

**Daniel 4**  
**November 22, 2015**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: Have you ever been around a person who is prideful? If yes, what are the characteristics of a prideful person? [egotistical; undue sense of self-importance; it often has to be about them; not teachable – not easy to be corrected; need to be right]

Q: How do you feel when you're around a prideful person? [uncomfortable, turned off, etc.]

X-References: The Bible has plenty to say about pride. Let's look some of them up:

- Prov 6:16-17 – There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable...haughty eyes
- Prov 8:13 – “I hate pride and arrogance.”
- Prov 13:10 – “Where there is dissension, there is pride.”
- Prov 16:5 – “The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.”
- Prov 16:18 - “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.
- Prov 21:4 – “Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.”
- 2 Tim 3:1-4 – “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, **proud**, abusive, ...
- James 4:6 – “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Q: Why do you think that of all the sins we can and do commit, God is so deeply offended by pride? Why do you think He “hates” it? [Pride has been referred to as the “complete anti-God state of mind.” It works against God’s authority, God’s law, and God’s rule. Pride assaults God’s throne and asserts its independence in an attempt to dislodge God as the Sovereign of the universe]

**Transition:** In today’s passage we learn that King Nebuchadnezzar (King N) has a pride problem. Of course, none of us are immune to this either. As Christ-followers the last thing we want is to be filled with pride such that it stunts our spiritual growth. As we read Chapter 4, let’s consider that *all of us CAN avoid the pitfalls of pride BY acknowledging certain TRUTHS about God that we’ll see in today’s passage.*

Background: This chapter is written by the king himself. It was written seven years after the experience itself, so that vv. 1–3 and 37 are Nebuchadnezzar’s public testimony of what God did to him and for him. Let’s listen in. Invite the class to look for TRUTHS about God. Let’s begin.

**BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Dan 4:1-18]**

V.1:

- King Nebuchadnezzar, to the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: may you prosper greatly!

V.2:

- It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.
- V.3:
- How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.
- V.4:
- I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous.
- V.5:
- I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me.
- V.6:
- So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me.
- V.7:
- When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me.
- V.8:
- Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)
- V.9:
- I said, “Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me.
- V.10:
- These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous.
- V.11:
- The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth.
- V.12:
- Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.
- V.13:
- “In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven.
- V.14:
- He called in a loud voice: ‘Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches.
- V.15:
- But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. “Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth.
- V.16:
- Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.
- V.17:

- “The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.’

V.18:

- “This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you.”

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: Before this new dream came along, how did King N describe his state of life? [at home in my palace, contented and prosperous]

Q: So King N has this terrifying dream, which as usual, could not be interpreted by the magicians, enchanters, etc, but could be interpreted by Daniel. Why was Daniel able to interpret the dream? [Because the Holy Spirit was in Daniel to reveal the mystery of King N’s dream]

Q v.10-12: King N has a vision of a tree. What are the features of this tree? [It is enormous; it touches the top of the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth; leaves beautiful, fruit abundant, it provided food and shelter to every creature]

Q v.13-15: So a messenger, a holy one, comes down from heaven and gives a set of instructions. What were the instructions related to the tree? [cut the tree down to its stump, which will cause all the birds and animals to flee; keep the roots intact and bound with iron and bronze]

Q v.15-16: What happens to King N in this dream? [He’ll be drenched in dew from heaven and live like an animal among the plants; his mind will be changed from a man to an animal for seven years.]

Q v.17: Why is God bringing down such a heavy-handed verdict? [so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men]

Q: Based on the verdict, where did King N apparently go wrong over the years? [He became prideful and didn’t acknowledge that God is the only Sovereign ruler of all the earth. Only God determines who has power and prosperity or anything else!]

