

Daniel 4 John Karmelich

1. Ever watched a television show where the opening scene is the conclusion? Because you are familiar with the characters, the opening scene doesn't make sense until you watch the whole show, and only then, you comprehend the first scene.
 - a) That is what is happening here is Daniel Chapter 4.
 - b) I've seen television shows where the main character has changed dramatically in the opening scene, and you don't understand why, until you watch the whole show. It makes for good drama, and the producers of the show "hook you in" because you want to understand how the characters got that way.
 - c) This story, in this presentation, is King Nebuchadnezzar.
 - i) The opening of Chapter 4 shows the King praising the God of the Bible.
 - ii) Somewhere, in the events of chapter 4, King Nebuchadnezzar gets saved.
 - iii) It isn't until you read the whole chapter, that the first few verses make sense.
 - iv) If you've never read Chapter 4 before, I recommend pausing here, and reading the whole chapter. This, along with a quick prayer request for the Holy Spirit's guidance, will help you understand the chapter.
 - v) Go ahead, I'll wait. ☺ Then come back and join me right here!
2. For those of you who are disobeying my request, here is a summary of the chapter. ☺
 - a) King Nebuchadnezzar at the height of his power has a bad dream. He dreams of a great big tree, covering the whole world. The tree gets chopped down, except the stump gets persevered. The dream then moves to a man literally living like a cow for 7 years. At the end of the 7 years, he makes a full recovery and is king again.
 - b) Daniel interprets the dream as being King Nebuchadnezzar himself. Daniel warns the king to "repent or this will come true". The king doesn't, and thus, the 7 cow-years beings. ☺ At the end of the 7 years, the King is returned to his normal self and is back in full power again. After he is restored, he praises the God of the Bible for teaching him the valuable lesson of just-who-is-really-in-charge-here. Finally, King Nebuchadnezzar writes the letter to the whole world, telling the story of the event.
 - c) This is how Chapter 4 is a "full circle". The chapter opens with the king praising God for everything that happened. Unless you've read the chapter, you don't know what King Nebuchadnezzar is talking about. That is why it makes more sense the second time you read the chapter.
3. Before I jump into this story, I want to get a point across. I take the view that Bible studies are not history lessons, but primarily applications for our lives. They are designed to teach us about God, our relationship with him, and what God expects of us out of our lives.
 - a) When you study the life of King Nebuchadnezzar, I encourage you to not focus on a king who lives roughly 2,600 years ago, but think about how your life has personality traits of King Nebuchadnezzar. Also, think about the political and economic and religious leaders of our country, and how God's hand is over their lives and how God calls on us to pray for them.
 - b) Chapter 4 is often nicknamed by commentators "testimony time". It is King Nebuchadnezzar giving his testimony of how God changed his life and further, King Nebuchadnezzar *praises* God for who he is, and what he is done in our lives.
 - i) I take the view that anybody who had been a Christian for a while should also be able to give *some* sort of testimony of how God has changed your life.
 - ii) It is the type of thing that is difficult to see in the present, but easy to see if one looks back on their life after turning their lives over to God.

- iii) Christianity is not just about believing Jesus is God. Christianity is about letting God *work through you*, about turning control of your life over to God moment by moment. It is about seeking God through prayer, through his word, through Bible studies, through gathering together with other Christians so God can instruct *you* as to what *he* wants you to do. *That* is living the Christian life.
- 4. Chapter 4 is the last we read of King Nebuchadnezzar. There is no further mention of him in the Book of Daniel.
 - a) In my opinion King Nebuchadnezzar gets saved. I expect to meet him one day in heaven. Personally, I'd like to strike up a conversation with him and ask him about his life. I think it would be interesting.
 - b) On a side note, I believe one of the reasons we get to live for *eternity* is so we can spend a large portion of that time getting to know all the other believers. I know I would personally like to spend time meeting some of the characters of the Bible, along with other people used by God. Anyway, it's an extra incentive to be a devout Christian. ☺
 - c) Being "saved" in the Old Testament, is acknowledging the God of the Bible is *the* one and only God, and *acting upon it*. I believe we'll see Nebuchadnezzar do this here.
- 5. Well, we have a lot of verses to cover tonight, so let's get going. Daniel Chapter 4, Verse 1: King Nebuchadnezzar, To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: May you prosper greatly!
 - a) Chapter 4 begins with King Nebuchadnezzar "calling a press conference". He writes a letter to everybody under his empire. The letter is translated into all the languages under his control. Remember that the Babylonian Empire was a vast territory that spanned a good portion of Eastern Europe and Western Asia.
 - b) Remember the *power* that King Nebuchadnezzar had. If you or I called for a press conference to make an announcement, the world would give a collective yawn and see "who is this guy, and why should I listen to him?"
 - i) But if the President of the United States calls for a press conference, all the major networks show up and the whole world watches, either directly, or later see the highlights on the nightly news.
 - ii) That is what is happening here. To borrow a cliché from an old television commercial "When King Nebuchadnezzar talks, people listen."
 - iii) One of the principals taught in the Bible is that God himself raises up leaders and often, brings them down again. It is mentioned in this chapter, and throughout the Bible. God uses Nebuchadnezzar to tell of His power as God. If God did not raise up Nebuchadnezzar to that level of power, then the King would not have the *influence* necessary to be his witness.
 - iv) God can work that way in our life. I have watched many a "nobody" start to be used by God in a great way, often times in a very small ministry. God will use them, and raise them up to a larger role and make their audience larger.
 - v) Remember with God, the size of the audience does not matter. Often, God will make us work for years, or a lifetime, in a small group. Eventually, God may take us up to a larger audience, or there may be someone under our influence that God wants to use greatly. The teachers of the great leaders are just as important to God as the leaders themselves.

