

## Daniel 4

### Forcing Daniel and his Friends to the Head of their Class

**Read Daniel 4:1-9:** This chapter seems like a repeat of what we just read. Nebuchadnezzar had another bad dream. Once again, he called in all of his counselors. This time he actually told them about the specifics of the dream. They still could not interpret it. Daniel is now the head counselor. It seems like he purposefully left Daniel for last to interpret it...so nobody could copy his answer. The first part of this chapter is really the summary after the events below.

Daniel's new name was Belteshazzar. That name means *Bel protects his life*. The idol Bel became known later as Baal. Bel was also a name for the idol Marduk. It was sort of an honor to be given that name in the Babylonian society. Bel was Nebuchadnezzar's god.

Sometimes people honor us; but we do not desire their gift or recognition. We have to see it as an opportunity to shine for the Kingdom. Daniel surely did not want to become a captive. He probably did not want to enroll in the King's training program. He did not want to be in the predicament where Nebuchadnezzar was going to kill all of his counselors. God forced him to greatness. Perhaps we should view our unintentional predicaments differently too. There could be new opportunities for us to shine. I was asked to become a Project Manager for three problematic projects this week, instead of serving as a General Superintendent this week. It is not something that I was seeking. Even so, I see it as what the company needs it...so I agreed. I have to figure that God is protecting me and blessing me from what I cannot see yet.

Nebuchadnezzar was shown his role in advance. We talked about how Nebuchadnezzar was shown his appointed place in history in advance. That is not something that we can change. Nebuchadnezzar's response was to challenge that dream by making the entire image of himself...without a successor or replacement. That is like rearranging the chairs on the deck of the Titanic. It isn't changing anything. Now God would have to show him the hard way, that it really is not Neb's call to change God's plan. You cannot resist what God has done.

### Spiritual Imagery in Nature

Daniel, like other prophetic books is full of imagery. We need these familiar things to help us to understand spiritual things. The natural mind of man cannot understand spiritual things. There is also an accountability aspect to prophecy. God will not pile on more knowledge and expectations if we have already said "No" to him in one way or another.

*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. (1 Corinthians 2:14)*

*And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and*

*hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says : 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (Matthew 13:10-17)*

The bible is based on *basic building blocks* that people can understand. The basic concepts (milk) of faith (God, man sin, heaven, hell, savior, etc..) are clearly understood. If we say "No" to God's plan for my salvation; then I should not expect to be able to understand many prophecies and deeper biblical concepts (meat). Isaiah compares spiritual comprehension to a child learning their school lessons.

*"Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little." (Isaiah 28:9-10)*

It is important to apply *Expositional Constancy* when interpreting prophetic symbols. The word-pictures of common things on earth usually have a consistent application. For example, here are a few prophetic imagery constants:

Wild animals- Can represent unbelieving Gentiles. They are like dogs following their appetites, without consideration of the results of their actions.

The Sea-All of the Gentile nations acting collectively

Rivers-Places of origin and providing boundaries, normally pointing to specific nations.

Mountains and hills-Seats of power, rising above the masses of people

Tall trees-Exalted leaders who stand head and shoulders above others in their visibility

Fruit-Useful and beneficial things that come from our lives to strengthen others

Leaves- Our outward profession, or our *apparent* health and *claimed status*. Not a real evaluation. How we represent ourselves (true or false)

### A Towering Cedar Tree

**Read Daniel 4:10-12:** Nebuchadnezzar was described as *the head of gold*, in relation to all of the empires of man. This next vision will further describe this Babylonian empire. The first characteristic listed in this second dream is that the Babylonian Kingdom is compared to a massive, towering tree. It was like the largest tree that you can imagine; towering above everything.



In the bible, towering things represent pride and domination. The prophets described various empires as tall trees or high hills or even as mountains. The Tower of Babel fits right in. The idea of individual greatness is appealing to the secular man.

*And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matthew 3:10)*

The animals living under the tree's shade are representative of Gentiles who gave their allegiance to whomever feeds them. The children of Israel turned to Babylon, Egypt and Assyria instead of God. They refused God's plan and instructions to live free. These alternate powerful allies destroyed their *adulterous lovers* (Israel and Judah).

Prophecy can have dual or triple applications. Ezekiel uses imagery of a forest with towering trees to describe the exalted kings of this world...as well as a means to describe the angels in the Garden of Eden. The prophets described Assyria as a towering cedar from Lebanon. Likewise, the angels in the Garden of Eden were varied in their glory (like various species of conifers). Lucifer was a big man on campus. He was bright, beautiful, musical and intimidating. He was like the *biggest tree* in the Garden. He was a perfect one to lead a rebellion of like-minded angels against God. If Lucifer went down like a clown, then any other angel would be well-advised to take note.

