

Daniel Chapter 4

Pastor Matt Postiff

Fellowship
BIBLE CHURCH

Another Question of Time

- There are, once again, no time markers given.
- Dr. Whitcomb's suggestion: the dream probably occurred around 569-568 BC, giving enough time:
 - To forget his theology lessons of chapters 2 and 3.
 - For a year to pass between dream and fulfillment (possibly the victory over Egypt happened that year).
 - For 7 years at the end of his reign, ending 562 BC.

Campaign Against Egypt

- A small fragment in the British Museum shows: In his “37th year [568/567 B.C.] Nebuchadnezzar, king of Bab[ylon], marched against Egypt to deliver a battle. [Ama]sis of Egypt [called up his a]rm[y].”
- Egypt was defeated. But Babylon was more modest in its writings than other empires, so this doesn't appear all over the place.

Campaign Against Egypt

- This event is mentioned in the Bible:
 - Jeremiah 43:10-13. This was prophesied by or before 580 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar will defeat Egypt.
 - Ezekiel 29:17-20. In 571 B.C., God promised through Ezekiel that Babylon would have victory over Egypt as compensation for serving God by afflicting Tyre, though not utterly defeating it.

Structure of Chapter 4

- A letter to his subjects throughout the empire.

Verses	Subject Matter
1-3	Introduction: What God Has Done in My Life
4-18	A Troubling Dream Recounted
19-26	Daniel Interpreted the Dream
27	Daniel Proposed a Course of Action
28-33	The Dream is Fulfilled: The King is Humbled
34-37	Nebuchadnezzar Honors God

Has His Letter Been Preserved?

- In other words, does history give testimony to this letter?
- You could go in two directions with that question:
 - Has an archaeologist dug up a copy of it?
 - The letter *is* preserved—in the Bible! The Bible *is* history!

A Title for the Chapter

- Pride and Punishment
- Or, Pride, Punishment and Repentance
- It appears to this student of Scripture that Nebuchadnezzar truly repented and was saved from his sin—by God. But not before first being a very prominent wretch.

Introduction to the Letter, 1-3

- Addressed to the “universal” citizen of his kingdom, which he viewed as dwelling throughout all the earth.
 - We know his kingdom didn’t cover the whole globe, but Daniel 2:38 and 4:22 do indicate that the king’s greatness and dominion reached the end of the earth. “Known world” is probably OK.

Introduction to the Letter, 1-3

- Verse 2 explains the purpose of the letter: to describe God's good work in Nebuchadnezzar's life.
- Verse 3 extols God for His signs & wonders, and His eternal kingdom.
- This is a big statement for such a king to make.

The Troubling Dream, 4-5

- The setting was rest and flourishing.
- You might think this dreaming thing is a habit for Nebuchadnezzar, but in reality there were about 35 years between the dream of chapter 2 and the dream of chapter 4.
- The dream made him afraid. See 2:1.

Cause of the Fear, 5

- In chapter 2, the smashed image and the meaning of the dream bothered him.
- In chapter 4, the dream starts out fine, but then an angel from heaven speaks, and the tree is chopped down. This seems ominous.
- Even worse, a man is turned into a beast (16).

Call for Interpretation, 6-7

- The wise men had not been helpful before, but the situation was desperate. Once again, they were of no help. Nebuchadnezzar was not even holding back the dream this time.
- So then Daniel came in. He was named Belteshazzar.
 - Name means “Bel, protect the life of the king”

Daniel's Reputation, 8-9

- He is in his mid-50s by this time.
- Nebuchadnezzar recognized him as possessing the Spirit of the Holy God (or, “spirit of the gods” in the mind of the polytheistic king).
- Nebuchadnezzar did not hesitate to let this be known by his own mouth, verse 9.

Daniel's Reputation, 8-9

- Daniel's reputation as a dream-interpreter preceded him. "No secret troubles you," the king said, so "explain to me the visions of my dream...and its interpretation."
 - He was confident Daniel could not be "stumped"!
- He had excelled and was "chief magician."

