



An Exploration of Eschatology in Exile

WEEK 4: October 6, 2020, 10 am

Pastor Andy Kinder
Seneca Church of God of Prophecy
12 Week Discipleship Course

Nebuchadnezzar & The Sovereignty of God: Daniel 4

Objectives

- Recognize God's Sovereignty
- Acknowledge Our Need for God
- Submit all glory and honor to God

Chapter Outline

- The King's Praise of God's Wonders (Daniel 4:1-3)
- The Troubled Visions (Daniel 4:4-18)
- Daniel's Troubled Thoughts (Daniel 4:19-22)
- The Seven Years of Illness (Daniel 4:23-27)
- The King's Prideful Boast (Daniel 4:28-33)
- Nebuchadnezzar's Praise for God (Daniel 4:34-37)

Review

- Daniel one begins with the history that leads up to this point in history.
- Daniel two discussed the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's interpretation of it, both historically and futuristic.
- Daniel three discussed the King's image of gold and the faith of the three Hebrew boys.
- Each chapters common thread is that Yahweh is the only true God.
- Chapters 1-4 each end with worship and adoration directed towards Yahweh.

The King's Praise of God & The Troubled Visions (Daniel 4:1-18)

- Nebuchadnezzar's praise is very peculiar here. Yet, he recognizes the God of Heaven as the revealer of all wisdom.
- To hear a Gentile king recognize the God of the Hebrews was a major event in Biblical history.
- He had a dream that troubled him greatly. However, he did not know what it meant. His wise men did not have the ability to tell him the interpretation.
- He recalled Daniel and his abilities and gifts. From there he called on Daniel to interpret. Notice this time he called Daniel by his Hebrew name, but still acknowledged the name of Belteshazzar, which is in reference to his Babylonian god.
- This means that what he saw previously with Daniel and the three Hebrew young men was enough to impress him, but not enough to convert him. Being impressed with God isn't the same as being converted.
- The Dream:
 - **A tree in the midst of the earth:** The **tree** in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was noted for its size, strength, prominence, beauty, fruit, and shelter.
 - **He cried aloud and said thus:** The **watcher** (presumably an angel) explained the fate of the tree. He noted that the tree was to be chopped down, and it would lose its size, strength, prominence, beauty, fruit, and shelter. He also said that the **tree** represented **a man** who would be **changed** and **given the heart of a beast**.
 - **Bound with a band of iron and bronze:** These were either for the tree stump's confinement or protection. The tree would no longer be free and great.
 - **In order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men:** Nebuchadnezzar heard these words in his dream. In light of this, the dream wasn't hard to interpret – it clearly dealt with the humbling of a great king. No wonder none of Nebuchadnezzar's counselors wanted to interpret the dream for him.
 - Like most kings – ancient and modern – Nebuchadnezzar wanted to believe that *he* ruled instead of God or anyone else. "Both the Assyrian and the Babylonian kings thought of themselves as rulers over all the earth, so describing themselves in their inscriptions." (Wood)
- Even though Nebuchadnezzar had not yielded to God, he knew that the "Spirit of the holy gods" was in him.

Daniel's Troubled Thoughts (Daniel 4:19-27)

- To be honest with Nebuchadnezzar could mean instant death for Daniel. However, he trusted God and told the truth in love. We can learn from Daniel. Sugar coating the truth doesn't help; rather it can prolong the revelation that is needed to change someone's life.
- The Interpretation:

- **His thoughts troubled him:** Daniel genuinely cared for Nebuchadnezzar and was clearly affected by the meaning of the dream. He didn't *want* it to be true of his friend Nebuchadnezzar.
- **It is you, O king:** Daniel applied the point without ambiguity. Instead of reaching for a general point (such as saying, "We all could use a little more humility") Daniel brought the truth in love. This was similar to what the prophet Nathan said to King David: *You are the man!* (2 Samuel 12:7).
- Great men and princes are often represented, in the language of the prophets, under the similitude of *trees*, see Ezekiel 17:5-6; 31:3 and following; Jeremiah 22:15; Psalms 1:3; 37:35.
- **Drive you from men... make you eat grass like oxen... wet you with the dew of heaven:** When Daniel explained this to Nebuchadnezzar, the king probably couldn't guess just how literally it would be fulfilled. This is not a symbolic dream. God was going to literally fulfill this dream.
- **After you come to know that Heaven rules:** This was God's intended purpose for Nebuchadnezzar. The king could have avoided this humiliating fate if he genuinely humbled himself.
- Notice, in verse 27 Daniel asked the king to repent. Hoping that God may relent his judgment. Yet, a prideful heart is not broken easily. It takes a process of humility to reach a prideful heart. When God is trying to break our prideful hearts, we must learn how to trust the process unto which God has elected us to walk.

The King's Prideful Boast & His Praise for God (Daniel 4:28-37)

- The dream came true just as Daniel had predicted.
- Nebuchadnezzar would not repent; therefore, God acted out of love to chastise even this wicked king.
- Notice, according to verse 29 God had given to Nebuchadnezzar at least 12 months (1 year) to repent). However, in the midst of his pride God judged this wicked king.
- The King's Wicked Mindset:
 - **"Is not this great Babylon:"** Babylon was truly one of the spectacular cities of the ancient world, which included the famous hanging gardens built by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - Daniel knew that the new Babylon was the creation of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:30), something previously thought untrue and only verified by recent archaeology. Nobody in the Maccabean period (second century B.C.) thought Nebuchadnezzar had built the new Babylon.

- In the British Museum, there are six columns of writing recovered from Babylon with describe the huge building projects of Nebuchadnezzar and his zeal to enlarge and beautify the city.
- Most of the bricks found in the excavations of Babylon carry this stamp: “Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, supporter of Esagila and Ezida, exalted first-born son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.”
- Late-daters of Daniel (who say that it was written in the times of the Maccabees, around 167 B.C.) can’t explain how a late writer would know to accurately attribute the spectacular buildings of Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar. One liberal Bible commentator, R. H. Pfeiffer, said of this problem: “We shall presumably never know.”
- **“They shall drive you from men... eat grass like oxen:”** The announcement came to Nebuchadnezzar in the same words he heard in his dream. This showed him that the dream was about to be fulfilled, and he would be reduced to the existence of an animal – specifically, an ox. The form of insanity in which men think of themselves as animals and imitate the behavior of an animal has been observed. Some call it generally *insania zoanthropica* and more specifically in Nebuchadnezzar’s case, *boanthropy*, the delusion that one is an ox.
- Finally, after 7 years of punishment, God opened the King’s eyes.
- This judgment had to be fulfilled according to God’s plan. Notice, Nebuchadnezzar even stated that nobody could ever say to God, “What doest thou?”
 - There is one way in which we questions God’s actions in a prideful heart. As to elevate our way or thoughts above the Almighty. This is sin.
 - There is another way in which we recognize our lack of ability and understanding of God’s ways and ask him in a heart-felt way, WHY, LORD? This is asked only to help us understand better.
- Spurgeon suggested the proper response of the believer to the greatness and sovereignty of God:
 - Have a heart of humble adoration.
 - Show a heart of unquestioning acceptance.
 - Exercise the spirit of reverent love.
 - Let your spirit have profound delight.
- Nebuchadnezzar’s last words in chapter 4 is, “and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” He is speaking from a place of experience. He knows that God can humble anyone, any group of people, and any nation (even a world empire).