

CORE Seminar
Spring 2024
Book of Daniel: Part 1 [Chapters 1-6]
Session 5: Daniel 4

ICE BREAKER

Who are some people in your life that are examples of godly humility?

Why do you think it's difficult for people in high positions of authority to remain humble?

INTRODUCTION

Last week, we saw how Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah stood firm in their resolve and conviction to worship God. They did not bow to King Neb's image. They did not worship the gods publicly and the God of the Universe privately. And because of their faith, God rescued them from the fiery furnace.

This week, Daniel 4 provides the most unique perspective to any we have seen yet in the whole story of Daniel. It unveils a pivotal chapter in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar – the mighty ruler of Babylon. This chapter offers reflective insights into the nature of power, humility, and God's divine sovereignty. This chapter helps us to understand God's mercy, His invitation of repentance & redemption, as well as the limitations of a powerful earthly king.

So, let's start off with a prayer and then we'll move to **Daniel 4**.

PRAYER

Have someone in your group read Daniel 4:1-3

Nebuchadnezzar Praises God

4 King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! ² It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.

**³ How great are his signs,
how mighty his wonders!**

His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Ok – this chapter starts off different!

QUESTIONS: What stands out to you guys about the first 3 verses?

Does this sound like the ol'Neb we're used to?

- What's different?

What clues do we have in the first 3 verses to show us that Neb's worship is genuine?

Let's keep reading

Have someone in your group read Daniel 4:4-18

⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. ⁵ I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. ⁶ So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. ⁷ Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation. ⁸ At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods—and I told him the dream, saying, ⁹ “O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation. ¹⁰ The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. ¹¹ The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. ¹² Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

¹³ “I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. ¹⁴ He proclaimed aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him. ¹⁷ The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy

ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.’¹⁸ This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because 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 gods is in you.”

King Neb seems to be the writing an intro to his biography OR he’s the on-site reporter “just reporting the news,” in the book of Daniel. Really, this seems so strange based on all that we had read in the first 3 chapters.

But guys, this is what God does to people – even evil dictators – when He grabs a hold of their lives. He completely transforms them into something completely unrecognizable. This chapter is his testimony of how God changed his heart.

And for Neb, it all starts again with a **dream**. And again, he brings the conga line of professionals to interpret his dream. But this time it’s different. This time King Neb tells them the content of the dream. He doesn’t play games like he did in chapter 2. But the result is the same – they still can’t interpret the dream.

And then Daniel [Belteshazzar] arrives. King Neb tells him the dream, and Neb has **expectation** – through all of the fluff – that his dream will be interpreted.

QUESTIONS: Why do you think God gave a dream to Nebuchadnezzar telling him what he was going to do? What does this tell you about God?

Has God ever “troubled your heart” to get your attention? If so, how did you respond?

Have someone in your group read Daniel 4:19-27

¹⁹ Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, “Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!²⁰ The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth,²¹ whose leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the heavens lived—²² it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth.²³ And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and

bronze, in the tender grass of the field, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven periods of time pass over him,' ²⁴ this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, ²⁵ that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. ²⁶ And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. ²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity."

Through everything that has happened up until this point, we get a brief insight into the relationship of Daniel and King Neb. Despite their backgrounds and their circumstances, there seems to be a mutual respect between them – almost like grandfather to grandson.

When Daniel heard the dream, Scripture states that he was, "**dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him.**" [If there was no respect for King Neb, then why would Daniel would be dismayed.] Apparently the alarm was written all over his face because King Neb responded with, "**Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.**" Maybe I'm wrong, but it seems that Daniel genuinely cared for Nebuchadnezzar and was clearly affected by the meaning of the dream. Even to the point in **verse 27**, when Daniel pleads with Neb to "break off" his sins and iniquities.

The right reaction to the threat of judgment is a humble **repentance** – to practice **righteousness** and to show **mercy** to the oppressed. Unfortunately – and as we will soon find out – Nebuchadnezzar did not do either of these.

