

# The Great Tree

📖 Daniel 4:1-37

👤 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

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🌐 fgbible.org

📍 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

Last week we studied Daniel 3 and derived certain principles of civil disobedience from the example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the fiery furnace. The first thing we learned is that the issues are narrowly defined. You don't commit civil disobedience over any old issue that rubs you the wrong way. Basically the issues come down to two: worship and the destruction of innocent life. If you are told how to worship, who to worship or when to worship you have a right to say, I'm sorry, I can't do that. You have to worship the one true God. Or when the issue is the destruction of human life and you are told that you are going to be involved in genocide, euthanasia or abortion, you have a duty to say, sorry, I can't do that. Those are the two biggies. And understand that if you do decide to commit civil disobedience then you should do it respectfully and you should be praying for the leadership and you should be willing to accept the consequences, whatever they may be. That was the way Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did it and it ended up being their testimony. And if you do it that way then it will be your testimony. And testimony in Scripture is huge. It is by your testimony that you do homage to the one true God.

Alright, this week we move into Daniel 4 and I want to introduce the chapter with some observations. The first observation is that in Dan 2-7, the Aramaic portion of the book we have a chiasm (X), this is where the first and last elements are parallel, the elements within those elements are parallel and so forth and so on...

**Daniel 2** ---- The Four Metal Statue and the Stone

**Daniel 3**----- The Fiery Furnace

**Daniel 4**----- The Great Tree

**Daniel 5**----- The Great Feast

**Daniel 6**----- The Lion's Den

**Daniel 7** ---- The Four Beasts and the Son of Man

Daniel 2 and 7 are both outlining the four successive Gentile kingdoms followed by the establishment of the kingdom of heaven. The difference is Daniel 2 looks at these kingdoms from the standpoint of man as great and beautiful accomplishment whereas Daniel 7 looks at them from the standpoint of God as ugly and oppressive. So these mark out the times of the Gentiles followed by the kingdom of God. Daniel 3 and 6 show individual Jews and how they may survive in those kingdoms but in the bigger picture they represent how the Jewish remnant may survive under the discipline of Gentile kingdoms so as to finally be raised and enter the kingdom of God. Daniel 4 and 5 show that Gentile kings and their kingdoms are under the sovereignty of God and they should not get arrogant but in the end they will get arrogant and God will take away their sovereignty and establish His kingdom on earth. So these things are going on in the bigger picture.

The second observation is also a structural one and I want to point out the linkage of chapter 1, 2, 3 and 4. These chapters tell the story of Daniel and his three friends, but they also tell the story of king Nebuchadnezzar. Today we come to the dramatic conclusion of his story and why he is the greatest of Gentile kings. What do we know about him so far? He was a brilliant military conqueror. He defeated many kingdoms. He worshipped many gods who in his mind defeated the gods of the kingdoms he defeated, but chiefly he worshipped Marduk. He was identified as the head of gold and so embodied the kingdom of Babylon. He gave lip service to the God of Daniel on one occasion but He quickly forgot about Him and constructed an image of himself. He then paid lip service to this God again when He rescued Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego but he'll forget that again on this occasion. The point is that the king had been taught some Jewish theology and in his mind this God was the Most High God, which for him meant not that there is only one true God, but only that this God was over and above all the other gods he worshipped. So he was still an idolater. But God has one more lesson to teach this man and this lesson will bring this man to faith in my estimation. And I think you'll be glad that you didn't have to go through what this man went through to come to faith.

The third observation is that chapter 4 is written by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar or by a scribe, perhaps Daniel, taking the king's dictation and it was logged in the royal court records of Babylon. So I'm proposing to you that this chapter is an official court record. I can't prove that from chapter and verse. But that seems to be the tenor of the chapter. And I'm also proposing to you that it was done officially because this is his final testimony. He's giving us his testimony in order to teach us that God alone rules from the heavenlies and bestows rule on whomever he wishes, that it is the God of the Bible who controls history. That is a big lesson for a Gentile ruler to learn because if you haven't noticed already, Gentile rulers are just as arrogant as they can possibly be. They like to rule others. They like to think that they control whatsoever comes to pass. They like to think that they are great. It easily goes to their head. Nebuchadnezzar typifies Gentile rulers. But God kept working with this man to humble him. And today God is going to give this Gentile king another dream and the dream is of a great tree that brings prosperity upon all the earth but is suddenly cut down and after some period of time re-sprouts. Again it's a terrifying dream to Nebuchadnezzar. And the question is, will he learn the lesson this time? Will it stick or will this man remain entrenched in arrogance.