*"Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude: 'Whom are you like in your greatness? Indeed Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, With fine branches that shaded the forest, And of high stature; And its top was among the thick boughs. The waters made it grow; Underground waters gave it height, With their rivers running around the place where it was planted, And sent out rivulets to all the trees of the field. 'Therefore its height was exalted above all the trees of the field; Its boughs were multiplied, And its branches became long because of the abundance of water, As it sent them out. All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs; Under its branches all the beasts of the field brought forth their young; And in its shadow all great nations made their home. 'Thus it was beautiful in greatness and in the length of its branches, Because its roots reached to abundant waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it; The fir trees were not like its boughs, And the chestnut trees were not*

*like its branches; No tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty. I made it beautiful with a multitude of branches, So that all the trees of Eden envied it, That were in the garden of God. ’ “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Because you have increased in height, and it set its top among the thick boughs, and its heart was lifted up in its height, (Ezekiel 31:2-10)*

This massive cedar (Babylonian Kingdom) also has beautiful leaves and is fruitful. Leaves represent *apparent health*. Jesus cursed a fig tree that had no fruit; but had beautiful leaves. It was a representation of Israel. They talked a good game; but they had no good works or true value. It was a picture of a superficial value...absent of anything of value to others. The fruit represented the place this empire held to feed all of the people of the world. Babylon was the temporary means to govern and provide for the nations. God used Babylon to break Judah and the surrounding nations; but then it was to protect, comfort and feed the nations. Instead of recognizing their God-given status, they remained takers and raiders. Nebuchadnezzar saw himself as having power and influence and being completely independent from God. That is why his kingdom got replaced.

A *New Babylon* is coming. It is more of an international system than a kingdom. It will be a world-dominating platform, which controls religion and commerce. It will once again tie idolatry and wealth and adultery. Old Babylon was the homeland of the Tower of Babel, and idolatry. The New Babylon will offer *shares* to all participants to become takers and spoilers and live the high life. It will turn the participants into enforcers (just like Genghis Khan's profit-sharing incentive formula). The normal social family and national sovereignty hierarchy will be replaced with *allegiance to the Babylonian cause (for personal benefit)*. The tie between idolatry and adultery is the abandonment of our right obligations in order to attain a selfish desire. Getting ahead at all costs; and disregard for others is the premise.

*After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.” And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her. (Revelation 18:1-8)*

The Devil has always used man's desire to be self-directed. He misrepresents God as a *cosmic killjoy*. The Devil is a trader who baits us to trade things of lasting value for trinkets. He

studies us like the spider studies the daily pathways of the fly. He puts the snare where he baits us. Lucifer was not satisfied to give God glory and thanksgiving. He was just too good looking and powerful to settle for that.

*“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15)*

The natural mind of man is similar to the Devil's egocentric view of everything. It is like the story of the very handsome son of David (Absalom), who

*“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you. (Ezekiel 28:17)*

The appeal of power and significance and control appeals to all men as it does to Satan. Pharaoh and the Assyrian Kings were compared to giant cedar trees, towering above all men on the planet. God gave them their *moment of glory and power*. God used these empires to exert influence on their neighboring nations.

We saw in the earlier dream that Jesus is the true King of Kings and LORD of Lords. He will crush all world powers when he returns. Jesus will level the mountains and tall trees.

*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, (Isaiah 40: 3-5)*

He will bring down all pride and power. Jerusalem will become the highest place on earth. It will hold all of the power over all of the nations.

*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. Isaiah 2:2-4)*

God allows unbelievers to exercise their own desires up to a point. Then they answer for it. The Bible is full of confused believers, who watch evil men succeed. These evil men are tools

to accomplish a certain temporary necessity. Nothing more. Once they have served their purpose, they too are judged for their misuse of power.

The birds usually represent demonic spirits. Babylon became the seat of idolatry.

**Read Daniel 4:13-18:** The specifics of the dream are now shared. The communicator in the dream seems to be an angel. The Hebrew word translated “watcher” in [Daniel 4](#) comes from a root word meaning “wakeful one” and thus can mean “watcher,” “sentinel,” or “guardian.” The dream is basically saying that judgement has come to Nebuchadnezzar for abusing his power. In a sense, he has lost his authority and power to keep his job.

*But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 12:48)*

Verses 28-35 describe how these events played out. Prophecy can either be described in spiritual imagery; or as a narrative of events at ground level. This way we see both sides of what is happening.

God decided not to kill Nebuchadnezzar. He would glorify God after his humiliation. He let Nebuchadnezzar become mentally ill; and take on animal characteristics. The Babylonians idolized all kinds of animal characteristics placed in men.

*The idols of the nations are silver and gold, The work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them. (Psalm 135:15-18)*



Nebuchadnezzar lived like an animal for 7 years. He became like his make-believe idols. Then his sanity was restored.

**Read Daniel 4:19-26:** This is Daniel’s interpretation, as described.

**Read Daniel 4:28-33:** This is how it went down. King Nebuchadnezzar did not humble himself; even though he knew about the prophecy. He boasted that he built this kingdom himself. God had heard enough; and made a correction on the spot.

**Read Daniel 4:34-36:** It is possible that it was Daniel who ruled the world for 7 years as the King's highest counselor. The King was finally humbled when he regained his sanity. It is interesting how the highest men in the world are humbled by God.