- c) Meanwhile, back at Verse 1, ☺, King Nebuchadnezzar opens his letter to the world.
 - i) When we, as Americans write a letter, our style is to mention *first* who the letter is written to, then the text of the letter, and then finally, we sign our name.
 - ii) In most ancient cultures, they do it in a different order. First comes who the letter is from, then who the letter is to, and finally, the text of the letter.
 - iii) When you read the letters in the New Testament, you see this style as well. Most of the letters start off with who wrote it (say, Paul for example), and then who it is written to (say, for example, the church in Corinth) and then the text of the letter. There is no additional signature at the end of the letter. This is the style we see here, and often in the Bible.
 - d) After the to/from aspects, the king opens with a greeting of peace & prosperity.
 - i) The NIV translation here reads “May you prosper greatly”
 - ii) The New King James translation says “Peace be multiplied to you.”
 - iii) The New American Standard Bible says, “May your peace abound!”
 - iv) My point is simply that there are various translations of this phrase.
 - v) If I haven’t mentioned it yet, the original language of this chapter is the Caldean (Babylonian) language, and not Hebrew.
 - e) The point of the greeting is that this is a humble king.
 - i) It is not: “It is your might king Nebuchadnezzar. All hail me! ☺
 - ii) It is not: “Hey everybody, I’m back from being a cow. Its good to be back!” ☺
 - iii) It is not: “through great efforts of mind-over-matter, I’ve personally overcome my great desire to eat grass and be on the cover of a milk carton.”. ☺
 - iv) It is not: “ the Babylonian god Nebu has shined favorably upon me today!”
 - v) No, it is honoring the true God of the Bible.
 - a) After seven years of hardship, King Nebuchadnezzar in all his power has come to realize just *who* is in power.
 - b) Those realizations, that change in his life, that feeling of joy of knowing the truth about life, have made Nebuchadnezzar a happy man.
 - c) Thus, the first words, “May you prosper”. As I would add: “May you know the God of the world the same way *I know* the God of the world. May you understand the love and plans God has for your life. May you understand the joy through all things. In that way, may you prosper.”
 - f) Gee, I hate to stop when I’m on a roll, but what do you say we go to verse 2? ☺
6. Verse 2: It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.
- a) Imagine somebody in the Babylonian kingdom reading this letter.
 - b) I’m sure world spread fast of the king being a cow, and now, back in power in again.
 - c) The curiosity factor *alone* would get you to read the letter and wonder, “so, what happened anyway?” What a great opportunity to be a witness for God!
 - d) A reason God *did* restore King Nebuchadnezzar to power was so the king *could* use this opportunity to glorify God.
 - e) Notice the opening of the letter doesn’t focus on the dream, nor the cow-years, but on the God of the Universe. The one true and living God. Life being with Him and ends with Him. This is the purpose and focus of the letter. It is to be a witness for God. The story is simply another example of how all of life is designed to bring glory to God himself.

