

# The Book of Daniel

## *Chapter 4*

# *Introduction*

This chapter is a letter written by Nebuchadnezzar; except for a narrative that was added by Daniel that's in the third person (vv 28-33). There's a reason for Daniel's narrative: (1) it provides an account of the king's insanity, which he may not have remembered and which he would not have written about even if he did remember; (2) to remove any form of shame from the king, which Daniel does; (3) with Daniel's narrative, the focus is upon the power and rule of the God of Israel, not the numerous, false gods of Babylon; and, (4) Daniel's insertion removes the subjectivity of Nebuchadnezzar and give a more realistic, objective viewpoint of the events.

# Introduction

The Law of God is very evident in this chapter; even so, there is also a silver lining of Gospel. The First Commandment is very prominent, as is the first and second use of the Law. With the first use, the king is shown that the Law will curb his pride and arrogance and lead him to be a more just and merciful ruler. It's clear that the LORD is seeking to move Nebuchadnezzar to repentance and faith.

The second use of the Law is evident in that God is judging him in order to convict him of his sin against the First Commandment.



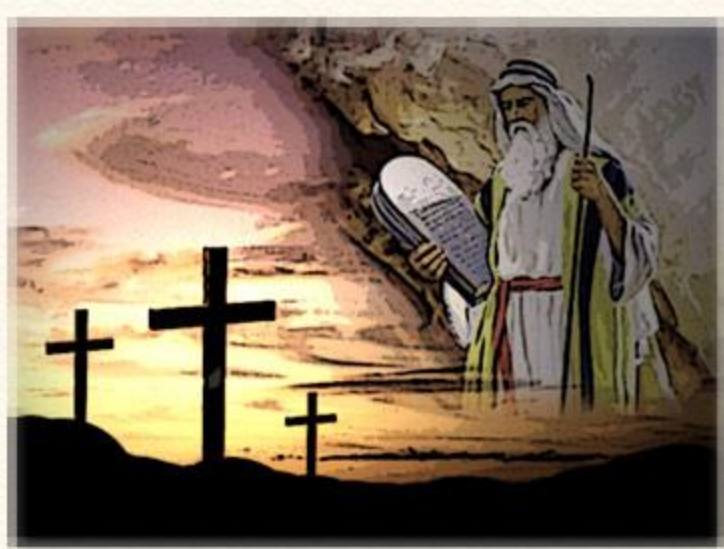
# Introduction

The results of God punishment via the use of the first and second use is effectual. The king does curb his arrogance and pride and admits that “the Most High God” is the ruler on earth. He must also recognize that he must not express his hubris in the future and that God is just in His discipline.

In the use of the Law, we are shown just how difficult it is for a pagan to repent and believe in the One True God and to renounce their pagan practices and false gods.



# *Introduction*



The Gospel is shown in God showing mercy and grace in His dealing with the king.

God demonstrates His power by removing Nebuchadnezzar from his throne, albeit temporarily, and the LORD offers to Nebuchadnezzar a taste of His sovereignty over a Gentile king.

# *Introduction*

The historical context of Daniel 4 is most likely between 573-569 BC. The periods prior to and after these dates are recorded in the Babylonian Chronicle: 586-573, Nebuchadnezzar is in Tyre directing the siege and capture of Tyre.

And from 568-567, he is involved in a campaign against Egyptian Pharaoh Amasis II, which proves to be unsuccessful. The other important fact to recall is that Nebuchadnezzar dies in 562 BC, so the only time that Daniel 4 could have happen is from 573-569. This period will be further discussed when we come to verses 13 and 22.

# Verses 1-3

The superscription identifies the author as Nebuchadnezzar and specifies to whom it is directed “...all peoples, nations, and tongues that dwell in all the earth.”

The fact that Nebuchadnezzar wants his letter to be distributed throughout the land indicates the importance he attaches to his experience. It's also important for us to recognize that this letter is written in the ancient Oriental style where the author first identifies himself and gives a general purpose of the letter.

