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a ***Grace Notes*** course

## **Daniel**

an expositional study  
by Dr. Grant Richison

Lesson 104

### **Daniel Chapter 4**

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## Daniel 104 – Chapter 4

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## Daniel 4

### Daniel 4:1-5

**Nebuchadnezzar the king, To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.**

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

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

**I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace.**

**I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.**

Chapter four is the climax to Nebuchadnezzar's spiritual journey. This is the third miracle Nebuchadnezzar witnessed. Daniel presents the chapter by Nebuchadnezzar's personal account.

Nebuchadnezzar moved from the bankruptcy of Babylonian wisdom to the wisdom of God. The main thrust of chapter four is God's sovereignty (vv. 17-18, 22, 24-26, 30-32, 34, 36-37).

**Daniel 4:25.** They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.

The timing of the events of chapter four is much later than chapter three. It may have been toward the close of his forty-three-year rule.

Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed a doxology in the first three verses.

Peace is the customary salutation in the east (6:25).

Nebuchadnezzar came to increasingly respect the God of Daniel in the first three chapters. He now states the purpose of his tract to Daniel – to declare the glory of Daniel's God.

Signs and wonders describe miracles. Signs are natural phenomena that evidence supernatural intervention. The word means something which points out. These signs pointed out God's wisdom and power. Wonders are supernatural manifestations of divine intervention in the course of nature. The word wonder means that which produces astonishment, surprise, awe.

The name Most High God is clearly Yahweh (3:36). However, the king's use of this name does not mean that he is a monotheist at this time.

The two words great and mighty stress the magnitude of God's miracles.

Nebuchadnezzar declares that God's kingdom is everlasting in contrast to his own temporal kingdom. God's rule is eternal, stable and unchanging.

The kingdoms of men change from generation to generation but God's kingdom is eternal and without change or loss of stability. No one will undermine this kingdom by a coup d'état. No one can assassinate Him or usurp His authority.

During 582-575 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar did not engage in military undertakings. This may be the time referred to here because he presents himself at rest in my house. At rest means to be free from fear.

Flourishing means growing green. The picture is a flourishing tree. His kingdom was prosperous. Nebuchadnezzar possessed all affluence a human could desire in his day.

Nebuchadnezzar receives a second vision that terrified him, as did his first vision. This mighty world conqueror sitting behind his fortifications is afraid. Although Nebuchadnezzar was the wealthiest man of his day, he was unhappy and full of fear. The man who has everything has nothing.

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**PRINCIPLE:** Success cannot displace higher ends.

**APPLICATION:** It is possible to be successful in every way humans can be successful and still be a failure. A man by modern status symbols can have the appearance of success. Success does not protect us from fear. True prosperity of soul is not possible without Jesus Christ. We can have everything and yet have nothing. Insecurity in the midst of success is vacuous.

**Mark 8:36.** For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?

Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

#### Daniel 4:6-7

**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.**

**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.**

Again, Nebuchadnezzar exhausts his human means before turning to Daniel and his God.

Once again, human viewpoint proves itself ineffective.

**PRINCIPLE:** Human viewpoint without divine viewpoint is ultimately ineffective.

**APPLICATION:** Human wisdom can only operate in the sphere of the finite. It cannot enter into the infinite dimension because that is the space reserved solely for God and His capacity. Philosophers of our age boast in their wisdom but it is an empty boast.

**1 Corinthians 2:14-16.** But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ.

Man by finite means cannot enter into infinite truth. The pride of man thinks that man's wisdom is the end of man. From God's viewpoint, man is not the measure of man. Humanism proclaims that man is the end of man. This is arrogance. God condemns pride throughout the Word of God:

**Proverbs 8:13,14.** The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.

Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength.

**Proverbs 11:2.** When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom.

**Proverbs 16:5.** Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.

**Proverbs 16:18,19.** Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

**James 4:6.** But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.'

#### Daniel 4:8-18

**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**

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Holy God), and I told the dream before him, saying:

**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.**

**These were the visions of my head while on my bed: I was looking, and behold, A tree in the midst of the earth, And its height was great.**

**The tree grew and became strong; Its height reached to the heavens, And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth.**

**Its leaves were lovely, Its fruit abundant, And in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, And all flesh was fed from it.**

**I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven.**

**He cried aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, And the birds from its branches.**

**Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, Bound with a band of iron and bronze, In the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, And let him graze with the beasts On the grass of the earth.**

**Let his heart be changed from that of a man, Let him be given the heart of a beast, And let seven times pass over him.**

**'This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.'**

**This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.**

Nebuchadnezzar described Daniel by both his Hebrew and Babylonian names – Daniel and Belteshazzar (1:7). Holy can mean divine as over against morally pure. Spirit does not refer to the Holy Spirit but to Daniel's human spirit that made possible divine revelation.