The Tree Part of the Vision, 10-15

- Nebuchadnezzar saw a tree in his vision.
- The focus in this chapter is usually on the animal-like insanity of the king.
- But the tree also plays an important role.
- This was a huge and strong tree, whose dimensions worked well in a dream context.

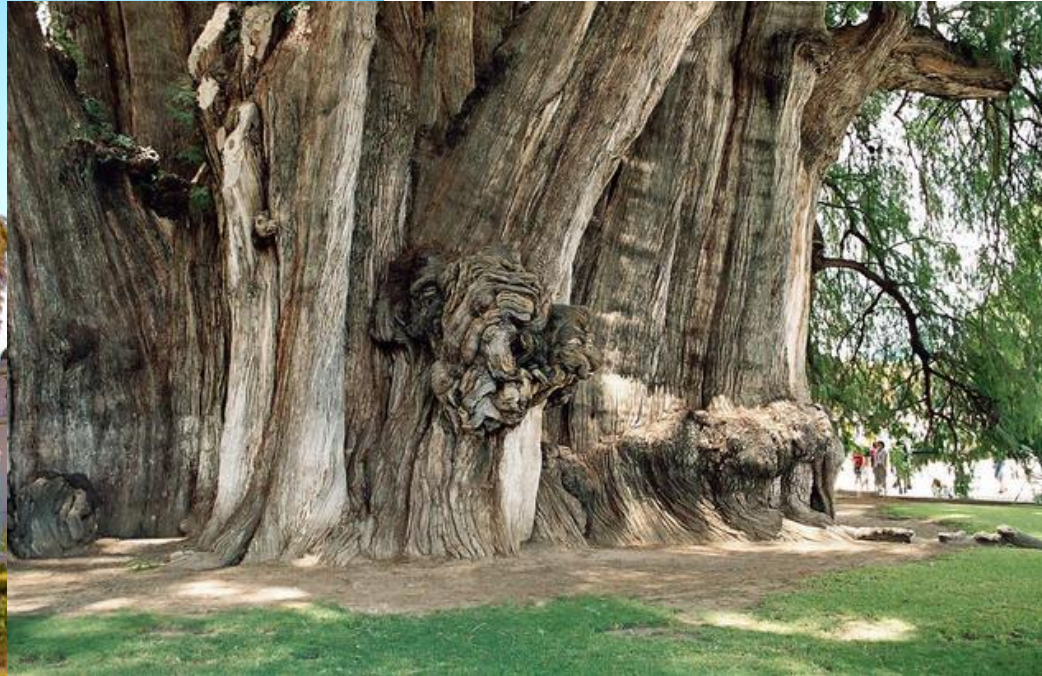
Huge Trees

- Example: Douglas fir, in the NW United States, can grow to 17 feet or more in diameter, and 300 feet tall.
- Some said they knew of many trees 20-25 feet in diameter at that height.



In Santa Maria in Oaxaca, Mexico

38-foot diameter!



The Tree of the Vision

- Visible world-wide. Healthy. Beautiful.
- Provided food, shade, and lodging for birds, beasts, and man alike.
- Trees as symbols of people: Psalm 1:3, 52:8, 92:12-14; Jer. 17:8.
- Trees as symbols of Kingdoms: Ezekiel 17, 31.

The Tree is Chopped Down, 13-14

- The title “a watcher, a holy one” identifies an angel in the dream.
- The angel had a message: cut down the tree and strip it bare. Scatter the animals that were enjoying it.
- It sounds final.

But the Tree Stump Remains, 15

- Bind the tree stump with iron and bronze.
- It would be outside, exposed to the elements like dew. Normally these things would rot the stump.
- Transition to “him” at the end of the verse.

The Animal Part of the Vision, 16

- The dream suddenly turns in verse 15, where the tree transmutes into a man...and then a beast.
- He grazes with beasts on grass.
- His heart is changed from a man to a beast.
 - Heart = mind. He will lose his mind.
- “Seven times” pass over him = 7 years in that state.

The Declaration of the Angel, 17

- The predicted events *will* occur.
- The decree of the watchers is derived from the decree of the God Who sent them to send the message. Angels don't make decrees themselves.
- Purpose: all living to know that God rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He pleases.
- Note: "the lowest of men." Nebuchadnezzar.