Q: What TRUTHS have we learned about God so far? [See yellow highlights above]

Q: Is there anything wrong with being at a good place in life, enjoying health and prosperity? [No]

Q: So if we are to avoid the pitfalls of pride, what does our thinking need to be while enjoying the good things of life? [King N = “Look at what I did” Us: “***Look at what God did!***”]

Share Crown Ministries Verse: **I Chron 29:11-12** – “Everything in the heavens and earth is yours, O Lord. We adore you as being in control of everything. Riches and honor come from you

alone, and you are the ruler of all mankind. Your hand controls power and might, and it is at your discretion that men are made great and given strength.”

Practical Application to Combat the pitfalls of pride: Condition yourself on a daily basis to acknowledge that everything we have comes from him. Ex: I came to church in His car; I am wearing His clothes, I live in His house, I pay bills with His money... Try to catch yourself saying the possessive pronouns of “my or mine.” (Share hail damage to His car story.)

**[Read Dan 4:19-27]**

V.19:

- Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you.” Belteshazzar answered, “My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!

V.20:

- The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth,

V.21:

- with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air—

V.22:

- you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

V.23:

- “You, O king, saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live like the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.’

V.24:

- “This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king:

V.25:

- You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.

V.26:

- The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.

V.27:

- Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.”

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q v.25-26: Daniel interprets the dream for King N. What is the interpretation? [You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.]

Q: Before King N's kingdom can be restored back to him, what must happen according to Daniel? [He has to acknowledge that God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone He wishes. He has to acknowledge that Heaven rules – not him!]

Q: What was Daniel's advice to the King? [Repent! "Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed."]

Observation: I love this advice because it shows that God gives King N warning, and it is up to King N to respond appropriately. God's grace was available to him. That's a pattern we've seen throughout the Old Testament, but especially in King N's life. Let's also not forget that King N figured out that God was the Most High on two prior occasions:

- The interpretation of his first dream – "Your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries." (2:47)
- Then He saw the pre-incarnate Christ with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace – King N said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego...I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces." (3:28-29)

God still prospered King N after these two encounters with God and then must have slipped back into pride a third time. God had enough! We started today's lesson with various verses about how God hates pride and will oppose the proud. This is a perfect example of how God humbles the proud.

Q: So if we are going to avoid the pitfalls of pride, what TRUTH about God should we acknowledge? [God is in control and is Sovereign over man at all times. This will NEVER change because we know His kingdom is eternal and His dominion will carry on for eternity.]

Transition: So let's finish this chapter to see how this story ends.

**[Read Dan 4:28-37]**

V.28:

- All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar.

V.29:

- Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon,

V.30:

- he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

V.31:

- The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, “This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you.

V.32:

- You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.”

V.33:

- Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

V.34:

- At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

V.35:

- All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?”

V.36:

- At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before.

V.37:

- Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q v.29: How much time elapsed before the dream became a reality to King N? [A year]

Q v.30: In case there’s any doubt that King N had a pride problem, what was his thinking? [“Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?”]

Q v.31: How swiftly did God choose to respond to King N’s thoughts? [While King N’s words were still on his lips!! “Your royal authority has been taken from you.”]

Q v.34-35: After his seven year sentence was completed, the Lord restored King N’s sanity. At that point, what did King N finally acknowledge? [Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?]

Q v.37: King N has experienced a conversion. Notice his praise of God. What was it? [I praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything He does is right and all His ways are just. And those who walk in pride He is able to humble.]

**LOOK:**

Rhetorical Q: Is that your testimony as well?

The best way we can avoid the pitfalls of becoming prideful is to acknowledge what we know to be true about God:

- God's kingdom is eternal.
- God's dominion endures for many generations
- God is the Most High God who is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.
- God does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.
- God is the king of heaven.
- Everything God does is right and all His ways are just.
- God is able to humble those who walk in pride.

**Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Da 4). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

This chapter is an official Babylonian document, written by the king himself. It is the story of his conversion, and what a story it is. Keep in mind that it was written seven years after the experience itself, so that vv. 1–3 and 37 are Nebuchadnezzar's public testimony of what God did to him and for him. We will consider those verses at the end of our study. Now for the account of the king's dream.

