

Uncompromising Week 4 What God Has Done

Daniel 4

¹ King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! ² It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.

³ How great are his signs,

how mighty his wonders!

His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,

and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream

⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. ⁵ I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. ⁶ So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. ⁷ Then the magicians, the enchanter, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation. ⁸ At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods—and I told him the dream, saying, ⁹ “O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation.” ¹⁰ The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. ¹¹ The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. ¹² Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

¹³ “I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. ¹⁴ He proclaimed aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his mind be changed from a man’s, and let a beast’s mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him. ¹⁷ The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.’” ¹⁸ This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because 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 gods is in you.”

Daniel Interprets the Second Dream

¹⁹ Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, “Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!” ²⁰ The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth, ²¹ whose leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the heavens lived— ²² it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth. ²³ And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven periods of time pass over him,’ ²⁴ this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, ²⁵ that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. ²⁶ And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. ²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

²⁸ All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ and the king answered and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” ³¹ While the words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, ³² and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” ³³ Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers, and his nails were like birds’ claws.

Nebuchadnezzar Restored

³⁴ At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason 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 endures from generation to generation;

³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,

and he does according to his will among the host of heaven

and among the inhabitants of the earth;

and none can stay his hand

or say to him, “What have you done?”

³⁶ At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

The Big Picture: God saves His people from being self-consumed so that we can know Him.

Truth:

The world doesn’t understand the ways of God, and if we are honest, God’s ways can be hard for believers to understand too. The Bible says things like, “for whoever loses his life will save it (Matthew 16:25),” and teaches that freedom comes from submission, and even teaching that serving others in humility can lead to glory. In our time and world, do these things even make sense?

Daniel 4 begins with King Nebuchadnezzar proclaiming what he learned from God. In other words, he starts this chapter with the end of the story, then reveals how he got to this point. Verses 2-3 say,

*"It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders
that the Most High God has done for me.
How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and his dominion endures from generation to generation."*

Nebuchadnezzar recalls how he finally came to a true understanding of the ways of God. Understanding what God had done for him had changed the king. God had repeatedly given Nebuchadnezzar glimpses of God's power through the lives of Daniel and his friends: the pure diet, the interpretation of dreams, and the fiery furnace. But, knowing God takes a personal encounter and God loved the king enough to show Himself.

Nebuchadnezzar looked at his accomplishments and thought that he was pretty great. He refused to attribute his earthly glory to God. Nebuchadnezzar was consumed with himself and the greatness of Babylon, so God gave Nebuchadnezzar over to his worship of self. Without God the king became like an animal. For seven periods of time (we don't really know how long), God let Nebuchadnezzar live in an existence without the wisdom of God, without the goodness of God, without the sanity and love of God to guide him. However, God didn't leave him in that poor estate. In His infinite mercy, God saved Nebuchadnezzar from his pride and punishment. God restored the king back to his throne with a real understanding of who was truly the King!

Many in the world around you want to focus only on the here and now. God calls us to look toward eternity, to long for more than this world has to offer, and to seek His glory through the advancement of His Kingdom. There is a warning in the story of King Nebuchadnezzar though and that warning is: "Don't be fooled! You are not the center of the world!"

Like King Nebuchadnezzar, God has given you glimpses of His goodness. Have they moved you? Are you tired of being the center of your world? Do you long for more? Jesus has saved you from a life of purposelessness. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (*John 14:6*). He gives direction, meaning, and purpose in the lives of those who follow Him and call him "Lord." Would you look up and see all that He has done for you?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

- Nebuchadnezzar was someone who witnessed God do amazing things yet he still attributed glory to himself. What does this tell you about a person's inability to have relationship with God?
- What do people need then in order to know God?
- How does God save Nebuchadnezzar?
- How does this story point us to Jesus and the cross?
- In what ways do you believe God has intervened in your life?

Equipping:

- Read verses 2-3. Again this is what he says after his humiliation. Even though Nebuchadnezzar witnessed signs and wonders in the previous chapters, he still didn't believe in God. What does this tell us about the nature of faith and belief in God?
- In verse 27, Daniel gives counsel to Nebuchadnezzar: stop sinning, pursue righteousness, and show mercy to others. Does the king listen to this advice? In what ways do we not listen to God's wisdom? What might be the consequences for us?
- There is a lot of mention of "king" and "kingdom" in these verses (and throughout our series). Whose kingdom do you find yourself working to establish? What difficulties or struggles do you have when it comes to living for God's kingdom?

Accountability:

- Nebuchadnezzar thought too much of himself and his accomplishments. How much of your time do you spend thinking about yourself and working toward your accomplishments? Is working hard for achievements a bad thing? How so? Lastly, in what ways can someone achieve much AND work toward God's kingdom?
- This entire series has been about not compromising faith in God by pursuing a worldly way of living. In what ways have you been challenged to be uncompromising?
- Have you taken time to share with your group those areas where you most struggle? Is it in matters of honesty, purity, pursuit of what is holy, etc.? As we enter into Thanksgiving and even Christmas, brainstorm ways to grow closer together, not only as friends, but also as brothers/sisters in Christ.

Mission:

- The Bible says that Christians are citizens of a greater kingdom and followers of the Great King, so in what ways do you see God calling you to help in the expansion of His kingdom? This past week did you miss or take advantage of any evangelistic opportunities? What happened? What can the group do to help keep you accountable?
- Even though Nebuchadnezzar was a firsthand witness to Daniel, Daniel's friends, and God's miraculous interventions, he didn't know God until God humbled Nebuchadnezzar. How does this change or deepen your perspective about mission to the people around you?
- With the holidays fast approaching, consider how your group can serve out in the community. Has your group landed on a service idea since last week? Again, for ideas and opportunities, visit the [Community Outreach](#) website.

Supplication:

- Even though the 6:10 Prayer Initiative is over, keep on praying for Northview HS until we announce our next school. God has been doing some awesome things there and we believe that it is because of our prayers!
- One of the things we have seen this series (and in the rest of the book of Daniel) is how quickly Daniel goes to God in prayer. Discuss as a group how easy/hard prayer is for you. What helps grow or hinder your prayer life? Don't forget to take time today to pray for one another.

For Further Study:

- 2 Chronicles 7:1-3
 - When the Old Testament temple was dedicated, the people witnessed God's presence fill the temple. In other words, God's presence consumed the temple and the people bowed down in reverence and awe. Did you know that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:16 that you are God's temple? How does that affect the way you see God's presence in your life? Take time to remind yourself that "[God] is good, [and] his steadfast love endures forever."
- 2 Corinthians 5:18-21
 - Paul, the author of 2 Corinthians, argues that Christians have been given the important responsibility of representing God's kingdom as ambassadors. How does this motivate you to live out your life in your home, school, and social networks?
- Ephesians 2:11-22
 - This is a long passage so it may be a good idea to read this one over the course of several days. What verses stand out most to you and why? Also, consider verse 19. We who "once were far off (v.13)" are now welcomed into God's kingdom as citizens and His family and home as children. How does that make you feel? Do you struggle with feeling like you're on the outside looking in? If you are in Christ, then you're an insider, not an outsider. If you're really wrestling with this, talk to your dgroup leader; they would love to talk to you and help you out!