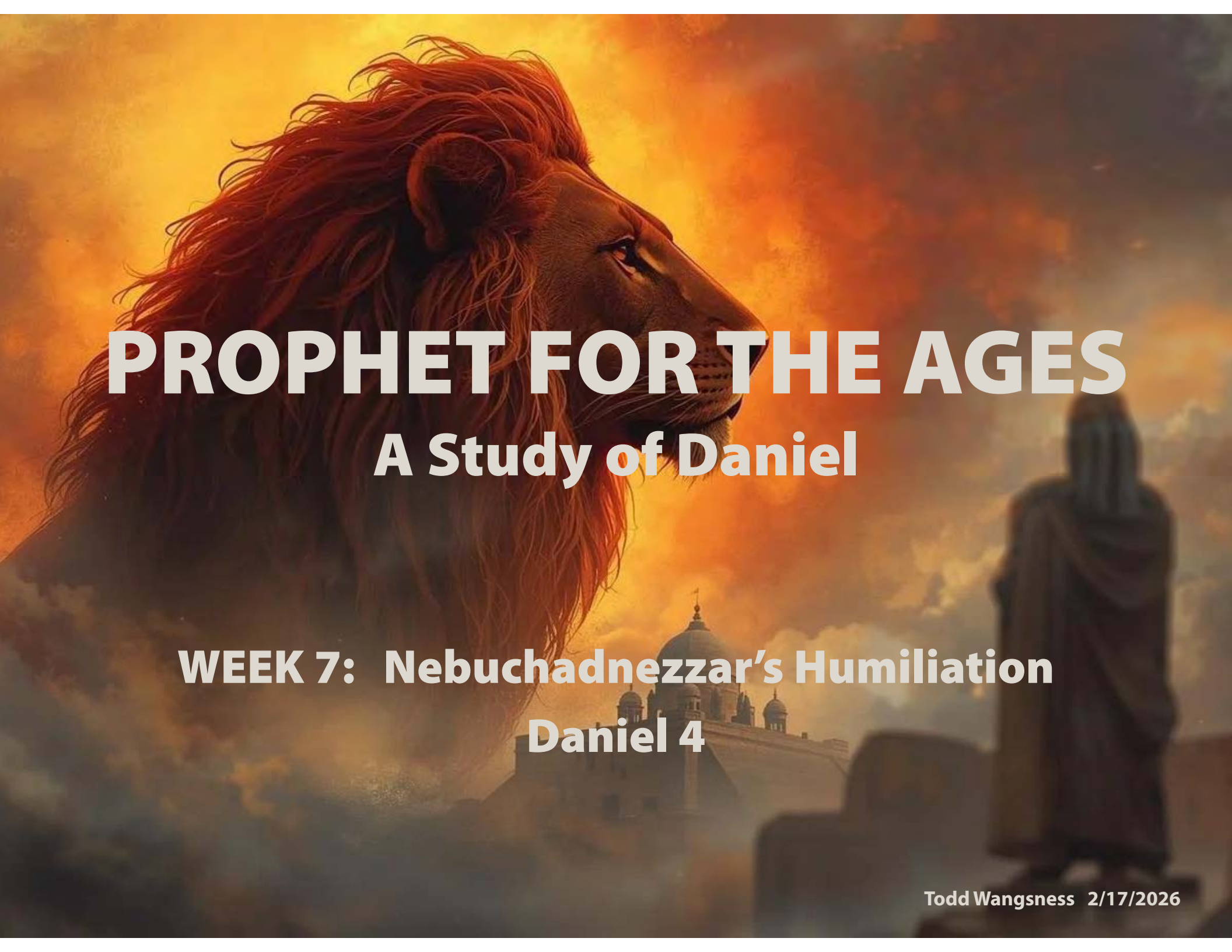




PROPHET FOR THE AGES

A Study of Daniel

WEEK 7: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation
Daniel 4

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

Daniel 4 Themes

The Sovereignty of God

- God alone is the "Most High" who establishes, removes, and humbles rulers. Earthly power, no matter how vast, is subordinate to divine authority

The Danger and Consequences of Pride

- The chapter echoes Proverbs 16:18 ("Pride goes before destruction") and serves as a graphic warning: God actively opposes and humbles the proud

Humility, Repentance, and Restoration

- In contrast to pride, humility before God leads to grace. Daniel's plea for the king to "break off your sins by practicing righteousness" (v. 27) shows mercy is possible through repentance

Divine Mercy and Grace in Judgment

- Nebuchadnezzar's testimony becomes a public witness to God's goodness, turning personal humiliation into worldwide praise

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Notable Quotes About Daniel 4

"Pride is the most destructive word in any language. Pride damned Satan and his angels. Pride has damned men throughout human history. Pride is destructive because it breaks that first and great command that we are to have no other gods before God Himself. Pride asserts that man is to take a place of superiority over God. Now, that is the lesson of Daniel chapter 4: God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. If you ever were looking for an illustration for James 4:6, you'd find it in Daniel 4. It is an apt and graphic illustration of that very basic truth. When you are proud, God fights against you; when you are humble, God gives you grace." -- John MacArthur