Request for Interpretation, 18

- Daniel is commanded to tell what it means.
- No indication is given that days passed between this and verse 19; in fact, the events seem to happen back to back.
- Nor is there any indication of lengthy prayer on Daniel's part, as in chapter 2 (2:17-18).

No Flattery Will Work on Daniel

- Nebuchadnezzar had elevated Daniel, and said very complementary things about him in verses 8-9 and 18.
- But this would not make the meaning of the dream any different than the God-intended meaning. No flattery could change that.

Daniel Interprets, 19-26

- A very long pause. Daniel is “astonished.”
 - Also translated as dismayed, stunned, perplexed, appalled. The latter is probably best.
- He was very troubled, moreso than the king!
- Nebuchadnezzar tried to help Daniel by means of an encouraging word.

Daniel's Hypothetical Wish, 19b

- “May” the dream apply to your enemies.
 - But the reality is that it is for Nebuchadnezzar.
- Daniel knew what was up, but he expressed compassion toward the king.
 - Nebuchadnezzar is spiritually lost.
 - He needs to be rightly related to God.

Identification of Dream Tree, 20-22

- Tree = Nebuchadnezzar
 - Like the head of gold in chapter 2 was the king.
- King Nebuchadnezzar is unquestionably great. His dominion reaches to the ends of the world.
- Verses 20-21 and 23 repeat earlier details.

Meaning of the Chopping Down

- The tree represents a man, and that man will:
 - Be driven from people
 - Dwell with the beasts of the field
 - Eat grass
 - Be wet with the dew
 - For a period of 7 years
- His glory and kingdom are taken away.

Until...

- Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that God:
 - Rules in the kingdom of men
 - Gives the kingdom to whomever he pleases
- In other words, Nebuchadnezzar has exalted himself and ignored God's primary role.
- So God is going to humble the king.

A Note on “Acknowledges”

- It is insufficient to merely “know” that God rules.
- Acknowledging means to *recognize, accept,* and *embrace* the truth that God rules. It entails a change of mind and disposition.

More on Acknowledging

- This is like the difference between believing as the demons (James 2:19) and believing as in true Christian faith.
 - The demons “know” God and the facts of Christ.
 - The believer not only knows, but recognizes, accepts, and embraces these truths—and others, like his own sinfulness and need of a Savior (= acknowledges).

Some Security, 26

- The stump and roots are left behind. The king and his kingdom will survive in some fashion.
- The metal bands picture it as being protected until the king can once again assume his throne.
 - But only after he comes to **acknowledge** that Heaven rules over all.

Summary of Interpretation

- The tree represents Nebuchadnezzar.
- The chopping down of the tree represents the deep humbling of Nebuchadnezzar.
- The preserved stump represents that Nebuchadnezzar will be returned to his kingship.

Advice from Daniel, 27

- Daniel sticks out his neck and does more than the king asked. He gives advice.
 - He had been doing that for years already.
- The advice was to repent, do righteousness, show mercy to the poor. Good advice today!
- God may relent and give the king more time.

Advice from Daniel, 27

- Daniel would not have said this if it were not relevant.
- Evidently, therefore, Nebuchadnezzar was ruthless and cruel toward the poor. He was sinful in all kinds of ways. He did not love righteousness and justice.

Daniel Told Me So, 28-33

- The dream was fulfilled just as Daniel said.
- God graciously gave Nebuchadnezzar more time—a year more.
- But 12 months later, as the king strutted around his royal palace, he made a statement that indicated he had not learned the lesson.

The Dream Fulfilled, 30

- Great Babylon
- I have built
- My mighty power
- Honor of my majesty
- This was true in a way, but he did not recognize God at all. It was purely selfish.

Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, v. 30

- Excavations have shown a lot about his works.
- A city with a 5-mile long double wall.
 - Each wall 25-feet thick, 40 feet between them.
 - 260 towers, 160 feet apart.
- Procession street $\frac{2}{3}$ mile long, lined with statues of 120 lions, and dragons, bulls.

Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, 2

- Glazed and colorful tile, much in a royal blue.
- Ishtar gate, with animal designs, 35 feet high.
- Ziggurat (step-pyramid) that was nearly 300 feet high with a temple to the god Marduk at the top.
 - 60 million bricks were used to build it.



Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, 3

- Three palaces
- A throne room 171 by 56 feet wide.
- Greek capitals on columns.
- Hanging gardens, one of the wonders of the ancient world, for his Median wife Amytis.
 - Water pumping system included.

Nebuchadnezzar's Pride, v. 30

- In Toronto, at the Royal Ontario Museum are two square clay building blocks with an inscription stamped upon them reading, *“Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who provides for (the temples) Esagila and Ezida, the eldest son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, am I.”*
- King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon was a prolific builder. According to some sources, Nebuchadnezzar's workers used over 15,000,000 bricks in his building projects and *almost all of them carried the same inscription* (emphasis added).

Nebuchadnezzar's Pride, v. 30

- At the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) in New York City is a dedication cylinder inscribed with cuneiform writing (wedge- or triangle-shaped characters, often baked into clay). It is one of many that have been found underneath Nebuchadnezzar's building projects. The one at the MET commemorates Nebuchadnezzar's construction of a new outer city wall and it reads in part:
- *"I built a strong wall that cannot be shaken with bitumen and baked bricks... I laid its foundation on the breast of the netherworld, and I built its top as high as a mountain... The fortifications of Esagila and Babylon I strengthened and established the name of my reign forever."*

The Dream Fulfilled, 31-33

- Twice the text indicates the speed of fulfillment.
 - In verse 31, “while the word was still in the king’s mouth.”
 - In verse 33, “that very hour.”
- This cannot be explained in natural terms.

Similar Rapid Punishments

- Acts 5: Ananias and Sapphira
 - Lied to God and misled the church.
 - Died essentially “on the spot.”
- Acts 12:22-23: Herod
 - Received praise for himself of which only God is worthy.
 - An angel of the Lord struck him down and he died an awful death.

Similar Rapid Punishments

- Somewhat more obscure is the case of a nationwide punishment of Israel.
 - Psalm 78:30-31 – as the food was still between their teeth, God’s anger rose against them and killed many.
- We all often deserve such punishments; but God is merciful.

So What Was This “Disease”? v. 33

- It is known as boanthropy, a very rare mental disease in which a human believes himself to be a bovine.
 - Delusional state; behavior as if identity is that of an animal.
 - Sometimes starts with a dream; or is thought by the afflicted one to actually be a dream.

The Disease of Boanthropy

- There are modern examples.
- See the case mentioned by R. K. Harrison from 1946.
- Such was the condition of the king.
- It must have been a state secret, and very frustrating for those around the king.

Meanwhile...

- Evil-Merodach, the king's son, was probably the emperor.
 - Daniel, as one “in the know,” would probably be much involved in hiding the secret and running the government.
- Examples of world leaders stricken in office.
 - Woodrow Wilson

Lack of Evidence for This Event?

- Nebuchadnezzar's mania lacks support from other ancient texts.
- But this is not an episode that anyone would want to record. It is embarrassing and, at the time, a potential threat to the security of the empire and Nebuchadnezzar's re-accession to the throne.

Lack of Evidence for This Event?

- Lack of other ancient texts does not mean it didn't happen. We may not have found those texts, yet. But the Bible *is* an ancient text!
- But something may have been found in the British Museum, No. BM 34113 (sp 213), and was published by A. K. Grayson in 1975.

4:33 From a Cuneiform Tablet

2 [Nebu]chadnezzar considered

3 His life appeared of no value to [him,]

5 And (the) Babylon(ian) speaks bad counsel to Evil-merodach [....]

6 Then he gives an entirely different order but [. . .]

7 He does not heed the word from his lips, the cour[tier(s) - - -]

11 He does not show love to son and daughter [. . .]

12 ... family and clan do not exist [. . .]

14 His attention was not directed towards promoting the welfare of Esagil [and Babylon]

16 He prays to the lord of lords, he raised [his hands (in supplication) (. . .)]

17 He weeps bitterly to Marduk, the g[reat] gods [.....]

18 His prayers go forth to [.....]

Feasibility of 7 “Lost” Years

- Good records of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign were kept up to about 594 B.C., but after that the records are scant, so 7 silent years is feasible.
- A mentally ill king could have continued to reign, even as other historical examples.
 - Especially with the help of his son and Daniel.

