

October 18, 2020

## God Judges Nebuchadnezzar for His Arrogance Daniel 4

**Review-** What are the Three Uses of the Law of God?

### **Read Daniel 4:1-3**

Notes: This is the opening of an epistle from the king to all the nations. In it he refers to a “Most High God” who has performed certain signs and wonders. He also admits that this God has a kingdom very different than any earthly kingdom! It is echoed at the end of this chapter (4:34-35). **Setting:** Daniel records a letter by Nebuchadnezzar where the king reports earlier events. Daniel adds some things at certain points.

### **Read Daniel 4:4-18**

- v. 4 “at ease in my house”- shows that Neb. is in a time of apparent security when he becomes dismayed
- v. 6 his fear this time makes him skip the step from ch. 2 of them telling him the dream too  
“all the wise men” – and Daniel is not among them, once again Daniel is not a pagan
- v.8-9 “my god...spirit of holy gods”- despite what happens here, Neb. remains a pagan  
“chief of the magicians”- in 2:48 Daniel is placed over them in authority though he is not a magician
- v. 11 “reached to heaven”- the arrogance of Babylon, like the Tower of Babel in Gen. 11
- v. 13 “a watcher”- a term only used in Daniel by the pagan king (and repeated by Daniel) may be a pagan understanding of an “angel”- a spirit messenger of God
- v. 15 “leave the stump”- a sign of hope that the tree might again sprout and grow
- v. 16 “his mind be changed”- the mental illness described is “boanthropy”  
“seven periods of time”- not specific, because the number is symbolic of new creation- God is re-creating Nebuchadnezzar’s mental and spiritual state- a more humble, contrite monarch
- v. 18 Why are the wise men unable to interpret this almost obvious dream?
  - 1) Unfamiliar with Ezekiel 17 and 31 (a tree as symbol for royalty)
  - 2) Unfamiliar with Isaiah 6:13; 11:1; Job 14:7 (a stump as symbol of hope)
  - 3) God blinded the pagans even in common sense matters (1 Sam 2:4; Prov 4:19; 2 Cor 4:4)

**The Main Point:** “In Daniel 4, the dream of Nebuchadnezzar is full of clues as to its meaning, but of all the people in Nebuchadnezzar’s court, only the lone Judean who trusts Yahweh can interpret them, because he alone has been enlightened by God instead of blinded by living in darkness and being trained in occult methods of divination. Only Daniel can see the light of God’s glory in this dream, because only he is part of the new creation of God. True spiritual knowledge and enlightenment comes only by the grace of the one true and triune God, and simply through faith in him.” (A. Steinmann, p. 239)

**Daniel 4:19-27** <sup>19</sup>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! <sup>20</sup>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, <sup>21</sup> 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— <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> 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,’ <sup>24</sup> this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins ~~with~~ by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

The Gospel! There is a call to repentance. The judgment does not have to be so. If the king repents and has faith in God’s mercy, he will show mercy as well- a fruit of repentance and faith in the true God alone.

v. 27 “with righteousness” not “by practicing righteousness” – it is a righteousness that comes by faith in the heart that necessarily produces good works

“sins” and “iniquities”- at this time the prophet does not hesitate to convict the king

### ***Read Daniel 4:28-33***

These are Daniel’s additional thoughts in the middle of Nebuchadnezzar’s epistle. The Law of God has consequences through the First Use and Second Use also

### ***Read Daniel 4:34-37***

What parts of The Faith are confessed in this mini-creed? What might be missing?

#### Review the Law in Daniel 4

First Use – God curbs Nebuchadnezzar’s pride, trying to make him a more merciful and just ruler

Second Use – God reveals his sin to Nebuchadnezzar with the goal of repentance and faith

Third Use – only works in believers and we can’t be certain Nebuchadnezzar has faith