

NEBUCHADNEZZAR IS HUMILIATED AND LATER RESTORED

DANIEL 4:28-37

SCRIPTURE READING AND INSIGHTS

Begin by reading Daniel 4:28-37 in your favorite Bible. As you read, remember that great spiritual wisdom comes from studying God's Word (Psalm 119:98-104).

In yesterday's lesson, Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's second dream. Today we'll see this dream come to pass in Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation and restoration. With your Bible still accessible, consider the following insights on the biblical text, verse by verse.

Daniel 4:28-30

All this (4:28): Our text affirms plainly and simply, "All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar." Everything God said would happen, did in fact happen. We recall Numbers 23:19: "God is not man, that he should lie." God made good on His word.

At the end of twelve months (4:29): It is significant that 12 months had passed since Daniel had given his exhortation to repent to Nebuchadnezzar. This was apparently a period of grace during which God gave Nebuchadnezzar the chance to repent. We are reminded of 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,

not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." God desired repentance, not suffering, for Nebuchadnezzar. But Nebuchadnezzar would not bend.

Had Nebuchadnezzar heeded Daniel's advice and repented (verse 27), he could have averted the chastisement of God. But during this 12-month period, he proved he had no real interest in changing his self-exalting attitude. Apparently, he completely ignored Daniel's advice. By the end of the 12 months, he was ripe for judgment.

Walking on the roof of the royal palace (4:29): Nebuchadnezzar had three palaces in Babylon. Some have suggested that he may have been walking on the top terrace of the famous hanging gardens at his main palace, considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

My mighty power... the glory of my majesty (4:30): Nebuchadnezzar considered the glory of Babylon as a reflection of his own glory and majesty. The Aramaic phrase translated "which I have built" is more literally "which I myself have built." No credit is given to God as the Giver of all good gifts (see James 1:17). One recalls the words that the apostle Paul once spoke to the immature Corinthian believers: "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). The same question could legitimately be asked of Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 4:31-32

While the words were still in the king's mouth (4:31): Nebuchadnezzar was given a 12-month grace period to repent. He failed to repent, however, and there would now be no further delay in judgment. As the king was speaking his prideful words, judgment fell decisively and suddenly.

One is reminded of Jesus' warning in His parable of the rich fool. This fool said to himself, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (Luke 12:19-20). Nebuchadnezzar, another rich fool, was unprepared for God's sudden chastisement, even though he had been warned.

A voice from heaven (4:31): The source of the judgment was the Most High God (see Daniel 4:24).

To you it is spoken (4:31): This message of judgment was not communicated to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel the prophet. Rather, God spoke directly to Nebuchadnezzar.

The kingdom has departed from you (4:31): The Babylonian kingdom—which Nebuchadnezzar had just been pridefully gazing on—was immediately taken from him. What he had thought was a reflection of his own majesty and glory would now be a reminder of what he had lost.

Driven from among men...with the beasts of the field (4:32): Nebuchadnezzar had ruled over the people of Babylon for many years, and he had exalted himself over them. Now he was no longer fit to live among them. He would live as a beast among other beasts.

Seven periods of time (4:32): This period of chastisement would last seven years. How ironic that the Babylonian king who had taken Israel into exile for seventy years now found himself in exile for seven years. Just as the seventy years of exile had a purifying effect on Israel, so this seven-year exile would have a purifying effect on Nebuchadnezzar.

Until you know that the Most High rules (4:32): Nebuchadnezzar was to remain in his beastly condition until he learned “that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” God had communicated this truth to Nebuchadnezzar earlier in his life, but he wouldn’t listen. Now Nebuchadnezzar would learn the lesson the hard way.

Daniel 4:33

Immediately the word was fulfilled (4:33): How suddenly and unexpectedly a judgment can fall! One minute the wicked can walk freely, feeling secure. The next minute—*bam!* Judgment falls.

During the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s affliction, his counselors apparently carried out the administrative duties of the kingdom. Daniel would likely have played a critical role (see Daniel 2:48-49).

His body was wet...his hair grew...his nails were like birds’ claws (4:33): Nebuchadnezzar apparently suffered from boanthropy, a disease in which a person believes he or she is a bovine. This disease can result in the patient growing long, matted hair and thickened fingernails.

Like other beasts of the field, Nebuchadnezzar was unconcerned about

bodily appearance. No longer was he groomed like a king. Instead of a royal appearance, he now had a barnyard appearance. Some have suggested that the king may have spent his time of insanity as a beast in one of the royal parks.

Daniel 4:34-35

At the end of the days (4:34): As stipulated by God, the chastisement ended after seven years.

My reason returned to me (4:34): No longer was Nebuchadnezzar insane. His reasoning ability returned to him.