7. Verse 3: How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.
 - a) King Nebuchadnezzar is so excited, he breaks out in praise.
 - b) This is why I believe Nebuchadnezzar is saved. It is not just that believes in God, but the fact that he stands up and declares to the world who God is.
 - i) Jesus said, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. (Matthew 10:32 NIV)
8. Now that we have the purpose of the letter stated, we begin the story itself.
 Verse 4. I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous. ⁵ I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me.
 - a) The letter now changes focus from the present to the past. The "past" is probably eight years ago.
 - b) The king was at his peak of power. He was ruler of the world. There was no rebellion, there were no wars. The economy was good. Inflation was low. The polls showed that his personal ratings were up. Things were good. ☺
 - c) Yet, it is not enough. One of the things to learn from Nebuchadnezzar is that "having it all" is not enough. Many a king, president, business leader and peak-of-power person will tell you of the emptiness they feel inside even when they have it all.
 - d) God designed us with a need to worship him. You avoid that need, and you end up worshipping something else.
 - e) Notice in Verse 5 that King Nebuchadnezzar was afraid. This is a guy who has it all.
 - f) Let's face it. When we have nightmares, we may get scared for a moment, but that's about it. We say, "well, it was just a bad dream, I better cut down on those spicy foods", and then, we go back to bed.
 - i) This was different. This *terrified* him. I suspect the king knew that this dream was somehow, about him.
 - ii) History also gives us a clue. There are some writings by Nebuchadnezzar that were found by archeologists. The king was personally fascinated by trees and the images of trees. I believe God used that fascination for this dream.
9. Verse 6: So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. ⁷ When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. ⁸ Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)
 - a) OK, the king had a bad dream. The last time the king had a bad dream was in Chapter 2. You'll remember then, that the king told all the "wise men" to read-his-mind, tell the king *what* he dreamed and then interpret it. This time, he just asks everyone to tell him the meaning of the dream.
 - b) Somehow, I sense that the king *knew* that all these other guys couldn't do it. After all, it was Daniel, and Daniel alone who, back in chapter 2 told the king what he dreamed.
 - c) I suspect the king thought, "well, these guys are on the government payroll. Let's make them earn their living. Let's see what they have to say."
 - i) I suspect some of them gave weird interpretations.
 - ii) I suspect others stated that this dream is about his enemies.
 - iii) I suspect others just shrugged their shoulders.
 - iv) I suspect *all* of them feared for their lives and their careers. Even if any of these "yes-men" would *dare to think* that this dream was about the fall of King Nebuchadnezzar, none of them had the guts to say so and lose their lives.

- d) The exception will be Daniel. Daniel's job was to be loyal to God *over* his loyalty to King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was probably the #2 guy under the king. Yet Daniel knew that if giving the king the true interpretation could cost the king his life, so be it. It is more important to stand up for God than to falsely stand up for the king.
 - e) King Nebuchadnezzar purposely called Daniel in last. I suspect the other guys on the payroll were commanded to stand around so the king could show off Daniel's power to the rest of them.
 - f) Notice the King calls Daniel "Daniel", which is his Jewish name. The king *then* mentions that the Daniel's Babylonian-given name is Belteshazzar.
 - i) Remember that Daniel was the #2 guy in the Empire, and was probably well known throughout the Empire as Belteshazzar.
 - a) Besides, Daniel is much easier to pronounce than Belteshazzar! ☺
10. Back to the story, Verse 9: I said, "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me." ¹⁰ These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. ¹¹ The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. ¹² Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.
- a) The dream is actually very easy to interpret. Why? Because Daniel does it for us in a few verses. It is *amazing* what some people have commented about this dream.
 - i) I'm saying this to remind you that an essential rule of prophecy, as well as Bible study is: If the Bible interprets the dream for you, that's it. No need to look for further interpretation!
 - ii) Listen to what Daniel says in Verse 22: you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.
 - iii) That is the meaning of the dream! End of the discussion. ☺
 - b) It sort of amazes me that nobody else (i.e., none of the kings other "wise men") could figure this out.
 - i) Remember that the correct interpretation means you are telling the king that he is going to be "chopped down", i.e., lose his power.
 - ii) *You* try delivering that message to a king and see what happens to *your* head!
 - iii) That is why I suspect nobody else could interpret it. I suspect many of them could figure out the meaning, but nobody wanted to risk their lives to find out.
 - iv) In the Bible, I could find you a lot of Old Testament word-pictures where "trees" represent nations or leaders. It is a good word-picture as it is the tallest of all plant life, and it does provide shelter and food for anyone in the animal kingdom, including humans.
 - c) It is interesting to re-read this paragraph from the standpoint of one who has reached the pinnacle of power. Think of a king, a president, a business leader, a billionaire, who has nowhere left to go but down. Re-read that paragraph and fill in your favorite person here.
 - i) There is nothing wrong with achieving these things. We *need* corporate leaders to provide jobs and products we need. We *need* good government leaders. The key is their attitude. Are they thanking God for raising them up, or are they congratulating themselves for their achievement?