# Verses 1-3

“WONDERS” are usually regarded as “a specific display of God’s power which causes men to marvel” (cf. Dt. 6:22; 7:19; 13:1-2; Is.8:18). By the use of this Biblical language proves that Daniel did have influence over Nebuchadnezzar and further validates that Daniel wrote his book during his captivity in Babylon.

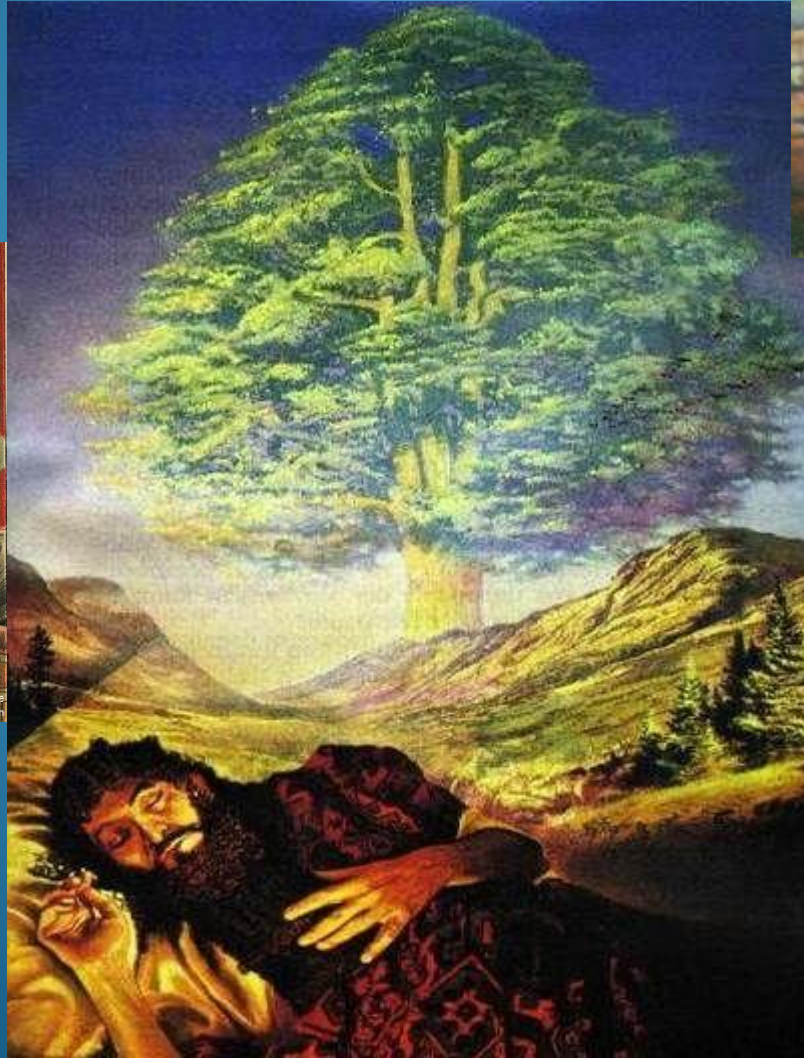
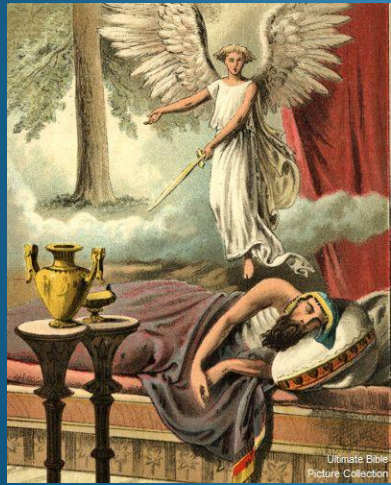