#### **I. The Dream Received (4:4–18)**

It was at a time of peace and prosperity that God sent this dream to the king, for this dream was really a divine warning to him that his sins were going to catch up with him at last. He was secure, but it was a false security, similar to the one Jesus pictured in the Parable of the Rich Farmer (Luke 12:15–21). It is when this wicked world is resting in “peace and safety” that God's judgment will fall (1 Thes. 5:3). The only true safety and rest is in Jesus Christ.

The dream was this: he saw a huge tree that overshadowed the entire earth, with the birds and animals taking refuge under it, and he heard an angelic voice say, “Cut down the tree.” The tree was cut down, but the stump was left in the wet grass, with a band of iron about it, for “seven times.” Needless to say, the king was greatly disturbed by this dream, especially since he had received another dream in the early years of his kingdom, and it dealt with the future of his reign.

The king summoned his wise men, but they were unable to explain the dream. Remember their boast in chapter 2: “Show us the dream and we will explain it.” Well, the king did show them this dream but they could not explain it. The worldly-wise make their boast of great wisdom, but they cannot understand or explain the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14–15). The king knew that only one man could solve the problem—Daniel, the man of God. So he called Daniel to his throne and related to him the dream that had perplexed him. Nebuchadnezzar had power, riches, and glory, but he was unable to unlock the future. The poorest Christian is far richer than he, because in the Word we have God's program for the future.

#### **II. The Dream Revealed (4:19–27)**

God used Daniel to be a “light in the darkness,” for He revealed to him the meaning of the dream. But the revelation struck the prophet dumb for an hour. That must have been the longest hour of waiting in the king's history. It was plain to Daniel that the message of the dream was a sobering one. He did not take it lightly or deliver it in a careless fashion. A true prophet is always in sympathy with his message; he feels the burden of it and delivers God's Word faithfully. Many people have the idea that spiritual wisdom and knowledge always lead to joy and witness, when sometimes they lead to sorrow and silence. See Dan. 10:1–3 for Daniel's reaction to the truth about the seventy years of captivity.

The explanation is not difficult to grasp. The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar and his great kingdom (vv. 20–22). God often uses the figure of a tree to picture a kingdom; Ezek. 31 is an example, and so is Matt. 13:31–32. A tree is a good symbol of an earthly kingdom because it is rooted in the earth and depends on the earth for its food and stability. The other nations that looked to Babylon for protection and provision are pictured by the beasts and birds lodging in



and under the tree. Certainly Babylon had become a great and powerful kingdom. But it was not for Nebuchadnezzar to boast, because God had given him his throne and his kingdom. That was the lesson the monarch was to learn the hard way.

“The watcher and holy one” is an angel of God, appointed to work in the kingdom of Babylon. Daniel 10:4–20 informs us that the angels are very active in the affairs of the nations of the world. The angel announced, “Cut down the tree—get King Nebuchadnezzar off the throne.” What an experience the king would have! He would actually cease to live like a man and would live like a beast for seven years. The tree would be cut down, and the iron band would restrain its growth, but the judgment would not be permanent. After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar would become human again, his reason would return, and he would ascend his throne in great glory.

Why was God working this way in the king’s life? To teach him humility. You will remember that in the king’s “image dream” he was pictured as the head of gold; and in chapter 3, the king had made an entire image of gold to attract worship and praise to himself. God would show this proud monarch that he was actually a beast at heart. In fact, in chapter 7, Daniel will have a vision that shows that *all* the empires are nothing but wild beasts. Daniel warned the king to repent and change his ways. “Break off your sins,” he begged, “and perhaps the Lord will give you forgiveness and time to serve Him.” After all, God had spoken to the king on two different occasions—the dream of chapter 2 and the furnace episode of chapter 3—and it is dangerous to turn a deaf ear to God.