11. Verse 11: "In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven. ¹⁴ He called in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field.
- a) In the Babylonian religion, they believed in angelic-like creatures that watched over the affairs of man. Therefore, it is not unusual for Nebuchadnezzar to describe an angel-like creature.
 - b) The interesting word-picture is the last sentence. After this great tree is chopped to the ground, the tree-stump is persevered in Verse 15. Not only is it saved, but also the stump is bound with iron and bronze so it can't be uprooted.
12. The vision continues, Verse 15 (cont.): 'Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.
- a) The first thing to notice is that in the middle of Verse 15 (being after my insert of the word "continued") the vision changes from a tree to "him". In other words, the pronouns in this vision change from "it" to "he". This was done so that the king would know *for sure* this is not a literal-tree, but a word-picture of a person.
 - b) King Nebuchadnezzar will have the first recorded case of "mad-cow disease" ☺
 - i) The king will be mentally turned into a "beast" until 7 "times" have passed.
 - ii) The word "times" probably means years. A minority view is that it means seasons as in fall, spring, etc. So it either means 7 years or 7 seasons, which is about 2 years. A third view is that in the Babylonian calendar, there are only two weather-seasons; so each "time" is a half-year.
 - a) Reaction? Whatever. ☺ Either way the king was a cow for a long time.
 - c) The word-picture we are seeing here, as we'll learn later in this chapter, is that King Nebuchadnezzar will be brought down, way down in fact, but not out.
 - i) Verse 16 says that after 7 "times" passes, then the king will be fully restored to power. That is the word-picture being drawn by this dream.
 - ii) There are two great miracles being performed in this chapter. The first is King Nebuchadnezzar being brought down to almost-nothing. The second is the restoration of his power completely.
 - iii) Stop and think about how many kings, emperors, presidents in history have ever lost *all* their power, have been declared legally insane for a long period of time, and then fully recovered and fully brought back to power. I doubt a scene like this is repeated in history.
 - iv) So the big question is "Why is God doing this to King Nebuchadnezzar?"
 - a) The answer of course, is in the next verse:
13. Verse 17 finishes the King describing the dream: 'The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.'
- a) Back to the question. Why did God *allow* the king to be turned into a cow for 7 years (or seasons) and then get his kingdom fully restored? What is the purpose of the double-miracle?
 - b) Read the last sentence again. To quote the king, "so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men."
 - i) Bottom line? This was not done for the king's sake; it was done for our sake!

- c) I underlined the word “the living!” in Verse 17 That’s us folks.
 - i) The purpose of this whole chapter, for that matter, the purpose of King Nebuchadnezzar’s rise and fall and rise again is all so that we, the living understand that God, and God alone rules over the affairs of mankind!
 - ii) There is a parallel thought-passage in the Book of Exodus. God is speaking through Moses to Pharaoh: “But I (God) have raised you (Pharaoh) up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. (Exodus 9:16 NIV)
 - iii) OK John. I understand that God rules over the affairs of man. I get that. Now what? ☺ Glad you asked!
 - a) The question of course, is what are you doing about it? God calls us to be *his* witnesses for him. To live as examples, to minister to those God calls us to minister to? To live our lives for God. That is the purpose of life itself.
 - (1) This is why Chapter 1 of Proverbs begins with the reminder that: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7a NIV)
 - (2) Once you understand that God is in control, the next step is to live your life *for* him. Finding your individual role, making yourself available to God for use is living life far greater than anything Nebuchadnezzar or anyone else could do on their own!
14. Meanwhile, back to Daniel, Verse 18: "This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."
- a) King Nebuchadnezzar didn’t get it. He *may* have comprehended it was about him and probably did, but he didn’t *want* to comprehend it or maybe he didn’t understand *why* he would have to be “chopped down”.
 - i) I can almost hear the king thinking, “Well, I guess this dream has something to do with me and my future. Maybe it is about someone who wants to overthrow me and “that” is who chops me down. But I don’t get this live-like-an-animal bit. If that is me, why do I have to suffer like that? After all, I am the great leader of Babylon. This place would fall apart if it wasn’t for me. The people *need* me. I’m Nebuchadnezzar after all!
 - a) Obviously, I’m speculating here. I’m trying to put myself in the King’s position and wondering what I would be thinking.
 - b) The king turned to Daniel, because he is a trusted friend and let’s face it, he knew Daniel would tell the truth, even if it was bad news for the king. People respect honesty more than a “yes-man”.
 - i) That is why being a good-witness for Jesus is important. During the really rough times is when people are going to look *to you* to understand what God expects of them.
15. Verse 19: Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you."
- a) The word “time” here is translated “one hour” in many translations. The simple point is Daniel stopped for a good awhile not only to pray to God for the proper interpretation, but to think about the implications.
 - b) Knowing Daniel’s personality, I don’t think he was scared to tell the King the truth about his fall. I just think Daniel was focusing on the implications of the prophecy.

