason for this is obvious, he knew that Daniel was among the wise men. Calvin suggested and I think he is right that if the other

wise men attempted to give a false or an incorrect interpretation of the dream he had then Daniel would have corrected them.

Listen to verse 6 and 7:

⁶ Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. ⁷ Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation.

In chapter 2 when Nebuchadnezzar wanted to find the real interpretation of his dream we learned what his true thoughts were about those in his court who had the job of interpreting dreams.

⁸ The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm: ⁹ if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation."

Truly it must be a great thing to have a job where you are considered so wise that no one questions you. But Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know the meaning and so he pointed out that he knew that the wise men and the astrologers had all been conspiring together to tell the King what he wanted to hear. He called out their lies and their corruption and he would not settle for anything but the mystery of his dream and then the interpretation.

Here in chapter 4, he is not as concerned about being lied to due to the fact that he has Daniel. In fact in verse 8 we see what happens when Daniel comes before him:

⁸ But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before him, saying: ⁹ "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation.

Notice, none of the other wise men attempted to give a bogus interpretation because they knew Daniel was there. Daniel came last before the King to give the meaning of the dream and Daniel had earned the trust of the King. Nebuchadnezzar refers to him by his Hebrew name Daniel, which means God is my judge. And he also references his name given to him in captivity Belteshazzar, which is a reference to the Babylonian god Bel. This name means Bel will protect the King.

Now...Let's take a look at the overall picture here in the 4th chapter. Chronologically we have Nebuchadnezzar addressing all peoples, all nations, and languages. He has a message to declare to them. He is going to be addressing them about the events that had taken place in his life. The events he is going to be addressing are the events of the fourth chapter. Prior to these events Nebuchadnezzar had encountered the one true God, and yet his heart remained proud. But what is going to happen, in Chapter 4 is Nebuchadnezzar the King is going to finally have his heart changed by the one true God. The problem for Nebuchadnezzar, prior to this, was the problem of so many people. Nebuchadnezzar was a man who was full of pride. His pride, was such that even though he had seen God work incredible wonders, even though God had placed him into a position of authority, His heart was lifted up in pride and God humbled him mightily. Most of this will be talked about in the coming weeks, but what I want us to look at today is the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar after his heart had been changed.

Prior to this he had given lip service to God amongst other gods. Prior to this he focused on his own personal accomplishments. In verse 30 of Chapter 4 Nebuchadnezzar utters these words:

“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?”

And then we read that while these words were still in his mouth, that a voice from heaven spoke and all that he thought he had, all that he thought he had built, all of it was taken from him and he would be made to recognize who was the source of all that he had.

In the last verse of Chapter 4 we see a portrait of his changed heart:

37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

I mentioned earlier that the problem of Nebuchadnezzar was a pride problem. His utterance before his descent into madness is the classic Bible example of pride. “*I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?*” Why do I call this a classic Bible example, because God warned his people about this very thing. He warned them multiple times, but the one that I like to focus on is in Deuteronomy the 8th chapter.

Listen to these words beginning in verse 11. Notice this section of Scripture begins with the word, “Beware.” I like the way Doug Wilson puts it God does not put signs up that tell us to look out for the cliff in the middle of Kansas. This warning is a very real warning and the danger spoken of here is a very real danger.

11 “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, 12 lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; 13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; 14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; 15 who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; 16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end— 17 then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’

18 “And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. 19 Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely

perish. ²⁰ As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God.

I have heard some tell me that this command is a command to the nation of Israel and it has nothing to do with Gentile believers or with New Testament Christians. I believe Nebuchadnezzar might disagree with such an assessment. Nebuchadnezzar was not an Israelite. And yet Nebuchadnezzar was brought under God's judgment because of his pride.

God, through Daniel had told him that he was the head of gold, and his reaction after that was to build an image and have everyone of his wisemen bow to worship the image. He, puffed up in pride, had the three young men tossed into the fiery furnace. Miraculously there was a fourth man in the fire that looked like the Son of God and Nebuchadnezzar gave a certain amount of praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, he even praised them for their courageous stand, but Nebuchadnezzar still had his trust in all of the wrong places.

But as chapter 4 begins we are dealing with a different man. We are dealing with a man who had been humbled by God and who knew who it was that truly was in charge of all things. I love verse 2 where he tells his audience...which is all peoples, languages and nations that "I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders of God."

And here are his words:

*³ How great are His signs,
And how mighty His wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And His dominion is from generation to generation.*

So let's look at this statement in detail.

How great are His signs and how mighty are his wonders?

Albert Barnes says "*How great and wonderful are the things by which he makes himself known in this manner! The allusion is doubtless to what had occurred to Nebuchadnezzar - the event by which a monarch of such state and power had been reduced to a condition so humble. With*

propriety he would regard this as a signal instance of the Divine interposition, and as adapted to give him an exalted view of the supremacy of the true God.”

Adam Clarke says *“His wonders - miraculous interferences, are mighty - they surpass all human power. He is the Sovereign of all kings, and his dominion is everlasting; and every generation is a proof of his all-governing influence. These are very fine sentiments, and show how deeply his mind was impressed with the majesty of God.”*

John Gill put it this way: *“They are great, very great, exceeding great; so great that it cannot be said, nor even conceived how great they are, what a display of wisdom, power, and goodness is in them; they are wonderful beyond expression and conception; and so strong and mighty as not to be resisted and made void by all the powers of nature, earth, or hell; and if this may be said of his works of providence, and his miracles of that, how much more of his works and miracles of grace!”*

But I also want us to see that not only does Nebuchadnezzar recognize the greatness of God in this passage, he also sees the extent and the scope of God’s Kingdom.

*His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And His dominion is from generation to generation.*

Nebuchadnezzar had been shown this in the dream he had about the great image with the head of gold, and the chest and shoulders of silver, and the legs of iron, and the feet mixed with iron and clay. As we discussed, the image which represented all of the great kingdoms of the world was destroyed by a rock formed without hands. This rock turned the nations of the world into chaff that blew a way in the wind, and then this rock became a mountain that overcame the world.

This rock formed without hands that becomes the mountain is the Kingdom of God. All the way back in Chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar is presented with the reality of this Kingdom, and yet because of his pride he struggles against it. But here in verse 3 of Chapter 4 Calvin put it this way: “Here he confesses God’s power not to be dependent upon man’s will. Since he had just before said, the statue which he had erected was to be worshipped, because he had chosen so to decree

it. Now, however, he remits much of his pride by confessing God's kingdom to be a perpetual one.

In Romans 1:18-25 we see a portrait of sinful man from the beginning of the world. This section of Scripture is very familiar and we will look at it next week specifically in the life of Nebuchadnezzar, but notice at the heart of God's wrath being poured out on every form of ungodliness is a failure to acknowledge God, a failure to thank God and a strong trust in one's own ability. Of course in order to live this way man has to become a suppressor of truth, and God gives them over to futility.

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Let us learn to acknowledge God in all things. Let us learn to be thankful and to set aside pride. Let us acknowledge God in our thinking. Let us learn to embrace the truth as it is revealed by God and not be sucked into the foolishness of the world. Every kingdom of man is transitive. Every power of man will fade. Only God's kingdom is perpetual. Only God's kingdom can be passed down from generation to generation.

Let us learn to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift us up.
Remember according to James 4:6 God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the
humble. Pray that God would give us humble hearts and we would draw ever nearer to
him.