Verses 1-3 are introductory. **Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: “May your peace abound!”** Now this is a proclamation Nebuchadnezzar made to his entire kingdom *after the theology lesson of this chapter*, after he’s learned what he was supposed to learn in this chapter. And basically this is His testimony, but you can see in v 1 that it reads like an official court document that he is writing to everyone in his kingdom and in it he is expressing his desire for **peace**, abundant peace, because as you’ll see in this chapter, he temporarily lost control of his kingdom and a time of civil war ensued and now this is after the war and he is comforting them with the words of peace. And you’ll see how a kingdom gets peace as we come to the end. Verse 2, **It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.** Isn’t it interesting that he wants to declare what God has done for him to the whole kingdom? That’s why I take it this as his testimony. He’s got the highest position in the kingdom, he has authority to make official proclamations and have them deposited in the official court records, and so he’s taking the opportunity to witness to his entire kingdom as well as any later kingdoms in history that may read these official court records. So he’s obviously learned the theology lesson by the time he wrote this record because he’s recounting **the signs and wonders**, which **God** had **done for** him. So whatever happens in this chapter is miraculous and he has accepted that the miracle worker is the God of Israel. Verse 3, **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.** Notice the tremendous confession! In Dan 3 Nebuchadnezzar was trying to establish his own kingdom as an everlasting kingdom. But after the events of Dan 4 he is admitting that God’s kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; that God is sovereign over all the nations. This is quite a change and he’s telling everyone in his kingdom, something has happened that has caused me to change. So I take it from this statement that he has now accepted that Dan 2’s picture of future world history is going to be the future and that picture said that there will be four Gentile kingdoms followed by the kingdom of God. That is premillennialism. Nebuchadnezzar was a premillennialist. He accepted that he was merely the head of gold and his kingdom would pass away as well as all the kingdoms that follow his and will finally be replaced by the eternal stone kingdom of God. That is premillennialism. And if one heard him proclaiming this, he quite naturally would ask, “Well how did you come to this point, Nebuchadnezzar? What happened so that you changed from demanding that everybody worship the image you set up to now admitting you are underneath the sovereignty of this God?”

Verse 4 begins to answer, **I, Nebuchadnezzar**, and this is how you would begin an official court record, you’d give your name and speak in the first person to make clear this is your testimony. **I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.** Now this indicates somewhat the timing of this event. He was clearly done conquering kingdoms because he **was at ease in** his house and if you have wars going on in your kingdom you’re not **at ease**. So it’s after the early period of Nebuchadnezzar’s conquering. Since he defeated Jerusalem utterly in 586BC we know this is after that battle. I’d date this toward the latter end of his reign, probably around 575-570BC. He’s going to reign until 562BC, the year of his death. And the events in this

chapter take a minimum of eight years. So you have to back up at least eight years from 562 and I would suggest longer than that because of the prosperity that is implied after the eight years. So I take it these events occurred around 575BC in this man's life. We're told he was **flourishing in** his palace, meaning his kingdom was thriving, the administration had been streamlined, now he could just sit back and enjoy progress. He was in his palace.