QUESTIONS: Daniel reveals a compassionate side to Neb, even though he has to deliver bad news. Why is speaking the truth in love so hard?

- **How does Daniel model this act of grace?**

In verse 25, Daniel tells King Neb that he will endure all of this punishment until he acknowledges that "the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will."

- **What would it mean for Neb to be humble?**
- **What would be the signs that he was humbled?** [verse 27]

Have someone in your group read Daniel 4:28-33

²⁸ All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ and the king answered and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” ³¹ While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, ³² and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” ³³ Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws.

You know – and as most people find – God is merciful. God did not enact the consequences on King Neb immediately. God waited 1 year. Think about that for a moment. King Neb saw the concern on Daniel's face, and heard Daniel's pleas for Neb to repent. You can almost see Daniel – for 12 months – praying for King Neb and reminding him of God's judgment that was pending.

It's almost a call back to Israel's warning from **2 Chronicles 36:15-16**

And the LORD, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.

Neb had received his warning – and after 12 months – there was no remedy. As he was walking on the roof of his kingdom – at the **highest** point of his kingdom – praising and glorifying himself, God's voice came **down** to Neb.

God told him that his kingdom would be taken from him, and that his new home would be “**with the beasts of the field.**” Verse 33 states that “immediately” the word [of God] was fulfilled against Neb – no more warnings. He was driven from men and he became like a beast in the field.

- **He ate grass like an ox.**
- **His hair grew as long as eagles' feathers.**
- **And his nails were like birds' claws.**

QUESTIONS: In verse 28-30, we see that Neb was impressed with himself and that he was proud of all that “he” had accomplished. What do you define in your heart as “making it” or “success”?

- *Have you achieved this at any point in your life?*

In verse 29, we read that 12 months passed before God brought His judgment on Neb. What does this teach us about God and His ways?

In his punishment, Neb truly became like a beast of the field. Do you think this was an appropriate punishment for Neb's pride?

What do you think God is showing Neb in making him like a beast of the field?

Have someone in your group read Daniel 4:34-37

³⁴ At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason 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 endures from generation to generation;
³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
and he does according to his will among the host of heaven
and among the inhabitants of the earth;
and none can stay his hand
or say to him, "What have you done?"*

³⁶ At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

In **verse 32**, we read that God told Neb that he would remain as a beast for **"seven periods of time."** We have no explanation of exactly how long that is – but in **verse 34** we see that the seven periods are over. For the first time, Neb lifted his eyes toward heaven – not to look at his kingdom or a statue he built or to admire himself – to see God. In doing so, he praised and honored the God of the universe. **Daniel 2:21** came alive in his eyes for the first time.

*He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding;*

King Neb now knew and honored God as Sovereign. And as a result, King Neb says this in **verse 37**:

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

In the end, God both humbled and restored Nebuchadnezzar. The goal wasn't to bring him **low**, but to bring him to his proper place before God and among men. King Neb now knew and honored God as Sovereign.

QUESTIONS: What stands out to you most in this story or about King Nebuchadnezzar?

What does Neb mean when he says in verse 34 that he "lifted his eyes to heaven?"

- **What immediately follows as a result of this action?**

Verse 36 tells us that Neb's kingdom continued to flourish after he was restored back to the throne. Clearly, he has learned that the humble will be exalted.

- **What do you think is the primary lesson that Neb learned from this experience?**
- **Is this a lesson that we need to learn?**

What does this tell us about God that he would provide a way to restore Nebuchadnezzar back as king after he acknowledged God? What does it tell you about what God does in your life?

CONCLUSION

Daniel 4 serves as a reminder of God's sovereignty and the importance of humility. Through God's actions toward King Neb, we learn that pride leads to downfall, but humility leads to restoration. After God's appointed time, Neb humbled himself before God, and he was restored to his kingdom and his senses. His testimony echoes throughout history, encouraging us to acknowledge the supremacy of God and to approach Him with reverence and humility in all aspects of our lives.