### **III. The Dream Realized (4:28–36)**

It happened as Daniel said. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a whole year to consider the warning and turn from his sins, but the king paid no heed. In fact, he became more and more proud of his achievements. See Ecc. 8:11 and Prov. 29:1. But there came a day when judgment fell and the true beastly nature of the king was revealed for all to see. Men drove him from his palace and he lived for seven years like a beast of the field, eating grass like the oxen. When God wants to humble a proud king, He can do it quickly and thoroughly.

This did not last forever. After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar was converted. The first step (the king tells us) was, “I lifted my eyes to heaven” (v. 34, NKJV). It is too bad he had not looked to heaven long before this. “I blessed God—I praised God.” That certainly sounds like a man whose life has been changed by faith in the Lord. The king had learned his lesson: he was nothing and God was everything. Read vv. 34–35 to see how much practical doctrine Nebuchadnezzar learned through this humbling experience. How tragic that the proud rulers of this present world fail to see they are nothing and God is everything. Verse 17 (NKJV) states the lesson clearly: “The Most High rules in the kingdom of men ...”

Now back to vv. 1–3. Here is the mighty dictator addressing all the peoples of the world and sending them *peace*. Nebuchadnezzar certainly was not known for his peaceful activities, because he was a cruel man of war. Verse 1 reads almost like a NT epistle from Peter or Paul. Note how in vv. 2–3 he gives all the glory to God and ascribes greatness to the Lord. This, again, was very unlike this heathen dictator; just seven years before he had been saying, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built?” He was boasting about *his* power and *his* majesty, with not a syllable of praise or gratitude to God. Well, all that is changed now; the king writes an official document giving personal witness to what God has done for him. Verse 37 is the grand climax: “I praise and extol and honor”—not Nebuchadnezzar—“the King of heaven” and “those that walk in pride He is able to abase.” Do we not have in this chapter a foreview of what will happen to the nations in the latter days? Just about the time they will be boasting of their greatness and

glory, God will send seven years of awful judgment upon them and bring them low. Then, at the end of that Tribulation period, Christ will return to earth and establish His kingdom. The nations that have trusted Him will enter into the glorious kingdom; the others will be cast out. Like Nebuchadnezzar, the believers will be converted from their pride and unbelief and will enjoy the blessing of God.

**Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 1341–1344). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

*C. The second dream of Nebuchadnezzar (chap. 4)*

1. THE KING'S PROCLAMATION (4:1–3)

Apparently a number of years transpired between the experience of Daniel's three friends in chapter 3 and Nebuchadnezzar's dream and period of insanity in chapter 4. Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years (605–562 B.C.). His insanity lasted seven years and he returned to the throne for a short time afterward before he died. His last years did not take place until he had time to conclude his extensive building operations (v. 30). Thus this incident may have taken place about the 35th year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule, or about 570. This would be some 30 years after the experience of the three men in the fiery furnace, about the 50th year of Daniel's life.

4:1–3. Daniel recorded an official proclamation made by **Nebuchadnezzar** which was circulated throughout his realm. Daniel was led by the Holy Spirit's inspiration to include this official proclamation. God had shown the king that He is able to deliver and preserve those who trust and obey Him. But God's revelation of Himself to Nebuchadnezzar did not conclude there. For God further revealed Himself to the king through the circumstances recorded in this chapter. And in his proclamation to all the people in his empire (**peoples, nations, and men of every language**; cf. comments on 3:4), Nebuchadnezzar declared that through God's **miraculous signs** he had learned of His power and that **God (the Most High**; cf. comments on 3:26) is sovereign and exerts His will in **His ... eternal kingdom**. Whereas earlier Nebuchadnezzar believed it was his own power and wisdom that had consolidated the kingdom under his authority, he learned that it is *God* who rules according to His will and uses those He chooses as His instruments.

2. THE KING'S TREE VISION (4:4–18)

*a. The request for interpretation by the wise men (4:4–7)*

4:4–7. For the second time a revelation was given to **Nebuchadnezzar** through **a dream** (cf. 2:1, 27–29). This dream, like the one years before, **terrified** the king (cf. 2:1, 3). Though **contented and prosperous**, he was **afraid**. So he sought an interpretation of **the dream** to allay his fears. Though **all the wise men of Babylon** had been discredited previously because of their inability to interpret the king's first dream (2:10–12), counselors had been retained by the king. He summoned **the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and diviners** (see comments on 1:17) and ordered them **to interpret the dream** which he revealed to **them**. However, they were unable to do so.

