

GOD IS SOVEREIGN (Daniel 4)

1. King Nebuchadnezzar's conviction about God (Daniel 4:1-3).

- a. As we read this chapter, we need to realize that the first three verses are really the conclusion of events recorded in it.
- b. Based on what happened to him, King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to let the people over whom he ruled know the God of heaven.
- c. Notice the things that he says about God's abilities and kingdom.

2. King Nebuchadnezzar explanation of events (Daniel 4:4-18).

- a. Times were good for King Nebuchadnezzar.
 - i. There was rest to be had.
 - ii. His kingdom was flourishing.
- b. We are not told when the events of this chapter took place but it seems to be toward the latter part of his reign.
- c. There was a period at the end in which there were no military campaigns and his building program in Babylon had ended.
- d. He then had a dream that frightened him and then he kept thinking about the dream and became more troubled.
- e. **Relay the account.**
 - i. Many have asked and wondered how long the seven times was.
 - ii. There is much debate about it.
 - iii. It is felt by most that for the changes in his body to take place, the time had to be at least 7 months if not 7 years.

3. Daniel's interpretation of the dream (Daniel 4:19-27).

- a. Daniel is troubled by the interpretation of it.
 - i. He is shocked into not speaking for an hour.
 - ii. We must remember that a number of years, at least 20, have passed since Daniel was elevated to such a powerful position.
 - iii. It seems as if during the passing of that time that Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar had grown to respect one another, if not have a friendship with one another.
 - iv. Daniel knew that the interpretation was a dire one for the king, which caused him to be astonished and silent for an hour.
- b. The king encouraged him and Daniel told him that he wished the interpretation was for the king's enemies and not the king himself.
- c. Daniel proceeded to let the king know that he, the king, was the tree and all the birds and animals that were sustained by the tree represented his subjects.
- d. The tree being cut down but the base being kept alive was to let the king know that his life would be spared though drastically changed.
- e. Daniel informed the king that he would become like an ox, or cow, for a period of 7 times until the king learned that God ruled in the affairs of men.
- f. Verse 27 shows the courage of Daniel.
 - i. He was willing to state what his friend needed to hear.
 - ii. He encouraged the king to repent of his sins.

4. King Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation by God (Daniel 4:28-35).

- a. It seems that Daniel's encouragement to change worked for a year.
- b. However, the king's pride got the best of him and he bragged about how great Babylon was and that he had made it such.
- c. Listen to one author's description of what King Nebuchadnezzar was looking at when this statement by him was made: "Stretching out before his eyes were architectural masterpieces of the ancient world: an enormous palace, an exquisite procession way with 120 flanking lions, the famous Ishtar Gate, the temples, the world-famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had not only created a beautiful city, he had built an impregnable fortress with double defensive walls covering 17 miles. A moat, artificial lake, and canals protected and supplied the city with water. It was impressive..."
- d. All of these things led to his enormous pride, which was the source of his enormous downfall.
- e. Before the words were out of his mouth, a messenger from God let him know that he was about to find out the true source of any power he may have had.
- f. At that point, he was driven from men and began to eat grass like a cow.
 - i. He was covered with dew.
 - ii. His hair grew like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws.
 - iii. There is an actual psychological condition known as boanthropy in which these same conditions and actions occur.
 - iv. Br. Turner, Sr., in his commentary on Daniel, quotes a physician who examined a patient in England who exhibited these same type symptoms.
- g. Think how humiliating this must have been.
- h. After seven times, whatever time period that represents, had taken place, he came to understand that God rules in the affairs of men.

5. King Nebuchadnezzar's declaration of God's might (Daniel 4:36-37).

- a. After his realization of God's power, he was restored to his former position.
- b. His experience led him to praise, honor, and exalt the King of heaven.
- c. It seems as if King Nebuchadnezzar finally had learned his lesson.
 - i. He had received a knowledge of God and realized God's wisdom when dealing with Daniel.
 - ii. He came to realize the power of God when dealing with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.
 - iii. However, he finally came to understand the greatness and sovereignty of God towards the end of his reign.
- d. Did King Nebuchadnezzar become a believer in God and receive salvation based on that?
 - i. The answer is that we aren't told for sure.
 - ii. This is the only chapter in the Bible written under the authority of a pagan if he did not.

6. Our application.

- a. Pride is destructive.
 - i. No sin is more discussed and condemned in scripture than pride.
 - ii. The dream of King Nebuchadnezzar was a rebuke of his pride.
 - iii. Daniel did what he could to get the king to repent and turn from his sin, and it seemed to work for a little while.

- iv. However, in the end his sin won out.
- b. The prideful will be humbled.
 - i. One way or the other, in this life or the next, the prideful will be brought low.
 - ii. It is better to humble ourselves before God now, than to be humbled before God later.
 - iii. James tells us to humble ourselves before God and He will lift us up.
 - iv. One day, if we don't now, we will all bow before God in humility and it will be too late then (Romans 14:11-12).
- c. There is the potential to reject God's sovereignty.
 - i. King Nebuchadnezzar thought himself at least equal to a god.
 - ii. His turning to pride led him to think this.
 - iii. He was allowed to find out the hard way how insignificant he really was.
- d. Tragedy awaits those who do reject God as ruler.
 - i. The same thing happens with all men as happened with King Nebuchadnezzar.
 - ii. When God's sovereignty is rejected, man's reasoning becomes unsound.
 - (1) Sin caused the king to reject God and uplift himself.
 - (2) Peter talks about those who think this way (2 Peter 2:12).
 - (3) When we refuse to acknowledge God, terrible and foolish decisions are made (Romans 1:21ff).
 - iii. We begin to rule our own lives when we reject God.
 - iv. Once we start ruling, we descend deep into sin.
 - (1) Since the king's choices were ruled by his heart he became like an animal.
 - (2) This is exactly what happened to the Gentile world who rejected God.
- e. There are four things we must do that the king did in order to truly be submissive to God.
 - i. Understand that God does have the right to rule (Daniel 4:34).
 - ii. Admit how insignificant we are (Daniel 4:35).
 - iii. Confess that fact that God's ways are truthful and righteous (Daniel 4:37).
 - iv. Acknowledge humility brings reward and pride brings destruction (Daniel 4:37).
- f. If you are not submissive to God, you are lost!
 - i. Only by submission to God does forgiveness and restoration occur (Daniel 4:36).
 - ii. Notice Romans 6:17-23.

Some material in the final point came from an article by John Kachelman found on biblestudies.com