Nebuchadnezzar viewed Daniel as the chief of the magicians because of his ability to reveal and interpret dreams. Daniel could interpret any secret.

Now Nebuchadnezzar begins to recount his dream in poetic style. The tree was the centerpiece of his dream. The tree represents Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom that grew to great glory.

Ancients often described nations as trees (Is 2:12-13; 10:34; Ezek 31:3-17). The Babylonian kingdom expanded to an enormous size.

This poetic tree represents Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. Many different kinds of people were under the umbrella of his reign.

A watcher descended from heaven. This angel administered the affairs of nations and was diligent in doing so. Nebuchadnezzar could see his tangible appearance.

The angel cried with a loud voice. The angel ordered the cutting down of the tree. This aspect of the king's dream frightened him the most.

This stump bound with a band of iron and bronze indicates restoration of the tree after it was cut down. Nebuchadnezzar was not completely destroyed in his insanity but dramatically cut down from his former glory.

Nebuchadnezzar roamed like an animal eating grass in the field in his insanity.

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Nebuchadnezzar was cut down as a tree. He would be insane for a period of seven times. The grammar does not indicate the length of this period. It could be days, months or years. Days or months would probably be too short so this refers to years.

Nebuchadnezzar reasoned like an animal. He ate with animals for seven years.

The purpose of the judgment of this tree is to teach that the Most High God is sovereign over the affairs of man. God sets up nations as He wills. He can do this to even the lowliest of men, so why should any king assume pride to himself?

**1 Samuel 2:7,8.** The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.

He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. 'For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, And He has set the world upon them.'

Nebuchadnezzar appeals to Daniel to interpret the dream for him. Again, the Spirit here is not the Holy Spirit but the spirit of Daniel.

**PRINCIPLE:** God is sovereign over all the Gentile kingdoms of the world.

**APPLICATION:** God has not abdicated his sovereignty. He is not a god that creates and then moves off to do his own thing, forgetting about His creation. God is both transcendent and immanent. He is both above and in His creation.

Note three things that God does with the kingdoms of this world:

1. Nations rise and fall to show that God is still in control. He overrules the kingdoms of this world. God rules in the kingdom of men (v.17).
2. God also gives kingdoms to whosoever He will (v.17). God puts people in power. Every political leader is there by the will of God.

3. God sets over it the lowest of men (v.17). That should humble some of our proud leaders!

#### Daniel 4:19

**Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.' Belteshazzar answered and said, 'My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!'**

Daniel begins to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's second dream starting at verse 19.

Daniel was reticent to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's second dream because of the negative implications on the king. The dream dumbfounded Daniel. He did not want to bear bad news; nevertheless, Daniel faithfully interpreted the dream to him.

**PRINCIPLE:** Communicators of God's truth should tell the unvarnished truth about God.

**APPLICATION:** As Daniel was not afraid to say, You are the man, neither should we be afraid. No communicator of God's truth should pull any punches. God's viewpoint is not easy to take sometimes. Neither should a teller of truth be audacious but true to truth.

No honest preachers or teachers tell people just what they want to hear. They do not take a poll to find out the prevailing opinion on things. They tell the truth. They will do it with discretion but they will do it. Tellers of truth represent light in darkness. If they do not tell the truth, few will trust their word.

#### Daniel 4:20-23

**The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all,**

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under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home—

it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.

And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him'...

Daniel confirms the greatness and extent of the tree of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. His kingdom was the greatest of his time. Nebuchadnezzar was brilliant in the fields of war, architecture and statesmanship.

Nebuchadnezzar was a world ruler who governed most of the civilized world. He brought great nations under his auspices. Great prosperity grew out of his leadership.

Daniel clearly asserts that the tree represents Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.