*b. The dream explained to Daniel (4:8–18)*

4:8. Then the king **told ... the dream** to **Daniel**. Unable once again to be helped by his own conjurers, he had to consult one who worshiped Yahweh. However, the king still acknowledged his own **god** (perhaps Bel, alias Marduk) as he referred to Daniel by his Babylonian name (**Belteshazzar**; cf. comments on 1:7) which included Bel's name. The word **finally** suggests that some time passed before Daniel went **into** the king's **presence**. Obviously Daniel was not among the wise men who had first been summoned to interpret the dream (4:6). Apparently Daniel was in a position of significant governmental authority and not serving as a counselor to the king (cf. comments on 3:12). That would explain why he was not included in the invitation given previously to the wise men.

Because of the impression made on Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel's previous interpretation (cf. 2:46) it is not likely that the king had forgotten about Daniel's ability to interpret dreams. Possibly the king suspected the ominous message contained in his dream and hoped that the wise men could soften the message when they interpreted it to him. The king thought that Daniel operated by **the spirit of the holy gods** (cf. 4:9, 18; 5:11, 14) and that through Daniel the message would be unveiled. Obviously Nebuchadnezzar was still a polytheist though he had acknowledged Yahweh's sovereignty years before (2:47; 3:28–29).

4:9–12. Nebuchadnezzar referred to Daniel as **chief of the magicians**, not because he was in authority over the wise men but because he was wiser than all of them, capable of understanding and interpreting dreams. The king implored Daniel to **interpret** his **dream** for him. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a simple one. He was perplexed not by what he had seen, but by his inability to understand its meaning.

Previously Nebuchadnezzar had traveled to Lebanon to watch the felling of the great cedars to provide timber for his construction projects in Babylon. So he had witnessed the felling of mighty trees. The **tree** he saw in his dream was significant because of its size (vv. 10–11), its beauty (v. 12), and its **fruit** (v. 12). It provided **food** and **shelter** for all the animals and **birds** who lived **under** it or **in** it.

4:13–14. The king then explained that he saw **a messenger, a holy one**. This holy messenger, unknown to Nebuchadnezzar, would have been known to the Jewish people as an angel sent **from heaven** with an announcement. The messenger said that **the tree** was to be **cut down**, the **branches** trimmed from the trunk, the **leaves** stripped off, and the **fruit** scattered. **The animals** and **birds** that found shelter under and in **its branches** were to scatter.

4:15–16. However, **the stump** was not to be removed but secured with bands of **iron and bronze**. The first part of the vision of the tree (vv. 10–12) probably would have caused Nebuchadnezzar no concern. It may have even produced pride as he recognized himself in the tree as the one who provided bountifully for the subjects in his realm. But this second part of the vision (vv. 13–15a), that the tree was to be cut down, must have greatly disturbed him.

The third part of the vision (vv. 15b–16) must have been even more terrifying—if Nebuchadnezzar recognized himself as represented by the tree—for sanity was to leave **him** and he would become demented, living among **the animals**. He would have no more mental ability than **an animal**. This condition would continue for an extended period of time (**till seven times pass by**; cf. vv. 23, 25, 32). The “seven times” were probably seven years because (a) seven days or months would have been inadequate for his hair to have grown to the length of feathers (v. 33), and (b) “times” in 7:25 means years (cf. comments there).

4:17–18. Several **messengers (holy ones)** announced the lesson to be learned through the vision: **so that the living may know that the Most High** (cf. comments on 3:26) **is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone He wishes and sets over them the**

**lowliest of men.** This vision was designed to be a part of God's revelation of Himself and His authority over **Nebuchadnezzar** who in pride had exalted himself above God. The **king** again (cf. 4:9) asked Daniel (**Beltshazzar**; cf. comments on v. 8) to **tell** him the meaning of **the dream**.