16. Verse 19 cont.: Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!
 - a) This verse tells me that Daniel (a.k.a., Belteshazzar) *liked* Nebuchadnezzar personally. Daniel was his right-hand man. Even though Nebuchadnezzar was a pagan king, who didn't believe in the God of the Bible until a few verses later, I think Daniel had a close affection for him that comes from spending time with someone.
 - b) Daniel understood that God raised up Nebuchadnezzar even prior to this event. Daniel further understood that God raised up Daniel to be the king's advisor and to be a good witness for the true and living God to Nebuchadnezzar.
 - c) What *shocked* Daniel was that God was going to bring *down* Nebuchadnezzar for a while. Daniel probably stopped to meditate as to *why*.
 - i) As we'll discover in a few verses, Daniel realized the king was being punished for failing to acknowledge God for his accomplishments.
17. Daniel now interprets the dream over the next four verses. Verse 20: The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, ²¹ with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air-- ²² you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.
 - a) Daniel is not only telling the king that *you* are the "tree", but a reminder that God has raised the king up to an extent of power unknown in history to this point.
18. Daniel continues, Verse 23: "You, O king, saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live like the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.'
 - a) This repeats back the key lines of the dream. The only thing Daniel has added so far in these four verses is that "you are the king".
 - b) Daniel repeats it back to Nebuchadnezzar so *he* could comprehend *himself* in this series of word-pictures.
19. Verse 24: "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: ²⁵ You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. ²⁶ The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.
 - a) Let me paraphrase in modern slang: "King Nebbie, here's the deal. ☺ You will think you are a cow and live *like* a cow for 7 years until you acknowledge that God is in charge of your life and you are not. Oh king, here's the good news. When you acknowledge this fact, God will give you everything back just as it was with no further conditions."
20. Daniel adds some advice in Verse 27: Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."
 - a) Let me paraphrase again. "Oh king, I know some things about God. I've studied the Old Testament to date. God has *relented* from past warnings of punishment if you change your ways. Kind of like a father to a child saying "I'm going to do this and this, but when the kid changes his behavior on his own, the father, out of love, relents from the planned punishment.

- b) It is interesting to note what Daniel requests as repentance. Not to bow-down and worship God. Not to study the Bible. He didn't even focus on the 10 commandments. Not that any of these things are wrong. I suspect what Daniel focused upon was the one sin Daniel knew Nebuchadnezzar to be guilty of, which was the king allowed oppression of the poor to exist in the kingdom.
 - i) By the way, this is not a guarantee that God *would* go back on his planned punishment.
 - ii) The importance of not allowing the poor to be oppressed was given by Solomon as a command to kings.
 - a) "Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:9 NIV)
21. Verse 28: All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"
- a) My favorite part of this paragraph is the phrase "Twelve months later".
 - i) Nebuchadnezzar did not begin the 7 cow-years for another year.
 - ii) God was *giving* Nebuchadnezzar time to repent.
 - iii) That is what God desires for all of us. God does not take pleasure in punishing us but wants us all to change our ways.
 - a) "Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezekiel 33:11 NIV)
 - b) The problem of course, is Nebuchadnezzar's pride.
 - i) Did the dream scare him from a year ago? Of course it did. The text says so.
 - ii) Did Nebuchadnezzar change for awhile? Probably, we're not sure.
 - iii) The problem is one year later, Nebuchadnezzar was back to his old egotistical self. Verse 31 focuses on how much "his" accomplishments versus God's accomplishments. Notice the emphasis on "I and me" in this chapter. I counted 31 uses of the word "I" or "me" by the King in this chapter (using New King James Bible).
 - a) God does *incredible* things *through* us. The secret, for our sake is to give God the credit. The danger is not so much King Nebuchadnezzar strutting around thinking how great he is, the problem is that God is interesting in the world knowing *he* is in charge. He uses *us* as a vehicle to communicate that fact.
 - (1) Jesus said "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required;" (Luke 12:48a)
22. Verse 31: The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. ³² You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."
- a) As the king was "thinking this", God began the cow-years.
 - b) One Bible commentator I read visited a mental institution in England where they had a patient with a similar mental problem. This patient *did* survive for years on eating grass.
 - c) God allowed it to happen *right at that moment* so the last thought Nebuchadnezzar would remember is his prideful thoughts. It is similar to someone who is suddenly struck blind. You will always remember the last thing you saw.