But in verse 5 he says, **I saw a dream and it made me fearful;** now it's on the basis of this verse that I call this Nebuchadnezzar's nightmare rather than Nebuchadnezzar's dream because he says **it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.** He wanted to relax but he couldn't relax after this. So verse 6 he brings in the wise men again. **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 dreams.**

Commentators think this man was stupid for bringing in the wise men again. Why if they failed in Dan 2 does he think this time the results will be any different? Well, frankly I don't think he's lost his marbles here, I think this man was brilliant and I think this man is interested in finding out if they've learned anything from Daniel. They've been under Daniel's tutelage for some years. Did they learn anything in all these years from Daniel? Was Daniel able to duplicate himself in these wise men? And it's really unclear in verse 7 whether they could make known the dream or not. Our English Bible says, **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.** But the actual Hebrew text of verse 7 does not say **they could not make its interpretation known**, it says "they were not making it known." In other words, they may have known what the dream meant, at least approximately, but they didn't want to tell him what it meant because they knew it was not in Nebuchadnezzar's favor. And who wants to be the bearer of bad news? Everyone wants to tell the king good news, not bad news because remember, this is the king whose favorite decree is to have you torn limb from limb if he doesn't like you, and nobody wants that. **But** verse 8, **finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god,** now observe that note, **according to the name of my god.** At the time this occurred Nebuchadnezzar was still thoroughly pagan, his god was Bel, another name for Marduk, and Daniel was named **Belteshazzar** after the king's god, a name which means "protector of the king." And isn't it interesting that Daniel really is the protector of the king, he's his right hand man, serves in his own court and as we're going to see, even Daniel himself wished this nightmare did not have to do with the king. There's an attachment by this time between Daniel and the king. Daniel loved him even though he was an unbeliever, and he didn't want bad things to happen to him.

So verse 8, and here comes **Daniel...in whom** Nebuchadnezzar says, **is a spirit of the holy gods;** not the Holy Spirit, not from Nebuchadnezzar's point of view, he's heard of Daniel's God, Daniel proclaimed Him, but he always reinterprets Daniel's God according to his Babylonian worldview and that's what goes on and on and on and it's the same thing that happens to us when we try to talk to people about God and Jesus Christ, they just slurp God and Jesus up within their pagan worldview just like what happened to Paul at Athens, and they don't get it. So as hard as Daniel tried to keep the focus off of himself in Dan 2 it didn't matter, Nebuchadnezzar

attributed Daniel with the ability, he has **a spirit of the holy gods** which is his way of saying Daniel has contact with **the holy gods**. But he has no real idea what he's talking about. That is nonsense. It is as much nonsense as dinosaurs evolved from birds. It is just talk without any basis in reality.

In verse 9 he makes the request, **O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians**, you're the chief one, certainly you know **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**. Now Daniel had already discounted what the king is saying here. In Dan 2 he told the king "there was no wisdom residing in me any more than any other living man." But you see, the flesh re-interprets those kinds of things and that's why it's so hard to communicate to unbelievers. Here's Daniel years later and Nebuchadnezzar still doesn't get it.

Starting in verse 10 he shares the dream, a great towering tree coming up out of Babylon and spanning over all his kingdom which is a great portion of the Middle East. And some of you have maps in the back of your Bible that outline the extent of the Babylonian kingdom. In verse 10 he says, **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.** Now this is nothing more than the condition described in verse 4, I was at ease, my kingdom was flourishing. But verse 13, **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.** Now I think what you are seeing is the development of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, the tree growing up, it grows larger and larger, lifting up into the sky and its branches reaching out to what was then the inhabited earth. And abundant production of fruit and the fruit fed the beasts that were under it and the birds that dwelt in it. So it was a source that supplied the needs of all who were associated with the tree. Then an angelic being came and chopped down the tree, but the tree didn't fall as a unit, it's not just one cut, it's a series of cuts, they cut the branches off of the main trunk until all that was left was a stump. So the picture is that the source that supplied all the needs of those associated with the tree was destroyed. The birds that were in the branches flew away; the beasts that were under its shade ran away, there's a destruction of the trees ability to provide the needs for all who lived off of it. But the stump was left in the ground and the angel put a band of bronze around it.

Then it becomes ominous in verse 16 because the stump evidently represents a man, **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.**

This, evidently, is what disturbed Nebuchadnezzar. His fear is that he is the tree and that something very unpleasant is going to happen to him for **seven periods of time**. The Hebrew does not designate the unit as minutes, weeks, months or years. Most commentators take it they were seven years because the LXX does designate the seven periods as years and it does seem to be a set time so I think that interpretation is best.