### 3. THE VISION INTERPRETED (4:19–27)

4:19. Whereas **Daniel** had had no reticence about interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's first dream to him (2:27–45), he now was reluctant to interpret this second **dream**. The first dream exalted Nebuchadnezzar; he was the head of gold (2:38). But this second dream debased him. When **the king** saw Daniel's reluctance, he encouraged Daniel not to be alarmed but to share its meaning with him. Daniel respectfully stated that he wished **the dream** pertained to the king's **enemies**.

4:20–22. Daniel repeated the description of the greatness of **the tree** (vv. 20–21) and then explained that the **tree** represented Nebuchadnezzar (v. 22). Daniel tactfully gave the good news first! Like the tree, Nebuchadnezzar had **become great and strong**, and his kingdom had been expanded and consolidated under his rule. His kingdom had become greater than any kingdom up to that time.

4:23–25. Then came the bad news. The cutting **down of the tree**—a **decree from the Most High**—meant that Nebuchadnezzar would be removed from his position of authority in the kingdom. He would be turned out of the palace (**driven away from people**) and would **live** like an animal among **the wild animals** until **seven times** (v. 23) would **pass by**. The word “times” is used again in 7:25 where it also means a year (cf. comments there). Thus Daniel predicted that Nebuchadnezzar would live in a demented state for seven years.

In the mental illness known as zoanthropy (an illness observed in modern times) a person thinks of himself as an animal and acts like one. This may have been the disease Nebuchadnezzar had. Daniel then referred to the purpose of this experience, which the messengers had announced in the dream (4:17). Through this illness Nebuchadnezzar would come to **acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone He wishes**.

4:26–27. The fact that **the stump** was not to be uprooted (but was to be secured and left in the field, v. 15) indicates that the **king** would **be restored** to the throne. However, that restoration would not take place till Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God's sovereign right to rule (**that heaven rules**).

Daniel concluded by exhorting the king to **renounce his sins**. This points out the principle that any announced judgment may be averted if there is repentance (cf. the Book of Jonah). Daniel urged Nebuchadnezzar to turn from his sinful pride and produce fruits of righteousness (**doing what is right and being kind to the oppressed**)—acts which stem from a heart that is submissive to God. Had Nebuchadnezzar done so, he would have averted his seven years of insanity.

### 4. THE VISION FULFILLED (4:28–33)

4:28–33. The revelation given **to ... Nebuchadnezzar** through Daniel's interpretation was soon forgotten and Daniel's exhortation was ignored. Nebuchadnezzar continued in his sinful pride. He did not repent as Daniel had advised him to do (v. 27). The **king** was controlled by his great egotism. He considered the city of **Babylon** itself as his personal possession and as a reflection of his **power** and **glory** (v. 30).

God endured Nebuchadnezzar's pride for **12 months**. This may have been a period of grace in which God was giving Nebuchadnezzar an opportunity to turn to Him in repentance. But when Nebuchadnezzar ignored Daniel's exhortation God, who had given Nebuchadnezzar his authority, announced the interruption of his rule.

What had been predicted was no longer postponed and judgment came on **Nebuchadnezzar**, in keeping with Daniel's interpretation. As the king was boasting of his accomplishments while **walking on the roof** (apparently a flat roof, common in those days) **of his royal palace** (v. 29), **a voice ... from heaven** (v. 31) announced his judgment.

As predicted, the king lived like an animal in the field, eating **grass like cattle**. (Later Daniel added that the king lived with wild donkeys, 5:21.) **His body was drenched with ... dew ... his hair grew** long like an eagle's **feathers ... and his nails** grew **like** a bird's **claws**. He gave no attention to his bodily appearance. Perhaps, because of his royal position, Nebuchadnezzar was hidden in a secluded park so his true condition could be hidden from the populace. Also in the king's absence Daniel may have played a major role in preserving the kingdom and possibly in preventing anyone from killing the king.

