

Daniel Chapter 4 – A Werewolf in Babylon

Harvest Community Church

Series: Daniel

Text: Daniel 4:33

Daniel 4:1-3

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found archaeologists discovered a fragment called “The prayer of Nabonidus.” It tells of a Babylonian king who was mentally ill for seven years and that his malady ended only after the judgement was lifted by God following the witness of a Jewish prophet. The king was Nebuchadnezzar, and the prophet was Daniel.

Daniel chapter four records how one of the world’s greatest kings was reduced to living like an animal because of his **pride**. He was a very capable and powerful king. He reigned for 43 years over the Babylonian Empire. History records that “all peoples and nations trembled and feared before him.” Nebuchadnezzar helped make Babylon a **wonder** of the ancient world. He built buildings, roads, trade routes, conquered enemies and then made those people a part of his kingdom. He was a warrior, a builder and consummate politician. He was cruel and brutal with his enemies yet created the famous hanging gardens on the walls surrounding the city. Even Isaiah recognized the grandeur this king created. **Isaiah 13:19**

This bizarre story accurately shows us sin’s effect on humanity. Everything about sin is degrading and defiling. This is why God hates it. The sin that all other sins flow out of is pride. **Proverbs 16:18** There also seems to be a truth revealed that there is a **line**, a certain point, that once we cross it God says – “Enough.” **Genesis 6:3**
Daniel warned the king about that line. **Daniel 4:27** The king in his arrogance forgot the warning and paid the consequences.

History, including recent history, is filled with powerful and famous people whose lives were cut far too short. Elvis, Prince, Marilyn Monroe, Michael Jackson are only a few of the many we could name. Some are the result of **lifestyle** choices others have known the judgment of God.

It would seem that some time had passed between chapter 3 and chapter 4. The king was clearly impacted by the fact that the three Hebrew boys did not die in the fire. This event did not change his heart. He still did not acknowledge God as **his** God. He still called Jehovah the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. **Daniel 3:28-30** In his mind Jehovah is still just one of many God’s

This chapter is a letter written to inform the people and tell the story of how God **revealed** Himself to the king and the **lessons** that the king learned.

It is written after his years of dealing with God’s judgment and after being restored to his kingdom.

- 1) This warrior king is now consumed with the idea of **peace**. “Peace be multiplied to you.” This is an incredible change of heart that he is declaring to all the nations he had conquered and all the ones that were in fear of his armies.

- 2) He is declaring the signs and wonders God used to get his attention; he now refers to God as the **Most** High God. Some scholars suggest that King Nebuchadnezzar made a conversion at the end of his life. It is possible that he only reordered his perception of God in his pagan hierarchy. He was moved enough to write a letter that explained his feelings toward his humbling experience.
- 3) He realized that God's kingdom was and is an **everlasting** kingdom while his was limited in time and scope. "His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and His dominion or rule is from generation to generation." This is an important thing for every Christian to understand during every season of history and in every nation. Every human government is limited and temporary. We serve an **eternal**, almighty God. **Psalm 145:13**
As we continue through the book of Daniel this is important to remember as we see what God is doing in end-times prophecy.

Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's ability – Daniel 4:4-9

First off King Nebuchadnezzar helps us to understand his state of mind as God was getting his attention. He was resting in a **false** sense of security. Jesus warned about this in the New Testament. **Luke 12:19-21 (NKJV & NLT)** In the natural King Nebuchadnezzar was successful and in abundance.

The dream that he had shook him to the core. God has a way of breaking through in a way that will get our attention. He will so shake us that nothing else will bring peace until we have a sufficient answer.

Notice that the king resorted to his old **pattern** of doing things. Instead of calling Daniel first or going to God first he sought out advice from all other sources.

Before God dealt with the king, the king still considered Bel his god. He refers to Daniel as Belteshazzar, the name he gave Daniel when he was brought into captivity. He saw in Daniel the Spirit of the **holy** 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.

King Nebuchadnezzar's dream – Daniel 4:10-19

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.

In the dream, the angels give the **reason** for what is about to happen. **Daniel 4:17**
God will, at times, make sure that the living and powerful know that the MOST HIGH rules in the kingdom of men. This is a theme found throughout the book of Daniel and throughout the Bible. The story of mankind is really HIS-story.

Daniel's interpretation of the dream. – Daniel 4:19-27

Right at the outset of verse nineteen we see change in the heart of King Nebuchadnezzar – “Then Daniel whose name **was** Belteshazzar. Which is different from verse eight – “But at last Daniel came before me (his name **is** Belteshazzar according to the name of my god.)”

Also in verse 19 Daniel answers the king favorably. “My lord may this dream concern those who hate you.” Remember that Daniel is in captivity. Daniel does not sugar coat the message, but he delivers it with faithfulness to God AND **respect** for the king. **Romans 13:7** As wicked as the king was, he had accomplished remarkable things. He was also God's tool for disciplining the nation of Israel. In all that Daniel was dealing with emotionally, he kept in mind the overall purposes of God.

Part of the purpose of the dream was that King Nebuchadnezzar could humble himself or that God could do it for him. **Daniel 4:26-27** The purpose of this was too humble not to destroy. As a prophet, Daniel was not afraid to offer **advice**. Too often in our day we are told not to offer people advice. People say, “who am I to offer my opinion?” When we are used to speak for God, we will often know what God is saying. Daniel was not afraid to speak truth to power because he had the Spirit of God in him.

The right reaction to the threat of judgment is a humble **repentance**. Unfortunately, Nebuchadnezzar did not do this. He should have followed the example of the repentance of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah

The fulfillment of the dream – Daniel 4:28-33

From the time of the dream to the time of his prideful boast was **1 year**. How easily we forget. God gave Nebuchadnezzar twelve months to repent, and he probably forgot about the dream during that time – but God didn't forget. If we do not act on God's significant dealings with us, we will believe that he has either forgotten or forgiven. If God has given you a significant warning, He will let you know that you have been faithful. If you hear nothing, know that He has not changed course. Because nothing happened, the king got too big for his britches.

Nebuchadnezzar restored to his senses. Daniel 4:34-37

At the **appointed** time the king's insanity came to an end. His understanding returned and he humbled himself and **blessed**, praised and **honored** the Most High God. Nebuchadnezzar could not break free from his madness until God appointed the end of the time. Then he had the opportunity to humble himself and lift his eyes to heaven.

The return of **reason** and understanding results in **worship**. **Daniel 4:37**

When we repent, God will **restore**; this is what happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Some find prophetic significance in this account. Since Babylon is used in the Scriptures as a figure of the world system in general, we can say: Nebuchadnezzar's madness foreshadows the madness of Gentile nations in their rejection of God and that Nebuchadnezzar's fall typifies Jesus' judgment of the nations.