23. Verse 33: Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.
- a) I wonder how conscious Nebuchadnezzar was during this time.
 - i) Did he have any recognition of his former life, but say didn't have the physical and mental ability to overcome the desire to live like a cow?
 - a) Because Nebuchadnezzar knew when the seven seasons were up, I suspect he still had some mental capacity and went "in and out". I suspect for *years* he tried to beat it on his own. He probably thought many a time here "I *know* I can overcome this", and then reverted.
 - b) Either that, or Nebuchadnezzar was aware of the change of the seasons and years. When 7 years had past, he was now conscious again.
 - c) It took seven years (ok, seasons ☺) before Nebuchadnezzar gave up and said, "OK, I give up God, you win. I tried on my own to beat this, to make myself better, but couldn't do it. At that point, his health was restored.
 - b) I also wonder what your average Babylonian citizen thought about this:
 - i) "Hey, did you hear the news, King Nebby has lost his marbles. The guy is walking around on all fours, eating grass and mooing all day. The same guy who did built the empire and conquered the world has gone mad."
 - ii) News that that gets around fast.
 - iii) There is a Jewish tradition that Daniel himself took care of the king during those seven years. It's possible but it is not stated as such in the text.
24. Verse 34: At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.
- a) This is the second great miracle of Daniel Chapter 4. It wasn't just that the king was struck with madness, but that he made a full recovery and his kingdom was fully restored. Think of the implications:
 - i) There was no revolt, rebellion or revolution for power for this time.
 - ii) Many people are always power hungry. It is amazing he was allowed to make a full comeback. Maybe none of his children were considered strong enough to rule.
 - iii) This means the kingdom was at peace during this time, or that the generals overturned any rebellion even without a king in charge.
 - iv) It is further amazing that the people under Nebuchadnezzar let the king come back to power. How would *you* feel about your king if you known he had been a cow for 7 years. Would you *just* let him rule again?
 - v) Personally, I bet King Nebuchadnezzar thought, "If I never see another blade of grass again as long I live I'll be happy." ☺
 - a) OK, no more cow jokes. ☺
25. Back to Verse 34, Nebuchadnezzar gives God the credit. He starts praising God: Verse 34(b): His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.
- ³⁵ All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"
- a) I remember a sports movie some years back called "Rudy". Young Rudy asked a priest a question about his future. The priest answered, "There are only two things I know for sure son, first, there is a God and second, I'm not him.
 - i) That is the realization of Nebuchadnezzar right here. There is a God.

- ii) Not just the multiple idol gods of Babylonian empire. But a single God who rules over the whole universe.
 - a) He and he alone is in charge. There is no one else to be worshipped.
- b) To put it bluntly here, Nebuchadnezzar gets saved. He is saved because he acknowledges who God is, and he turns his life over to him.
- c) This is the last we read of Nebuchadnezzar. In a sense, this is all we have to read. Based on the text, I'm convinced he's in heaven. He got to the point of acknowledging the God of the Bible and changed his life *based* on that knowledge.
 - i) God worked *through* Daniel to lead Nebuchadnezzar to God. The same way God works *through* Christians to teach people about Jesus.
- d) The skeptics out there will naturally ask, "Well of course Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God. God turned the guy into a cow and then gave him back everything. Who *wouldn't* acknowledge God after all that?"
 - i) Answer: You'd be surprised. The world is full of success to failure back to success stories. People go through *amazing* rise and falls and rises and still don't acknowledge God. The humanistic thing to do is to feed your ego and give yourself the credit. This is why miracles are not enough to change people. People only change after being broken, and realize there is more to live than themselves.
 - a) Jesus said, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." (Luke 16:31 NIV)
 - (1) When Jesus says, "they will not listen to Moses and the Prophets", it is a reference to the collective works of the Old Testament. This is why the Old Testament is necessary. The Old Testament gives God's standards for good standing with him. Without "the law", we would have no idea that we cannot approach God on our own.
 - (2) That is the lesson Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way. Give the guy credit. He was smart enough to know when he was defeated. Unlike say, Pharaoh in Exodus, Nebuchadnezzar turned to God at his lowest moment. That is when God works best in our lives. When we have fully exhausted all *our* options and *our* resources, and we have no choice left but to *completely* trust God, is when he does his best work in our lives.
 - (a) Listen to Nebuchadnezzar testify to that fact:

