

# CAPITOL STUDIES

FEBRUARY 7, 2024 • WEEK 5



## DANIEL: CHRIST'S CIVIL SERVANT IN BABYLON

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### *Verse of the Week*

Daniel 4:17

This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers and the decision is a command of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men.

## Daniel's Wise Counsel



**P**RIDE IS SOMETHING THAT GOD HATES! Pride played a role in sin entering the human race, and it continues to plague mankind today. It is at the base of almost every sin. Man is captivated by his selfish ego. He is obsessed with his own self-reliance, self-control, and self-esteem. In his pride he fancies himself his own god and thus lives independently of God. The danger of pride is clearly seen in chapter four of the book of Daniel. This part of the narrative text deals with the subject of pride, the exalted heights to which it soars, and the method which God uses to bring proud sinners to their knees. This chapter magnifies God's absolute sovereignty and man's total sinfulness. This account took place after the king had learned about God's power, supremacy, and mercy. Yet in his pride he did not take heed!

In Daniel 4, "you have the personal testimony of a pagan king, the first monarch of the times of the Gentiles, giving you his spiritual biography."<sup>1</sup> In chapter two, the image depicting the course of these times is revealed. The character of these times is portrayed in chapter three—a period dominated by the worship of man and idols. These times come to a head in chapter four, as man in all his pomp and importance passes off the scene. After this chapter Nebuchadnezzar will not be seen again.

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## INTRODUCTION

**The humbling of a dictator.** It is believed this chapter is an official Babylonian document, written by the king himself, edited by Daniel under the pen of the Holy Spirit's inspiration and included in the Biblical text. Here is the story of the king's conversion. Written after seasons of time, this is Nebuchadnezzar's public testimony of what God did to him and for him. Here is the account of the king's dream and fulfillment.

*Job 33:14-17*

*Indeed God speaks once, or twice yet no one notices it. <sup>15</sup>In a dream, a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds, <sup>16</sup>then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, <sup>17</sup>that He may turn man aside from his conduct, and keep man from pride.<sup>2</sup>*

*Proverbs 16:18 (KJV)*

*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

### I. THE DANGER OF PRIDE

#### A. The King's Proclamation

*Daniel 4:1-3*

*Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound! <sup>2</sup>It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me. <sup>3</sup>How great are His signs and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generation to generation."*

King Nebuchadnezzar begins by praising "the signs and wonders" that God wrought in his life. The chapter was probably written by the king after he experienced God's sovereign authority over him. The signs and wonders he went through were a mental derangement that God allowed because of his pride. Nebuchadnezzar wrote, wanting all under his domain to know what God had done in his life. This is unusual, indeed.

#### B. The King's Order

*Daniel 4:4-9*

*I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. <sup>5</sup>I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. <sup>6</sup>So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. <sup>7</sup>Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me. <sup>8</sup>But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying, <sup>9</sup>"O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the*



*holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.”*

The monarch’s complacency in the midst of the peace of his empire was interrupted by a dream that disturbed his sleep and made him fearful of the future. As with Nebuchadnezzar’s earlier dream, his wise men were unable to give the interpretation, and so it was committed to Daniel.

### C. The King’s Vision

*Daniel 4:10-12*

*Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great. <sup>11</sup>The tree grew large and became strong and its height reached to the sky, And it was visible to the end of the whole earth. <sup>12</sup>Its foliage was 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 sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it.*

In his vision, Nebuchadnezzar saw a tree planted on earth, growing until it became so large that it stretched up to the heavens. It provided food for all living creatures. This tree metaphorically represented the massive influence and control of Nebuchadnezzar’s empire.

### D. The King’s Sentence

*Daniel 4:13-16*

*I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven. <sup>14</sup>He shouted out and spoke as follows: “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. <sup>15</sup>Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, But with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field; And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. <sup>16</sup>Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let a beast’s mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him.*

An angel commanded the tree be felled, the animals driven away, and the fruit scattered. This “angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven” was a Messenger, literally interpreted as “one who is awake.” This title occurs only here in the Bible (vv. 13, 17, 23). God’s holy angels are always awake and keeping watch over the activities of humanity.