Can God Do This...To Me?

- The answer is in the question: **God**.
 - Of course He can: He made everything.
- But this was a unique circumstance, with a man who was an international leader, one of those on top of the world.
 - A perfect exemplar to show the world about God.
 - Like Pharaoh of 900 years earlier.

Nebuchadnezzar Honors God, 34

- The chapter, and the letter it records, concludes with praise for God.
- First, Nebuchadnezzar looked up to heaven. He was acknowledging God.
- Then his mind returned.
- Then he praised the one true and living God.

Nebuchadnezzar Honors God, 34

- He shows clear recognition that Heaven rules.
 - See 4:32, 26, 17
 - Heaven = God
 - The Kingdom of Heaven = The Kingdom of God

Nebuchadnezzar Honors God, 35

- All the inhabitants of the earth are nothing.
 - The king includes himself.
- God is omnipotent. He does what He wishes.
- No one can stop God.
- No one can question God's actions.
 - Yet we do so too often. Shame on us.

God Restores Nebuchadnezzar, 36

- God gave his mind back.
- God gave his kingdom back.
- God gave his honor and splendor back.
- God gave his counselors and nobles back.
- God gave his majesty back.
- Evidently this was short lived.

Final Praise for God, 37

- The king *personally* praised God, identifying Him as the King of Heaven.
- He acknowledges God is the God of truth and justice. All that He does conforms to those attributes.
- If God can put down Nebuchadnezzar, he can do the same to anyone on earth.

Apply to Your Thinking

- 1 Corinthians 4:7: “...what do you have that you did not receive?” Teach this to your children!
- Galatians 6:3: “...if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”
- Romans 12:3: “...to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly...”

More Application

- Daniel had great respect for Nebuchadnezzar, and treated him with deference.
- God is in control of all things, even bad things.
- Boasting is completely out of place believers.
- Note the depth of God's grace toward wicked Nebuchadnezzar...and toward us.

More Application

- We often say that leaders in government or business or the church should see themselves as servants of those they lead.
- But more importantly, those leaders are servants of God, and should think of themselves as such.

Liberal Objections to Daniel

1. Aramaic was a late Semitic language not used in literature of the sixth century B.C.
2. Three Greek words in Daniel 3 indicates that the book was written in the Hellenistic period, after Alexander the Great had brought Greek culture and language to the Oriental world.
3. Chronological contradictions between Daniel 1:1 and Jeremiah 25:1 show that the writer of Daniel was so far removed from the historical events he described that he made mistakes.

Solutions to These Objections

- #1-3 have been solved by archaeological discoveries.
- About #1, we know Daniel was written earlier than liberal scholars claim, and Aramaic was language not uncommon in Neo-Babylonia.
- We addressed #2 briefly in our studies in chapter 2.
- Differences in figuring the accession and regnal years of kings explains #3.

More Liberal Objections to Daniel

4. Mention of Belshazzar as last king of Babylon proves that the story is legendary. All ancient sources present Nabonidus as Babylon's last king and never even mention Belshazzar.
5. Ancient historians never mention Darius the Mede as king of Babylon, as Daniel 5-6 do; thus the book of Daniel is not a trustworthy historical source.
6. Nebuchadnezzar's madness of seven years, recorded in no other ancient source, is further proof of the legendary nature of the book.

Solutions to These Objections

- #4 about Nabonidus and Belshazzar is resolved because Belshazzar was second-in-command under Nabonidus at the time.
- See “third ruler in the kingdom” in 5:7, 16, 29.

Solutions to Objections

- #5 about Darius the Mede is more difficult.
 - Dr. Whitcomb offers a solution. Darius is probably the same as Gubaru, a sub-governor under King Cyrus the Great. Gubaru's name appears often in ancient texts as a governor of Babylon (*Daniel*, p. 79-80).
 - Dr. Siegfried H. Horn also offers a solution (September, 1959, *Ministry*, page 44; or *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 4, pages 814-817).
- See above for answer to #6.