26. Verse 36: At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

- a) Amen! There is not much I can add to that.
- b) Notice the end of Verse 36 is that God made the King greater than before.
- c) The last sentence is a great line. "Those who walk in pride he is able to humble."
 - i) It is no guarantee that every great leader will be brought down.
 - ii) We have to remember God has a purpose for everything. Some he leaves leaders up in power. Some he brings down. I cannot explain all mysteries. I have to wait until I get to heaven to understand it all. In the meantime, I'm just going to praise God like Nebuchadnezzar. Why? To quote the king in Verse 37 "because everything he does is right and all his ways are just"

- d) Notice in Verse 36 Nebuchadnezzar declares that God “made him even greater than he was before”.
- i) Remember that prior to the seven cow-years, Nebuchadnezzar had everything.
 - ii) So how was he made even *greater*?
 - iii) To use the New Testament cliché, he became born again.
 - iv) We as Christians, when we accept Jesus, we too become *even greater* than we were prior to our conversion.
 - v) One has to see the parallel between our salvation and Nebuchadnezzar:
 - a) Nebuchadnezzar *thought* he had everything, but in God’s eyes, had nothing.
 - b) Nebuchadnezzar was brought low by his sinful life.
 - c) Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the God of heaven and his life was restored.
 - d) That is what God does for us by our accepting Jesus’ payment on the cross. Not only are we restored, but we are restored to a much richer, and much fuller life than we could ever have prior to our conversion.
 - (1) Paul said, “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.”
(Ephesians 1:18-19a, NIV)
 - e) On that positive note, let’s wrap it up.
27. Let’s pray: Father, we thank you for these lessons we have learned about Nebuchadnezzar. It is you, and you alone who is in charge. Help us to search out the pride in our lives, to find out the areas where we are still trusting in ourselves and not in you. Help us to remember to pray for those you have appointed as leaders over us. You are the one who has raised them up. Help our leaders to seek your guidance and your will for their lives and those under them. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.
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Bonus Material – Class Notes:

Notes for Daniel- Chapter 4 (Page 1 of 3)

King Nebuchadnezzar Gets Saved and Gives His Testimony

Chapter Overview:

- The entire chapter is a published letter from King Nebuchadnezzar to everyone in the kingdom.
- This chapter takes place at least 8 years after Chapter 3.
- Most of the chapter describes events that happened over the previous 8 years.
- The structure of the letter is 1) present events, 2) past events, and then back to 3) present events
- It starts with what is happening to King Nebuchadnezzar presently because of last 8 years.
- It then describes the key events of the last years of his life.
- It then comes “full circle” to again explain how the events of the last 8 years changed his life.

A Summary of Chapter 3:

1. King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges and praises the God of Heaven (Verses 1-3).
2. Nebuchadnezzar has a bad dream. His magicians, enchanters, etc. can't interpret it (Verses 4-8).
3. Nebuchadnezzar calls in Daniel and reveals more details about the dream (Verses 9-17).
 - a) The vision is of a tree that covers the entire earth (Verses 10-12).
 - b) The vision changes to an angel proclaiming to cut down the tree (Verses 13-15a).
 - c) The vision changes from “it”(tree) to “him”(king) living like an animal for 7 years (Vs. 15b-16)
 - d) Finally Nebuchadnezzar announces the purpose of the vision (Verse 17).
4. Nebuchadnezzar has Daniel interpret the dream (Verses 18-27).
 - a) Daniel states that King Nebuchadnezzar is the tree in this vision (Verses 19-22).
 - b) Daniel states that the dream means the king will live like an animal for 7 years until he acknowledges that God rules over the affairs of mankind.
After 7 years, he will be restored to his throne (Vs. 24-27).
5. The letter now moves back to the events of 7-8 years ago (Verses 28-33).
 - a) There was a 1-year period to see if Nebuchadnezzar “repents”...didn't happen (Vs. 28-32).
 - b) An angel announces that the seven years of “living-like-a-cow” will now begin (Vs. 31-33).
6. After the 7 years, Nebuchadnezzar regains his sanity and his kingdom (Verses 34-36).
 - a) Nebuchadnezzar praises God for teaching him this lesson and restoring his kingdom.