"Nebuchadnezzar's second dream accomplished three things: It warned the king that his pride would lead to judgment and records the culmination of Nebuchadnezzar's spiritual biography, with God using drastic means to bring this haughty king to the end of himself and to faith in the God of Israel." -- Warren Wiersbe

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Daniel 4 Overview

- There are several principles in this chapter that God has previously addressed in the bible
 - *Job 33:14-18 Indeed God speaks once, Or twice, yet no one notices it. 15 In a dream, a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls on people, While they slumber in their beds, 16 Then He opens the ears of people, And horrifies them with warnings, 17 So that He may turn a person away from bad conduct, And keep a man from pride; 18 He keeps his soul back from the pit, And his life from perishing by the spear. [NASB]*
- Here in Job, we see that Man tends to not listen to God when He speaks one or two times
- God has spoken to Nebuchadnezzar twice already
 - In Daniel 2 in his dream of the great image, where Daniel interpreted his dream
 - In Daniel 3, where God delivered Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego in spectacular fashion

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Daniel 4 Overview (cont.)

- God will now firmly get the king's attention a third time in chapter 4
- God hates pride. He uses yet another dream to warn the king about his pride.
- When Nebuchadnezzar persists in his prideful attitude, God resoundingly and publicly humiliates the king in a dramatic manner
- He loves Nebuchadnezzar and intervenes in his life to humble him that he may recognize that God is supreme and that His Will cannot be thwarted
- In the end, Nebuchadnezzar humbly acknowledges that God is the Most High and deserving of our praise and thanksgiving!

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Nebuchadnezzar's Praises God!

Dan 4:1-3 *Nebuchadnezzar the king,
To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace
be multiplied to you. 2 I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders
that the Most High God has worked for me. 3 How great are His signs, and
how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His
dominion is from generation to generation.*

- Nebuchadnezzar releases a royal proclamation (not an edict or decree)
- He wanted to tell everyone about the unique experiences he has had with the God of Israel over the course of several years
- In verse 3, the king declares three things about the God of Israel
 - He acknowledged God's *signs and wonders*
 - God's Kingdom is *everlasting*, as compared to man's kingdoms
 - God's dominion is *from generation to generation*

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Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream

Dan 4:4-7 *I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6 Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation.*

- Like the first dream of the Great Image, this dream terrorized the King
- He – again – called in the *wise men* with a decree (big guns), this time he did not demand they recount the dream to him, but to only provide its interpretation
- They could not (or would not) provide an interpretation to the king
 - They probably lacked courage more than insight
 - The text says they did not make it known, not that they could not make it known

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Dan 4:8-9

But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before him, saying: 9 "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation.

- Again ... Daniel to the rescue!
- Nebuchadnezzar uses Daniel's Babylonian name *Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god*
 - The king still considered *Bel* his god
 - This shows the events of chapters 2 and 3 had still not changed Nebuchadnezzar's heart towards the God of Israel
 - He was still an unbeliever who had merely added God to his pantheon of gods
- The actual Aramaic wording for *Spirit of the Holy God* is, "spirits of the gods"
- Earlier, he had acknowledged God as the God of gods (*Dan 2:47*)
- But he still falls short of acknowledging the God of Israel as the absolute and sole deity

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Dan 4:10-12 *“These were the visions of my head while on my bed: I was looking, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. 11 The tree grew and became strong; its height reached to the heavens, and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. 12 Its leaves were lovely, its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, the birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.*

- Nebuchadnezzar recounts his dream to Daniel
- The tree in his dream was so tall it could be seen *to the ends of the earth*
- The initial phase of the dream was idyllic – an oasis for all creation

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

Dan 4:13-14a ***"I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. 14 He cried aloud and said thus:***

- **Nebuchadnezzar describes *a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven***
 - **Aramaic for 'watcher' means "waking or wakeful one"**
 - **This wording appears two other times in Daniel (in verses 17 and 23)**
 - **Clearly, this was an angelic being appearing in the dream**

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

Dan 4:14b-16 *'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. 15 Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. 16 Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times pass over him.*

- The angelic watcher issued a decree consisting of three points:
 - The tree was to be drenched *with the dew of heaven*
 - It was to graze with the animals among the plants of the earth
 - *His* mind was to change from that of a man to that of an animal
 - This was clearly a personification of the tree in the dream to describe that it referenced a man, not just a tree
- The duration of the judgment was to last seven times (or years)

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Dan 4:17

'This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.'

- A whole assembly of watchers decreed it – even though the message came from only one
- The decree was made so that all the living would know:
 - The Most High is sovereign over all the kingdoms of men
 - God gives rulership to *whomever He will*
 - At times, He may appoint the *lowest of men* in positions of authority

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

Dan 4:18

"This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you."

- Though Nebuchadnezzar recognized Daniel as a man filled with the Spirit of the Holy God, Nebuchadnezzar had not yet yielded himself to the Holy God

Dan 4:19

Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!"