I blessed the Most High (4:34): Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson well. The first thing he did after his reason returned to him was to bless the Most High God.

Praised and honored him (4:34): Nebuchadnezzar praised and honored God as the one true God who manifested Himself in His mighty deeds. Notice that the king who had previously sought praise and honor for himself was now praising and honoring God. Notice also that the tenses of the verbs used here point to continued or habitual action. Nebuchadnezzar continued to praise and honor God.

His dominion...his kingdom (4:34): Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that contrary to the temporal rule of finite earthly kings, God's dominion is everlasting, just as His kingdom is everlasting. Nebuchadnezzar also knew from firsthand experience how quickly a finite, earthly king could fall from power.

Inhabitants of the earth (4:35): Nebuchadnezzar conceded that when compared to the Most High God, "all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing." Again, Nebuchadnezzar was speaking from firsthand experience. He knew that he himself, when compared to God, was as nothing.

He does according to his will (4:35): God accomplishes His sovereign will both in heaven and on earth. Nebuchadnezzar's seven-year chastisement and subsequent restoration was a manifestation of God's will on earth. Nebuchadnezzar was now a believer in God's authority and sovereignty.

None can stay his hand (4:35): Nebuchadnezzar reasoned that if he, the king of Babylon, could not stay God's hand, no one could. The Most High God truly is Almighty.

Or say to him, "What have you done?" (4:35): One is reminded of Isaiah

29:16: "You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, 'He did not make me'; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?" (see also Isaiah 45:9).

Daniel 4:36-37

Reason returned to me...splendor returned to me (4:36): God sovereignly restored Nebuchadnezzar's reason and his kingdom. God can exalt a person as easily as He can humble a person.

All his works are right and his ways are just (4:37): God's chastisement of Nebuchadnezzar was right and just.

Those who walk in pride he is able to humble (4:37): Nebuchadnezzar learned this lesson the hard way.

MAJOR THEMES

1. *God's sure word.* Things happened to Nebuchadnezzar just as God indicated they would. God's word is sure and trustworthy (see Genesis 21:1; 41:54; Exodus 7:13). No wonder we read of God, "Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" (Numbers 23:19). God said, "I will not...alter the word that went forth from my lips" (Psalm 89:34). God Himself proclaimed, "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). He asserted, "I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it" (Isaiah 46:11). "The mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 58:14).
2. *Judgment from God.* God is a God of judgment in the face of unrepentant sin. Judgment fell on Nebuchadnezzar because of his relentless self-exaltation (Daniel 4:31-33). Judgment likewise fell on Adam and Eve because of their disobedience to God (Genesis 3). Judgment fell on the Jews for rejecting Christ (Matthew 21:42-44), on Ananias and Sapphira for lying to God (Acts 5), on Herod for self-exalting pride (Acts 12:21-23), and on Christians in Corinth for irreverence regarding the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians

11:29-32). Christians will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Unbelievers will be judged at the great white throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

DIGGING DEEPER WITH CROSS-REFERENCES

Sudden reversals—Psalms 75:7; 147:6; Isaiah 22:25; 26:5; 40:23; Ezekiel 21:26; Daniel 4:31; Matthew 19:30; 20:16; Luke 1:52; 6:25; 16:25

God's voice—Genesis 3:8-9; 8:15-16; 9:8-11; Exodus 3:4; 19:19; Leviticus 1:1-2; Numbers 7:89; Deuteronomy 4:12, 33, 36; 5:22; 13:18; 26:14; 28:1; 1 Samuel 3:4; 2 Samuel 22:14; Job 37:2; Psalm 29:4; Isaiah 6:8; Ezekiel 10:5; Matthew 17:5

LIFE LESSONS

1. *No one can hold back God's hand.* When Nebuchadnezzar recovered from his affliction, he extolled God by saying, "None can stay his hand" (Daniel 4:35). We likewise read in Isaiah 14:27, "The LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" Job asks, "Who can turn him back?" (Job 9:12). Proverbs 21:30 assures us, "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the LORD." You can trust that God will surely do all that He has planned and promised to do!
2. *God can bring restoration.* God ultimately restored Nebuchadnezzar's sanity and his kingdom (Daniel 4:36). Scripture reveals that God can restore people in many different ways. God can restore people spiritually: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul" (Psalm 23:1-3). He can restore the joy of salvation: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (Psalm 51:12). God can restore us after we've experienced trials: "After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (1 Peter 5:10; see also Psalm 71:20). If you are in need of restoration, turn to God without delay!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What is most striking to you about the fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 4:28-33)?
2. Do you think Nebuchadnezzar (a pagan king) became a part of God's family? Why or why not?
3. Do you sense any need for spiritual restoration? If so, what have you learned in this lesson that might help you?