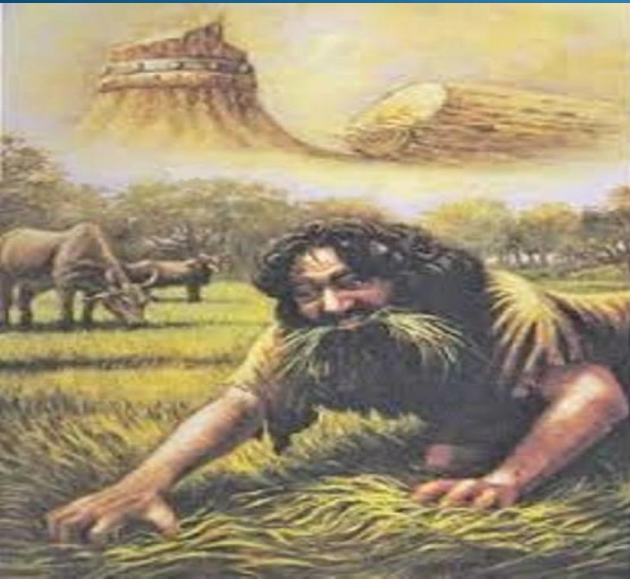
# Verses 4-18

Nebuchadnezzar sees a huge tree that captivates his mind. A loud voice from “a holy One who came down” commands that the tree be cut down, but although it seems the tree is to be totally destroyed, it turns out that the stump and roots will be left and that a band of iron and brass would be fastened around the stump. The interpretation seems to fit in with the image as we shall see, since Nebuchadnezzar’s temporary removal from his throne was dramatic and his malady held him bound. *“And he shall be moist with the dew of heaven”* fits in with Nebuchadnezzar’s wanderings outdoors in the night without cover.

# Verses 4-18



# Verses 4-18



***“His portion shall be with the beasts in the grass of the earth.”***

Squares with the King’s behavior when he ate grass like an animal. This demented state would continue until God had time to finish his specific work on the king.

***“His heart shall change”*** doesn’t mean biologically, but psychologically, into the heart of a beast. This may refer to psychological phenomena called “*bullomania*,” which is a condition in which a human regards himself to be a cow, a bovine, and acts out behaviors like a cow. Although very rare, there is a “modern” example of King George III of Great Britain.



# Verses 4-18

The length of time is stated “***until seven times shall pass over him***” (v.13). The length of time is of no real consequence; the important thing is that God’s time will accomplish His purpose!

Though we should recall that Daniel doesn’t use numerology in his book; even so, this period shouldn’t be construed as seven years. Note that the term “years” isn’t used, only seven times. In regards to the physical changes of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 30), it could have been seven months or seven seasons (four seasons equaling one year and then three seasons equaling nine months)

# Verses 4-18

A watcher and a holy one is an angel and when taken in context (cf. v.24) the final analysis makes sense. We read of heavenly councils elsewhere in Scripture (cf. 1 Kings 22 & Job 1). What part do angels play in such assemblies? Is their participation meaningless? Hardly, since they do consult with the LORD, yet they will do what God decrees and desires.

The truth of the statement “*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*” is the meaning of v.17 (Cf. 1 Sam.2:7-8; Lk.1:52).

In his concluding statement, Nebuchadnezzar implies that there was no more to the dream than what he had just told. He again asks for an interpretation as he did in verse 9. He again notes the failure of the official dream interpreters and suggests that Daniel display his superior wisdom as he has done on the previous occasion.

# Verses 19-27

Daniel is horrified and knows that the dream portends judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar due to his arrogance and pride. For this reason, Daniel is reluctant to tell the king such, knowing of Nebuchadnezzar's violent temper and irrational reactions leading to violent punishments. However, the king, sensing Daniel's uneasiness, coaxes Daniel to reveal to him the interpretation of the dream.

Daniel is still cautious as he distances himself from this message of judgment, so he demonstrates his loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar by telling him that he, Daniel, wished that the judgment would fall upon the king's enemies. This is a subtle signal to the king that what Daniel is about to reveal isn't good news for Nebuchadnezzar.

# Verses 19-27

Daniel reinforces the dream by repeating what Nebuchadnezzar has already related to him; though, there are minor variations. It seems that Daniel's variations are intended to avoid embarrassing the king. Even so, Daniel is clearly telling the king that what he has dreamed is validate and true.