#### 5. THE KING'S RESTORATION (4:34–37)

4:34–35. When the seven years (cf. comments on v. 23) had transpired (**at the end of that time**) **Nebuchadnezzar** with his **sanity ... restored ... praised the Most High** (cf. comments on 3:26). The king who had sought honor and glory for himself now acknowledged that the Most High **lives forever**. The king confessed that God's **dominion is ... eternal**, that **His kingdom endures** (cf. 6:26; 7:14, 27). Thus he acknowledged God's sovereign authority.

Nebuchadnezzar also acknowledged God's irresistible will: **He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth**. Also the king confessed that man is answerable to God, not God to man, for no one can stop God and **no one** has a right to question Him (cf. Job 33:12b–13; Isa. 29:16; 45:9; Rom. 9:19–20).

4:36–37. The king's acknowledgment of God's right to rule (vv. 34–35) brought about the restoration of the king's **sanity** (cf. v. 34) and a restoration to his **throne**. Having been humbled before God, Nebuchadnezzar rose to **greater** heights of honor than he had known when he walked in pride. He said he praised, exalted, and glorified **the King of heaven** (cf. "honored" and "glorified" in v. 34). These verbs indicate continued action, suggesting that Nebuchadnezzar did these things habitually. These verbs embody the ideas of reverence, respect, honor, admiration, and worship.

Since Nebuchadnezzar said that these attitudes characterized his life, many have concluded that he experienced regeneration, becoming a child of God. Nebuchadnezzar did confess that what God had done in dealing with him was **right** and **just**. This is certainly not acknowledged by one who continues in rebellion against God. The king also admitted that he had walked **in pride** (cf. 5:20) but had been humbled by his experience. This too would testify to a transformation in Nebuchadnezzar's character through a newfound knowledge of God.

There seems to be prophetic significance in this incident as well as in the one in chapter 3. Even though God has appointed Gentiles to a place of prominence in His program during the times of the Gentiles, yet most nations and people walk in rebellion against God. This attitude is graphically described in Psalm 2:1–3. God will deal with the nations to humble them and bring them into subjection to Himself. One purpose of the Tribulation, which will immediately precede Christ's second coming, will be to humble the nations and bring them to the point of subjection to Christ's authority. At the conclusion of God's judgments, described in Revelation 6–19, Jesus

Christ, the victorious Rider on the white horse, will descend from heaven and smite the nations. Then an angel will announce that “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). God’s judgment on Nebuchadnezzar, designed to subject him to God’s authority, seems to prefigure God’s judgment on the nations to subject them to the authority of the One who has been given the right to rule.

**Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (pp. 1276 – 1278). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.**

**4:16, 32–33** Nebuchadnezzar’s appalling illness resembles a well-documented psychological malady known as lycanthropy (lit. “wolf-man”), although there is insufficient detail in the text to assume that he suffered from that particular condition.

**4:30** Historical sources (e.g., Herodotus, Berosus, cuneiform inscriptions) and archaeological excavations have substantiated Nebuchadnezzar’s claim concerning Babylon’s grandeur and the king’s extensive building program. Ancient Greeks regarded Babylon’s famous Hanging Gardens as one of the “seven wonders of the world,” and bricks from ancient Babylon are stamped with Nebuchadnezzar’s name.

**4:34–37** Critical scholars consider this section to be literary fiction derived from the same source as the “Prayer of Nabonidus,” an Aramaic fragment discovered at Qumran near the Dead Sea in 1952 (known in scholarship as 4QPrNab). Though affinities exist between chapter 4 and that document, they are far outweighed by the differences (e.g., the name of the king, the nature of the illness, and the location). The Nabonidus story is doubtless a distorted version or later application of the biblical narrative. Apocryphal imitations of canonical works were common during the intertestamental period, and several others grew up around the book of Daniel (e.g., Prayer of Azariah, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon). Although these works drew material from biblical sources, they are clearly fictional.