In verse 17 the purpose is stated. **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.** Alright, this is the theology lesson. Theoretically he could have learned it just from the dream, he was told right here, God rules history, not you Nebuchadnezzar, God is sovereign over all men and all nations, not you. And He gives that rule to whom He wishes, even over the lowliest of men, which in the Hebrew is the humblest of men, referring to lowly origins and it's true that Nebuchadnezzar's father Nabopolassar was of humble origins. And so God had given his family the realm and Nebuchadnezzar should recognize that and give praise to Him. That's the theology lesson.

Daniel is now called upon to interpret this nightmare. Nebuchadnezzar knew this related to him or else he wouldn't have been so afraid; he knew he was arrogant, he knew he was responsible and it would be a natural thing to associate this dream with yourself if you were in that arrogant state. That's why an appeal to truth, a direct confrontation of unbelief with the truth is necessary to get people to accept the truth. They won't be comfortable facing the truth, and understand that about unbelievers, they feel much safer not being confronted with the truth, that's why they want the Ten Commandments removed, that's why they want prayer out of the public schools, that's why they want nativity scenes off the public square. It reminds them of the truth and that's not comfortable. So you know that they know the truth, they're just suppressing it in unrighteousness, trying to avoid a confrontation. Confrontation with the truth in a head on collision is the most terrifying thing to an unbeliever. Now Nebuchadnezzar is asking for it, give me the truth, I want to know for sure if that stump is me. He is terrified but he wants to know. In verse 19, he's apparently not the only one terrified. **Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him.** Can't you tell from Daniel's response that he loves the king? Can't you tell that he has an affection for the king? Of course you can. Daniel had grown close to the king, he had probably been praying for the king's salvation for years, now he finds out what is going to happen to the king and he doesn't want this for the king. He, like the wise men before, doesn't want to tell the king. So the king says, **'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!** Clearly a statement of tremendous love and compassion!

But love also tells the truth, it speaks the truth in love. In verse 20, **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—22it is you, O king; for you have become great and**

**grown strong**, just like a tree, his worst fears have been confirmed, **and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth**, just like the branches of a great tree. So what you see here is that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was flourishing. It was providing abundantly for all the nations and peoples he conquered. The nations are symbolized by the beasts and the birds and indeed it was true, Nebuchadnezzar provided for all of them. So an inscription reads, "Under her everlasting shadow I gathered all men in peace. A reign of abundance, years of plenty I caused to be in my land."<sup>1</sup> And by the way, this sets you up for understanding the parable of the mustard seed in Matt 13 because there again you see a tree and birds of the air coming and nesting and it is all a picture of the kingdom of God flourishing on the earth over all nations when Christ returns.

But verse 23, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is subject to God so Daniel says, **'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,"** This means the king's kingdom is going to be chopped up, the chopping off of the branches would be disruption of the peoples and nations that he had conquered and brought into his kingdom because his ability to rule them is being taken away. So Nebuchadnezzar is going to be out of office for a while, not exactly on a vacation, and because his power is cut off pockets of rebellion will break out on the part of the conquered peoples against the kingdom itself. So pockets of civil war if you will, as the foreign peoples try to regain their independence, and what makes it possible is Nebuchadnezzar is not there to hold the empire together. This will last seven years which is necessary to get the theology lesson of verse 17 through to this man; arrogance must be crushed.

Now verse 24, **this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king...** So **the decree of the Most High** includes Nebuchadnezzar as a subject, signifying that the Most High God rules over Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar doesn't make the ultimate decree; he's included within the Most High God's decree. Then verse 25 we have the decree and explanation for why Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom will go into a time of civil war; **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.** He's going to be subjected to a condition, miraculously of course, that's part of the introduction to the proclamation in verse 2, he wants to "declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me." Those are his reflections after this condition. He actually interprets this condition as one of God's grace because it crushed his arrogance. So what is going to happen to him? He's going to suddenly start acting like a wild animal.