Now the bad news: God will remove Nebuchadnezzar from his authority in the Babylonian kingdom. The king would lose his power and glory but God would preserve his life. However, God provided for Nebuchadnezzar in grace – He left a stump.

**PRINCIPLE:** God has a purpose for our lives as long as we live.

**APPLICATION:** The principle of the stump is that God has a purpose for us as long as we are alive. As long as we live, God always puts a band of His grace provision around our lives. This opens greater opportunities to serve him even after a serious fall.

#### Daniel 4:24-27

...this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:

They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.

And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules.

**Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.**

Jeremiah shows the subsequent downfall of Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 4:16,17). He abused his authority by usurping glory to himself.

God will drive Nebuchadnezzar from his people. He will live like an animal for seven years. In 7:25, Daniel uses times for years. This is the mental condition known as zoanthropy – where a person thinks himself an animal.

Nebuchadnezzar would continue in a state of insanity until he understood that God is sovereign over all the kingdoms of the earth. God will not uproot his kingdom but leave a stump, a vestige of his kingdom.

Daniel boldly exhorts the king toward certain ends. God's discipline upon Nebuchadnezzar was because of his pride. This is a sin that God hates.

**Jeremiah 9:23,24.** Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;

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But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the Lord.

Tranquility is a result of peace with God. We can learn this lesson by the hard route or the easy way. Our colossal pride gets in the way of God's work in our lives. God may have to break that ego.

**PRINCIPLE:** Tranquility is a result of humility.

**APPLICATION:** After God neutralized Nebuchadnezzar's pride, his volition was open to God. God, at times, tears down our pride so that He can deal with us on a true level.

#### Daniel 4:28-37

**All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.**

**At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon.**

**The king spoke, saying, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?'**

**While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!**

**And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.'**

**That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.**

**And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation.**

**All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'**

**At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me.**

**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.**

God now executes discipline upon Nebuchadnezzar.

The palace at Babylon had large courts, a throne room and the famous hanging gardens (the gardens of Semiramis), one of the Seven Wonders of the World. These gardens were a terraced structure with extensive water supply. This palace stood just inside the double wall of the inner city with eight gates. The outer wall encircled the city by twenty-seven kilometers. As Nebuchadnezzar walked in this pomp and circumstance--as he viewed the great temples, the Ishtar Gate, the towering ziggurats--his heart filled with pride.

Nebuchadnezzar did not heed Daniel's warning for an entire year. God gave him a period of grace. Now he is about to receive judgment from God.



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Archaeologists recently discovered documents in which Nebuchadnezzar boasted of the glory of Babylon. The phrase "I have built" shows his focus on building programs. This verse speaks of unadulterated pride. Pride prowls in each one of us. We are proud of face, place, race and even grace.

As soon as the king uttered his arrogant pride, he heard a voice of divine discipline.

God drove Nebuchadnezzar from the acme of power and reduced him to an animal.

Immediately Nebuchadnezzar began to function as an animal. This was supernaturally imposed.

The end of time refers to the end of the seven years predicted earlier. His sanity returned to him at this time.

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

Nebuchadnezzar continued his tract in the first person. He lifted his eyes to heaven indicating that he came to his senses about his pride and about who God truly is. He recognized and accepted that God's kingdom is eternal and his was temporal. The qualities of sovereignty and eternity go far beyond the local deities of Babylon.

This may indicate that Nebuchadnezzar came to saving faith in Jehovah. Because God has dominion, He has authority to do whatever He pleases. Whatever God does is right because He has the authority to do it.

Nebuchadnezzar's sanity returned to him when he acknowledged the sovereignty of God. God also restored the glory of his kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson. He acknowledged that God is true and just in His works. Note the piling up of praise: praise and extol and honor. This is pure worship from the greatest king in the world at that time. God operates according to a standard of righteousness and truth. His method of doing

things is just. It appears that Nebuchadnezzar is clearly converted.

**PRINCIPLE:** Grace always precedes judgment.

**APPLICATION:** Some of God's decrees are conditional. God's threat of judgment is often conditional. God sovereignly controls the universe as a person, a Being of relationship. Some of us will not respond to God other than from His judgment.

Towards the end of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity, he said, "I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven". That acknowledges God's authority in his life. He repented and came to Jehovah as his Savior. God always responds to repentance. God will extend His mercy to you, if you are willing to receive it.