Fetters of iron and bronze were ordered for someone who was to be given the mind of a beast for the space of seven seasons and to live like an animal of the field. Notice the words in verse 16: “Let his mind be changed.” The word mind here has reference to all of the thinking, cognitive reasoning processes of man, controlling everything. This person will become insane and literally imagine himself an animal. This is a monstrous psychological affliction known as “boanthropy” from *bo* (ox or cow) and *anthrōpos* (man). The person thinks he is an ox.





*Daniel 4:17*

*This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers and the decision is a command of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men.*

The dream, added the angel, would come to fruition, for it would serve God's purpose of vindicating His absolute sovereignty. Further, it would demonstrate that God Himself elevates men to positions of earthly glory as it pleases Him and that He also deposes them at will. This is a powerful statement for God raising up and putting down kings and rulers in ancient times and in our days as well.

*Daniel 4:18-19*

*"This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you."<sup>19</sup> Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar replied, "My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!"*

Daniel is troubled by the vision. It is evident that God gave Daniel the understanding of the dream for the sake of the king. He wishes that this sentence was for Nebuchadnezzar's enemies.

### E. The King's Pride

*Daniel 4:20-22*

*The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth<sup>21</sup> and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged—<sup>22</sup>it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.*

The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar in all his glory and grandeur. Like the tree, he had proudly exalted himself to the position of a god in heaven because of his great accomplishments. His dominion stretched to the remote recesses of the world. Millions of people rested in the protective shade of this tree which illustrated Babylon. This is also an illustration of man's trust in political powers instead of God.

### F. The King's Downfall

*Daniel 4:23-25*

*In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, "Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with*



*the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,”* <sup>24</sup>*this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:* <sup>25</sup>*that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.*

The felling of the tree at the height of its glory no doubt spoke of the collapse of the Babylonian empire and the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 5). Daniel told the king he was to suffer a period of insanity in which he would crawl about on all fours, fancying that he was an ox. He would be banished from the company of men and left to live with the brutes of the field, dieting on grass, living the life of a mad man.

### G. The King’s Warning

*Daniel 4:26-27*

*And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.* <sup>27</sup>*Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.*

The stump foretold that the king would survive the ordeal and live to be reinstated on his throne. It implied that the empire would outlive him and be passed on to his successor. Daniel’s parting words to the king were an appeal for him to forsake his sins and iniquities and prove that he had genuinely repented by producing deeds of kindness. Such a reversal of his attitudes and actions might avert the fulfillment of the prophecy and judgment of God. Here is the heart of this civil servant in compassionately counseling the king to repent.

## II. THE DESTRUCTION OF PRIDE

### A. The Boasting of the King

*Daniel 4:28-30*

*All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.* <sup>29</sup>*Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.* <sup>30</sup>*The king reflected and said, “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?”*

Here God provides a season of opportunity for Nebuchadnezzar to consider his ways and change. This patience is expressed in 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” Seemingly, the King’s prideful actions and attitudes were not greatly impacted by the dream and its meaning. He continued to





reflect upon the greatness and might of his kingdom, what he had done to build it, and how it existed for his majesty. Here is his boastful statement of Babylon.

## B. The Humbling of the King

*Daniel 4:31-33*

*While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you,<sup>32</sup> and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes."<sup>33</sup> Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.*

After being shown a year of mercy, the king was smitten by God. God withdrew his blessing from Nebuchadnezzar. Having lost his rational powers, he was reduced to a beast of the field. God has direct access to the mentality of men, and He can do with it anything that suits His purpose. The blatant character of the king was much like people today, who in egotism and pride reject even the fact of God's existence (Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 13:5). Man is much like a wild beast! In utter godlessness and lawlessness, he refuses to entertain any thought of God, clearly rejecting His jurisdiction. Pride and its outcome are clearly seen. Nebuchadnezzar's madness lasted for seven times. Some feel these times were years, but the context suggests it was a season of time, not necessarily years. The king learned much from his experience. We can learn from it, also.