Now there is a natural condition called "therianthropy" and sometimes "zoanthropy" or "lycanthropy" in which a person believes that he has transformed into an animal and behaves like the animal. It's a rare but documented

condition linked to bipolar and schizophrenia. "A review of the medical literature from early 2004 lists over thirty published cases of lycanthropy...Canines are certainly not uncommon, although the experience of being transformed into a hyena, cat, horse, bird or tiger has been reported on more than one occasion. Transformation into frogs and even bees, has been reported in some instances. A 1989 case study described how one individual reported a serial transformation, experiencing a change from human, to dog, to horse, and then finally cat, before returning to the reality of human existence after treatment. There are also reports of people who experienced transformation into an animal only listed as "unspecified".<sup>2</sup> Dr Walvoord quotes a case from Dr Raymond Harrison. And this is interesting documentation. Harrison says, "A great many doctors spend an entire...career without once encountering of the kind of monomania described in the book of Daniel.... The present writer, therefore, considers himself particularly fortunate to have actually observed a clinical case of boanthropy in a British mental institution in 1946. The patient was in his early 20's, who reportedly had been hospitalized for about five years. His symptoms were well developed on admission, and diagnosis was immediate and conclusive. He was of average height and weight with good physique, and was in excellent bodily health. His mental symptoms included pronounced anti-social tendencies, and because of this he spent the entire day from dawn to dusk outdoors, in the grounds of the institution....his daily routine consisted of wandering around the magnificent lawns... And it was his custom to pluck up and eat handfuls of the grass as he went along. On observation he was seen to discriminate carefully between grass and weeds, and on inquiry from the attendant the writer was told the diet of this patient consisted exclusively of grass from hospital lawns. He never ate institutional food with the other inmates, and his only drink was water....The writer was able to examine him cursorily, and the only physical abnormality noted consisted of a lengthening of the hair and a coarse, thickened condition of the finger-nails. Without institutional care, the patient would have manifested precisely the same physical conditions as those mentioned in Daniel 4:33....From the foregoing it seems evident that the author of the fourth chapter of Daniel was describing accurately an attestable, if rather rare, mental affliction."<sup>3</sup> Now while this condition, or one similar to it has been diagnosed in the medical community, perhaps due to neurological factors, certainly the cause of Nebuchadnezzar's condition was supernaturally caused. And God is using it to teach this man some theology, the theology at the end of verse 2, namely **that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes**. God wants recognition of that from Nebuchadnezzar. He wants him to give credit where credit is due instead of taking all the credit himself. So the goal of the therianthropic condition was that the arrogant Nebuchadnezzar would humbly recognize God as sovereign of the universe. And every Gentile ruler needs to learn this theology lesson. I suggest that's the reason Nebuchadnezzar wrote this down and had it deposited in the official court records of Babylon. Why would you record the most humiliating incident in your entire life and have it entered into the official court records of the greatest empire on earth if you didn't want later kings to read these records and learn what you learned? I can see no other way of interpreting this than Nebuchadnezzar's final testimony to all Gentile rulers to humbly recognize that the Most High is ruler over all mankind and bestows rule on whomever He wishes. A great many letters are sent to Washington every day, but I have yet to see anyone send this letter."



Verse 26 and here we have explanation of the stump, **'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.** So the band of iron and bronze was to assure the protection of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom during these seven years. In verse 27 Daniel closes with an exhortation. **'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.'** Daniel recognized that God always gives grace before judgment and so he gives him this good advice, repent from your arrogant rule and rule properly and rule righteously, serve the people of your kingdom rather than oppress them, administer righteousness in the courts and by doing so you can avoid having to go through this horrible mental disorder.

