

## Daniel

## "Learning the Hard Way"

(Daniel 4:1-37)

**The Date/Setting:** The time of the events in chapter 4 are not clearly identified, however there are indications that these occurred later in his reign. For instance, at the time of the dream his extensive building program was completed (4:30). History tells us that Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC. This means that the latest time of the dream was around 570 BC, allowing seven years for his period of insanity (4:33) and one year of reigning as king in his restored kingdom (4:34-37).

**The Outline:**

- A. Nebuchadnezzar's Royal Proclamation (4:1-3)
- B. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (4:4-18)
- C. Daniel's Reaction to the Dream (4:19)
- D. Daniel's Interpretation of the Dream (4:20-27)
- E. The Fulfillment of the Dream (4:28-33)
- F. Nebuchadnezzar's Reaction (4:34-37)

**The Key Players:**

- God (Most-High)
- Nebuchadnezzar
- Daniel
- Wisemen
- A Watcher (Holy One)

**Nebuchadnezzar's Royal Proclamation:** After the events recorded in this chapter had taken place, the King had a royal proclamation about them circulated. He did so in an effort to teach his people the lesson which God had taught him, the fact that the Most High God has a kingdom that is sovereign over man and will last forever in contrast to man's kingdoms. Based on the fact that the literary style of this chapter resembles the style of Nebuchadnezzar's ancient inscriptions, and the character of the king revealed in this chapter agrees with ancient descriptions of the man, it is concluded that the chapter records the words of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

**Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

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| 1 | Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that made him afraid (4-5).                   |
| 2 | The King brought all the wisemen before him to interpret the dream (6).  |
| 3 | The King told the wisemen the dream but they could not interpret it (7). |
| 4 | Daniel came in and the King requested that he interpret the dream (8-9)  |
| 5 | The King revealed the dream to Daniel (10).                              |

- A large tree stood in the midst of the earth (10).
- The tree grew strong and tall and was visible to the whole earth (11).
- The tree's leaves were beautiful and it provided fruit for all (12).
- The tree provided for the animals, birds and the people of the earth (12).
- As the King lay in bed, he saw a holy one come down from heaven (13).
- The holy one directed that:
  - the tree be chopped down, its fruit scattered, and all flee (14).
  - the stump would remain but banded with iron and bronze (15).
- The holy one said that:
  - a man (represented by the stump) would be changed to a beast (16).
  - the purpose for this was to let the living see that God is sovereign (17).
  - the Most High God rules the kingdom of men (17).
  - God gives authority to the humblest of men (17).

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| 6 | The King requested that Daniel interpret the dream for him (18) |
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### **Daniel's Reaction to the Dream**

7 Daniel was alarmed at the interpretation and the King noticed (19).

8 The King told Daniel not to be alarmed (19).

9 Daniel expressed remorse at what he was about to tell the King (19).

### **Daniel's Interpretation of the Dream**

10 Daniel revealed the interpretation of the dream to the King (20-26)

Daniel told the King that:

- the Tree represented him (20-22).
- what happened to the tree represented God's judgment of him (23-24).
- he would live like a beast for seven years (25).
- God's judgment would end when he saw God as sovereign (25).
- the stump represented a restoration when judgment was complete (26).

11 Daniel counseled the King to repent of his ways (27).

### **The Fulfillment of the Dream**

12 A year later the King was admiring his accomplishments (28-30).

13 A voice from heaven pronounced judgment on the King (31-32).

14 Immediately the King left the palace and lived like an animal (33).

### **Nebuchadnezzar's Reaction**

15 Later, Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes to heaven and praised God (34-35).

16 At this, his sanity and his kingdom returned to him (36).

17 Nebuchadnezzar continued to praise God (37).

**What was God's judgment on Nebuchadnezzar?** He imagined himself to be an animal and acted like one. Generally, medical science refers to this as lycanthropy, which is related to a wolf, but more specifically, boanthropy is related to behaving as an ox. Apparently, the disease is curable, and is known to allow its victim sufficient consciousness of self to make intelligent prayer possible. This would explain the king's ability to change his attitude while suffering this madness.

**What do skeptics say?** Skeptics have scoffed at the account Nebuchadnezzar's mental illness in Daniel. They have claimed that it is preposterous to believe that such a thing happened to such a mighty king. However, a Greek writer named Megasthenes, who lived from 312-280 BC related a story told to him by the Chaldeans that sounds similar to Daniel's account. Additionally, it is worth noting that toward the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign his name disappeared from the historical and governmental records of Babylon and then reappeared for a short time before the King died.

**What was the lesson of Daniel 4?** The term "Most-High" is used four times throughout the account referring to God (v17, 25, 32 & 34/35). It seems that the message being conveyed is that God is in charge over the affairs of men. When we compare Daniel 4:35 to Romans 9:20 (Can the pot say the potter, why did you make me this way?), we see that the lesson that the King learned must be learned by people of the world today. On this occasion, it appears that the King had a change of heart.

**Next Week:** "Numbered, Weighed, and Rejected (Daniel 5:1-30)"