## III. THE OVERTHROW OF PRIDE

### A. The Conversion of the King

"Conversion is marked by faith toward God and repentance from sin: It is the first conscious response to the grace of God that... invades the heart, implanting spiritual life and enabling spiritual perception."<sup>1</sup>

*Daniel 4:34-35*

*But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward 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.<sup>35</sup> All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"*

After his humiliating experience, King Nebuchadnezzar knew there existed only one eternal God—the Most High. He knew that God was



supreme and all-glorious and that He could not share His glory with the creature. He now knew that men were as nothing in God’s sight. Man had absolutely nothing with which to commend himself to God. All man’s works were worthless and transitory. God had the right to do exactly as He pleased without consulting the creature first or ever. God’s sovereignty extended to the highest heaven and to the lowest hell. Nothing in heaven above or on the earth below could thwart God’s purposes or interrupt His plans. No mortal man had the right to question what God does.

## B. The Restoration of the King

*Daniel 4:36-37*

*At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. <sup>37</sup>Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”<sup>1</sup>*

“God acts in unfettered liberty to do with His creatures anything that pleases Him. God is eternally just and true, faithful, and righteous altogether. God’s ways are behind the scenes, but He moves all the scenes which He is behind!” – John Nelson Darby.<sup>3</sup>

## CONCLUSION

J. Allen Blair says, “Years ago in London there was a large gathering of noted people. Among the invited guests was a famous preacher of his day by the name of César Malan. A young lady played and sang charmingly, and everyone was thrilled. [V]ery graciously, tactfully, and yet boldly the preacher went up to her after her music had ceased. ‘I thought, as I listened to you tonight, young lady, how tremendously the cause of Christ would be benefited if your talents were dedicated to Him,’ he said. ‘You know, young lady, you are a sinner in the sight of God, but I am glad to tell you that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses you from all sin.’ ...The young lady was shocked, and she snapped out a rebuke for Malan, to which he replied, ‘Lady, I mean no offense. I pray God’s Spirit will convict you.’

“They all went to their homes. The young woman retired, but couldn’t sleep. The face of the preacher appeared before her, and his words rang through her mind. At 2:00 in the morning, she sprang from her bed. She grabbed a pencil and a piece of paper, and with tears running down her face, this young lady, Charlotte Elliott, wrote these words, ‘Just as I am, without one plea / But that Thy blood was shed for me / And that Thou bidst me come to Thee / O Lamb of God I come,’ because one preacher was compassionate enough to be confrontive.”<sup>1</sup>



## Theme Verse

Daniel said,

“Let the name of God be **blessed** forever and ever,

For **wisdom** and **power** belong to Him.

It is He who changes the **times** and the **epochs**;

He **removes** kings and **establishes** kings;

He gives **wisdom** to wise men and **knowledge** to men of understanding.”

Daniel 2:20-21

## Things we must remember:

1. God’s judgment may be slow—but it is **certain**.
2. God will go to any extreme to show us **He is Lord**.
3. Be watchful of pride. It is the root of all kinds of sins. Clothe yourself in humility.
4. Praise the Lord! “God took one who was His servant in time and made him His child for eternity.”<sup>4</sup>



Pastor Arin Hess

## FOOTNOTES

1. John MacArthur, “How Are the Mighty Fallen!” *Grace to You*, Feb. 10, 1980, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/27-12/How-Are-the-Mighty-Fallen>.
2. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
3. Some of this material is taken from Edward Watke, Jr., *Study of the Book of Daniel*, Revival In the Home Ministries, Augusta, GA, 1992.
4. Michael Barrett, *God’s Unfailing Purpose: The Message of Daniel*, Ambassador Emerald International, Greenville, SC, 2003, pg. 148.



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