But, verse 29, **"Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. "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?'** He's saying this all within his heart, he's magnifying himself, he's crediting himself with all the majesty of his kingdom, he's so arrogant. And verse 31, **"While the word was in the king's mouth,** out of the mouth comes that which is in the heart, **a voice came from heaven,** not through Daniel but straight from God himself **saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you.** You know, get clear in your head right now why this is happening, I am doing this to you to teach you theology. Nebuchadnezzar said it is by my power and for my glory that Babylon has been built. God says, no, no, no, it is not by your power, it is by My power, I gave you that position, I made you king, I built Babylon. But you refuse to give Me credit and therefore I demonstrate My authority over you, now you will go mentally insane, you will go on all fours and act like a wild animal and eat grass and sleep outside and remain unkempt for seven years. And **immediately,** verse 33, **the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled.**

Now I suspect that he was kept in the royal garden park. It was customary for the royal rulers of the time to build garden parks and surely you know of the hanging gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. So he would have had one of these secluded parks; the lions den Daniel will later be thrown into was probably within this park. And now the mightiest man is there on the grounds acting like an animal and eating grass, digging holes in the ground, a very embarrassing situation. This went on for some time. During the time the kingdom is in great danger; civil wars broke out, assassination attempts were made against Nebuchadnezzar. But Nebuchadnezzar would remain and I suggest that Daniel watched over him, Daniel protected him and Daniel guarded the throne for him. That is what the name Belteshazzar means!

**But** verse 34, **"But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me,** the seven years had elapsed, **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?'** Okay, I think you can make a pretty good case that this is a profession of faith. And I think you have to recognize in verse 34 that his condition during this time did not totally destroy his ability to think because he obviously knew what was going on and when the condition ended he **raised his eyes toward heaven** and his **reason returned to** him. That's the moment this man was saved, it took seven years to break this man's pride and get him to admit that God rules in the heavens and bestows rule on whomever he wishes. And he accepts that. There are no idols now as before in verse 8, there is only the one true God who rules.

Verse 35 and these are powerful statements of God's sovereignty, if you struggle with God's sovereignty here are some verses, **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?'** It's hard to think of any human more qualified to say that than Nebuchadnezzar. If God can change your mental state into that of an animal I think He can do whatever He wants and you can't do anything about it. And you can't challenge whether He is right or wrong in anything He does. And that solves a lot of things if you think it through. If you can accept it.

Verse 36, 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.** This is an application of the principle that he who humbles himself will be exalted. His kingdom flourished even more than before. Verse 37 and this is the closing words of the official court record, **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.** This is the end of the court record. I think it's the testimony of a believer. I don't think unbelievers praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven. I think that's an activity believers do. He didn't do that at the end of Dan 2 or Dan 3, so to see it here gives me the impression that this man has learned the theology lesson and I think you and I will see this man in heaven. This is why this man is the greatest Gentile king. He became a believer and walked with God from this day forward, bringing righteousness and justice into his kingdom. Because of this God made his kingdom flourish more than before. The tree that had grown strong and flourished in unbelief but became a stump. Yet God preserved the stump with its roots. Once the king was humbled and looked to heaven, the stump re-sprouted and grew to be even stronger than before, flourishing as a mighty tree. That is a great picture.

What are we to learn from this chapter? First, God rules from the heavens, He gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom and He took it away. God gives rule to whomever He wishes, He raises and lowers kingdoms. No kingdom rises and no kingdom falls without God doing it. That is the philosophy of history. Second, arrogance will characterize rulers during the times of the Gentiles. According to the image of Dan 3 Nebuchadnezzar was perhaps the most

arrogant Gentile ruler ever. But his arrogance was broken, he came to faith and learned humility. He left record of it in the royal court of Babylon so later kings and rulers can read it and come to faith and humble themselves before God breaks them. Third, God uses revelational pressure to get people to respond to Him. I think this is the best tool we have to explain why some come to Christ and others don't. Everyone gets revelation through creation and that is sufficient to condemn, but some get special revelation and here He gave sufficient special revelation to bring this very arrogant man to faith. Fourth, God was gracious to humble the first great Gentile king and have him record it and enter it into the official court record of the greatest superpower on earth. If Gentile rules will heed Nebuchadnezzar's testimony and put their faith in Christ and humble themselves, God will establish their position and make their offices flourish. Alright, next time chapter 5, Belshazzar and it teaches a parallel lesson with some interesting twists.

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<sup>1</sup> Renald Showers, *The Most High God*, p 43.

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clinical\\_lycanthropy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clinical_lycanthropy)

<sup>3</sup> John F Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, 109-110.