- Daniel was so alarmed at the dream, he was hesitant to share it with the king
- Only at the insistence of the king, did he finally open up
- As he did, he respectfully prefaced the interpretation by wishing it did not pertain to Nebuchadnezzar, but – instead – to his enemies

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

Dan 4:20-22 *“The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, 21 whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home— 22 it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.*

- Daniel applied the point without ambiguity
- Instead of reaching for a general point (such as saying, “We all could use a little more humility”), Daniel brought the truth in love
- This was similar to what the prophet Nathan said to King David: You are the man! (2 Sam 12:7)

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

Dan 4:23

"And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him';

Dan 4:24-25

This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: 25 They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.

- *"till you know that the Most High rules"*
 - This was God's intended purpose for Nebuchadnezzar
- The king could have avoided this humiliating fate if he had genuinely humbled himself

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

Dan 4:26-27 *“And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules. 27 Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.”*

- Daniel confirms that God would restore Nebuchadnezzar after the 7-year judgment was complete
 - After he came to know that the God of Heaven rules!
- Daniel's advice to the king consisted of two parts:
 - He should immediately renounce his sins and embrace righteousness
 - Resolve to forego iniquity by showing mercy to the poor
- The two-part solution follows both the OT and NT doctrines of:
 - Repentance and justification by faith
 - Demonstrating his faith (belief) by his actions (sanctification)
 - *Rom 10:9-10 if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

Dan 4:28-30 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"

- **Babylon was truly one of the spectacular cities of the ancient world, which included the famous hanging gardens (one of seven Wonders of the Ancient World) built by Nebuchadnezzar**
- **Babylon was 15 miles on each side, with an estimated 200,000 residents**
- **The top of the outer wall was wide enough for four chariots to ride abreast**
- **Daniel knew that the new Babylon was the creation of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:30), something previously thought untrue and only verified by recent archaeology**
- **In the British Museum, there are six columns of writing recovered from Babylon which describe the huge building projects of Nebuchadnezzar and his zeal to enlarge and beautify the city**
- **Most of the bricks found in the excavations of Babylon carry this stamp: "Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, supporter of Esagila and Ezida, exalted first-born son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon."**

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

Dan 4:31-32 *While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."*

- Nebuchadnezzar developed a rare disease called *lycanthropy*
 - The form of insanity in which men think of themselves as animals and imitate the behavior of an animal has been observed
 - Some call it *insania zoanthropica* and more specifically in Nebuchadnezzar's case, *boanthropy*, the delusion that one is an ox
- God will do whatever it takes to bring us to a place to recognize we need Him
- Several extra-biblical and archeological records back up the biblical account of his seven-year period of insanity

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

Dan 4:34-35

And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding 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 is from generation to generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

- The first thing Nebuchadnezzar did at the conclusion of his judgment was to *lift his eyes to heaven!*
- He began glorifying the Most High! In his praise, the king declared a number of things about the nature of God:
 - He lives forever
 - He has an eternal dominion
 - His kingdom endures from generation to generation
 - All people of the earth are regarded as nothing before Him
 - He does as he pleases with the army of heaven
 - No one can hold back His hand
 - No one can object to His will

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Dan 4:36-37

At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

- The instant Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the Most High as God, he was restored to the throne
- His dignity and splendor were restored and neither his advisors nor the nobility opposed his return
- He regained his position as king with even greater honor than before
- Verse 37 contains the king's concluding remarks about his ordeal
- He had an attitude of praise toward the King of heaven
- He exalted God for two reasons:
 - God's deeds are rooted in truth
 - His ways are a manifestation of absolute justice

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Conclusion of the Matter

- **God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6)**
 - There have been many who rise from humble origins to great glory, and then fall
 - Perhaps it is better to have never been raised up than to rise and then fall
 - Most, if not all, fall through pride; and a proud look is number one on the list of God's most hated sins (Proverbs 6:16-19)
- **We also see that God will glorify himself among the nations**
 - When Nebuchadnezzar took some of the treasures of the Jerusalem temple and put them in the temples of his gods, he had reason to believe that his gods were stronger than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - By the end of Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar knew which God was the one true God
 - And when Nebuchadnezzar knew it, he wasn't shy about telling people what he had learned – he was a true witness, giving testimony to God's great works
- **Nebuchadnezzar's madness foreshadows the madness of Gentile nations in their rejection of God**
- **Nebuchadnezzar's fall typifies Jesus' judgment of the nations**
- **Nebuchadnezzar's restoration foreshadows the restoring of some of these nations in the millennial kingdom**

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Questions To Ponder

- So, was Nebuchadnezzar “saved”?
 - What words within the text support your view that he was saved or unsaved?
- Parable of the Seed and Sower
 - *Luke 8:5-8 “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. 6 “Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. 7 “And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. 8 “But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.” When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”*
 - In that parable, are the seeds the potential believers or the word of God?
- What attributes of God are evident in Nebuchadnezzar's journey through chapters 2, 3, and 4?
- How does pride sneak into our walk and thoughts?
 - What is the earliest manifestation of the sin of pride we read in the bible?
 - What steps do we need to take to address pride in our lives?