Bible Cross-References and Notes for This Week's Study:

Verses 1: King Nebuchadnezzar's letter to the world. Opening words: “May you prosper greatly”

- The New King James translation says, “Peace be multiplied to you.”
- The New American Standard Bible says, “May your peace abound!”
- My point is simply that there are various translations of this phrase.
- The point of the greeting is that this is now a humble king.
- After seven years of hardship, King Nebuchadnezzar has come to realize just who is in control.

Verse 3: King Nebuchadnezzar praises the God of heaven

- This is why I believe King Nebuchadnezzar is saved. Not because he states he believes in God, but he acts upon that faith by declaring to the world who God is.
- Jesus said, “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32 NIV)

Notes for Daniel- Chapter 4 (Page 2 of 3)

Bible Cross-References for This Week's Study:

Verse 8: King Nebuchadnezzar calls Daniel "Daniel"

- When Daniel was deported, he was given the Babylonian name "Belteshazzar" (Chapter 1).
- As a (the) top administrator, Belteshazzar was probably well known around the Empire.
- By Nebuchadnezzar calling Daniel "Daniel", it is a subtle way of acknowledging Daniel's God.

Verse 15: The word that is translated "times" or "seasons".

- The word "times" probably means years. Therefore 7 "times" is 7 years.
- A second view is that it means seasons as in fall, spring, etc.
- Based on this view, Nebuchadnezzar was a cow for 1¾ years.
- A third view is that the Babylonians only have two weather-seasons; "summer and winter".
- Based this view, so each "time" is a half-year. Therefore it lasted 3½ years.
- My reaction? Whatever; no matter the interpretation the king was a cow for a long time. ☺

Verse 17: Why did God allow the king to be turned into a cow for 7 years?

- What is the purpose of the double-miracle?
- To quote the king, "so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men."
- There is a parallel thought in the Book of Exodus. God is speaking through Moses to Pharaoh: "But I (God) have raised you (Pharaoh) up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. (Exodus 9:16 NIV)
- The purpose of the double miracle is so the world may know:
- There is a God.
- This God, Our God interferes with the affairs of man!
- The question of course, is what are you doing about it? God calls us to be his witnesses for him. To live as examples, to minister to those God calls us to minister to? To live our lives for God. That is the purpose of life itself.
- This is why Chapter 1 of Proverbs begins with the reminder that:
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7a NIV)

Verse 27: Daniel pleads with Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his sins.

- By asking Nebuchadnezzar to repent does not guarantee God will relent of his planned punishment, but there are Biblical examples of such an occurrence. (Example: Exodus 32:10-14).
- The specific sin that Nebuchadnezzar was guilty of: "(not) being kind to the oppressed".
- "Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:9 NIV)

Verses 28-30: The seven "cow-years" beings:

- God does not delight in the punishment of the wicked.
- "Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezekiel 33:11 NIV)
- God holds leaders more accountable than others.
- Jesus said "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required;" (Luke 12:48a)

Notes for Daniel- Chapter 4 (Page 3 of 3)

Questions to Ponder:

- How “aware” was Nebuchadnezzar of his former life during those 7-years?
- Did he attempt to regain consciousness by “mind-over-matter”?
- Did he know when the 7 years were up? Was he simply informed when it was over?
- Did he finally give up and acknowledge God, and finally the 7 years were over?
- What did the “average Babylonian” think of all this?
- The curiosity-factor would get people to read the letter.
- God used this event to witness to those all over the Babylonian Empire.

Think About The Sequence Of Events About The Book Of Daniel To Date:

- God worked *through* Daniel to lead Nebuchadnezzar to God.
- God works through Christians to teach people about Jesus.
- Our job as Christians is to tell God about people (prayer) and people about God (witness).

A Question Brought Up By Skeptics:

- The Bible skeptic would say, “Well of course Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God. God just turned him into a cow, and fully restored everything he ever had. Who *doesn't* thank God after a great miracle like that?”
- Response: You would be surprised how many people have received great blessings and miracles and say it was through 1) their own effort or 2) luck/coincidence.
- Great miracles are not enough to bring people to God. Some people don't want to repent of their lifestyle no matter how great the evidence.
- Jesus said, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” (Luke 16:31 NIV)

Verse 37: Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed, “I... became even greater than before”.

- Nebuchadnezzar already *had* all the power that he had before.
- He could have referred to being saved.
- Money and power are never enough.
- He was restored to greater power because now he is a humble servant of the God of the Universe.
- He has greater power because now Nebuchadnezzar will live for eternity.
- “I will praise you forever for what you have done;
in your name I will hope, for your name is good.
I will praise you in the presence of your saints. (Psalm 52:9, NIV)