The exhortation (v.27) to the king is designed to bring Nebuchadnezzar to repentance. Notice that it is very forceful Law and Gospel. What Daniel is telling the king is second use of the Law. If the king is merciful to the poor, perhaps God will allow the king's prosperity to be prolonged.

# Verses 28-37

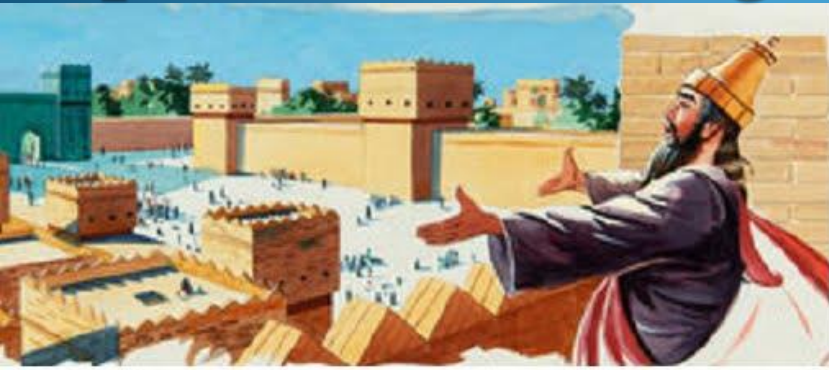
Verses 28-33 are Daniel's description of how the king's dream was fulfilled. It was very common for ancient rulers to omit embarrassing events of their reign; so Daniel's narration supplies the fact, the truth, of the fulfillment of the king's dream..

**Verse 29 tells us that Nebuchadnezzar's insanity strikes him exactly one year after his dream. What Daniel relates is very important, since the king had ample time to repent and receive righteousness from the LORD (v.27). Even though the king is a rank unbeliever, God was more than patient with him.**



# Verses 28-37

Nebuchadnezzar arrogance and hubris leads to his humbling by God, “Isn’t this the great Babylon that *I* built for a royal residence by the might of *my* power and for the glory of *my* majesty?”



Typical despot and politician...the king, in his arrogance, is taking credit for all without acknowledging

that the LORD has given him the office of ruler and king and had also given him the power and knowledge that he possesses. Daniel had practically told him such, yet, his arrogance and conceit is too great!

# Verses 28-37

God will not be mocked...Nebuchadnezzar had barely spoke his haughty words when the judgment of God fell on him. The voice from heaven not only signals the gravity of the situation, but also repeats key elements from the dream (vv. 15-16, 23, 25); so there can be no misunderstanding as to who is the Judge!!



# Verses 28-37

[34-35] ***“At the end of time”*** appointed for his insanity, his judgment, the king acknowledges God by lifting his eyes to “heaven.” In the king’s circumstance, heaven is circumlocution for God. Thus, immediately after his insanity is removed the king confesses God’s sovereignty. It is his confession that removes the penalty of his judgment. Nebuchadnezzar is humbled and admits that he is nothing before God, that all that he had previously accomplished was a result of God’s blessing, and that he was wrong to glorify himself. Note that the king once gloated over his absolute power (3:15), yet now he acknowledges that God’s power is absolute and beyond challenge (v.35).

# Verses 28-37

[36-37] Nebuchadnezzar states that the reason his kingdom was “*returned*” to him, and he was “*reinstated*” over his kingdom, was in keeping with God’s promise. The king continues to confess that “all” God’s ***works are true and his ways are just. All who walk in arrogance He is able to humble.***” Though Nebuchadnezzar makes such a confession, there is no evidence that the king ever possessed true saving faith in the One True and Triune God.

# Summary

This chapter concludes the narrative concerning King Nebuchadnezzar. As with all pagan rulers and those who do exercise power and authority, they find it very difficult to acknowledge that all they possess has been given to them by God and is to be used for His glory, alone!

**So as we close Chapter 4, we close on a Gospel note. As we proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must always bear in mind how subversive His Holy Gospel truly is and how great a threat it does pose to those who hold power in this world.**