

Daniel 4

Where Does God Draw The Line?

AND

Nobody Is Too Far Gone For God!

I. Introduction

A. What have we learned about Nebuchadnezzar?

1. Ruler of the world - 2:37-38; 4:1, 22
2. Feared - Note the response of Ashpenaz in v10
3. Short fused - Note Nebuchadnezzar's response to Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego in 3:13, 19
Response to the wise men 2:12
4. Ruthless –
 - a. Note Nebuchadnezzar's response to the wise men in 2:5, 13
 - b. Note direction in 3:29
 - c. What he did to Zedekiah - Jeremiah 52:1-11
5. Intelligent – 1:19-20
By all historical accounts was a military genius
6. Proud – 4:30

B. God's view of pride

1. Is a sin
Proverbs 21:4 *“Haughty eyes and a proud heart, The lamp of the wicked, is sin.”*
2. It is something He hates
Proverbs 6:16 *“There are six things which the LORD hates, ...Haughty eyes...”*
Proverbs 16:5 *“Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord”*
3. It is something that He is opposed to
James 4:6 *“Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*
4. It is something He will address
Proverbs 16:5 *““Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.”*

5. Because it us taking His glory for ourselves

Isaiah 42:8 *“I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another,”*

Isaiah 2:17 *“The pride of man will be humbled And the loftiness of men will be abased; And the Lord alone will be exalted in that day,”*

C. After the completion of creation when does God interact with the world?

1. For judgment
2. For salvation
3. For His own glory

D. God doesn't act immediately in regard to salvation or judgment because he is patient

1. He wants people to repent

Romans 2:4 *“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”*

2 Peter 3:9 *“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”*

2. He wants us to know the riches of his glory and mercy

Romans 9:22-24 *“What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.”*

E. We have seen God interact with Nebuchadnezzar

1. God gifts Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah and Azariah so that they will end up in his court
2. He has given Nebuchadnezzar insight into the future demonstrating to Nebuchadnezzar that He is the God of the spirit world
3. He has demonstrated to Nebuchadnezzar that He is the God of the physical world and is able to save

F. Today we will hopefully tie all of these events together and see how God works all things together for His purpose as we see His final recorded interaction with Nebuchadnezzar.

1. I believe that we will see the lengths that God will go to to bring someone to himself
2. This also has impact beyond the individual God is working upon
 - a. Exercise/Strengthening of faith of those who belong to Him
 - b. Hardening of those who don't

II. Read Daniel chapter 4

III. When are we in history and in regard to Daniel's time in Babylon?

- A. Late in Nebuchadnezzar's reign
 1. At ease and flourishing in his palace (4:4)
 2. Babylon is built (4:30)
 3. Had to have had time to become even greater after the events recorded here (4:36)
- B. Reigned for 43 years (605-562 BC)
- C. Was out of commission for 7 years (4:25, 32)
- D. So I would put this in his 30th to 35th year of his reign

IV. The Author(s)

- A. Ultimately the book of Daniel is penned by Daniel
- B. But notice this in the first person...from Nebuchadnezzar's point of view (4:1-27 (except 19a), 34-37)
- C. Under the inspiration of the Spirit Daniel chose to include Nebuchadnezzar's writing
- D. This is Nebuchadnezzar's personal testimony
- E. Also narrative by Daniel (4:28-33)

V. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

- A. Nebuchadnezzar is dreaming again
 1. These dreams were fearful and alarming to the King
 2. They terrorized him
 3. He knows this is supernatural intervention because of the angel
 4. He doesn't understand his dream
- B. Note his response is the same as in Chapter 2
 1. Called the usual suspects to interpret for him
 - a. Magicians – Learned men, scribes
 - b. Conjurers – Those who have contact with the spirit world

- c. Chaldeans – Astrologers and those of the King’s ethnic background
- d. Diviners – Those who cast spells and practice witchcraft
2. Why can’t they figure it out?
 - a. They have been told the dream
 - b. Tree reference is used often in this time period of time to refer to a king or kingdom
 - c. Ezekiel 31 the Asserian king is referred to as a Cedar of Lebanon and this type of imagery is seen in secular historical documents as well
 - d. Maybe they realize this implies a negative outcome for the king and they are concerned for themselves if they share bad news
 - e. Maybe God clouded their thinking
- C. This time however he seems to be waiting for Daniel
 1. Finally Daniel...(4:8)
 2. Acknowledges Daniel’s position...chief of the magicians...after 30 years
 3. Once again Daniel arrives after the thrashing about with human wisdom has led to no outcome...acknowledged in 4:18
 4. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges Daniel’s ability...no mystery baffles you (4:9)...you are able (4:18)
 5. He notes that Daniel has the spirit of the holy god(s)
 - a. There is evidence to support that this is singular...spirit of the holy god
 - b. I believe that even in his pride and standing against God Nebuchadnezzar was impacted by God’s work in Daniel’s life
 - c. To use new testament theology that the Spirit’s work and control in Daniel’s life had impact on the world around him
- D. The dream
 1. Saw a tree
 2. Central in the earth...visible from the ends of the earth
 3. It is huge, fruitful, luxurious
 4. It provides food and shelter to all
 5. It is announced that the tree is to be cut down
 6. The stump is to be left and banded

- a. Banded = Fenced
- b. It is to be protected
- 7. Note the stump is a he
 - a. Will sleep outside
 - b. Will eat grass
 - c. Will be given the mind of a beast
- 8. This will last for 7 years (Daniel 7:25)
- 9. This is being done in order that ALL may know...(4:17)

VI. Daniel's reaction to the dream

- A. Daniel can interpret the dream immediately it appears
- B. He is visibly shaken, "appalled" by the interpretation
- C. So much so that Nebuchadnezzar has to call him out...
 - 1. assure him that it is OK to tell it
 - 2. Nebuchadnezzar really wants to know
 - 3. I also believe he knows that Daniel will tell it straight
- D. I believe Daniel isn't afraid of Nebuchadnezzar's response
 - 1. Daniel has spent ~30 years of his life in close contact with the King
 - 2. He understands the things that God had said about the king
 - 3. I believe he is moved to his core by the coming judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar
 - 4. Notice 4:19 that Daniel wishes this were meant for his enemies
 - 5. Notice the boldness in his call for Nebuchadnezzar to repent 4:27
 - 6. Oh that we would be so moved by coming judgment of our friends

VII. Daniel's interpretation

- A. You are the tree
- B. This is going to happen to you
- C. You will be driven from mankind
- D. Will act like a cow...eat grass...sleep outside
- E. For seven years
- F. Until you acknowledge God 4:25
- G. But your kingdom will be restored to you

VIII. Daniel's Account

- A. Switched from first person to Daniel recounting the story
- B. This happens because the King is a bit preoccupied
- C. What is it that brings the king down – Pride (4:30)
- D. How long did God give him to change his ways
 - 1. One year (4:29) since he was specifically warned
 - 2. 50 years if you account Nebuchadnezzar's age
 - 3. God is patient
 - a. To allow people to respond (2 Peter 3:9; Romans 9:22)
 - b. To allow His people to see the mercy and grace of God
 - 4. I believe that God would have relented if Nebuchadnezzar had repented
 - a. We see it over and over again in scripture...
 - b. Nineveh (Jonah)...
 - c. Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 32:24-26)
 - 5. But the king didn't repent and ultimately God draws the line on Pride
- E. Nebuchadnezzar's chastening
 - 1. As soon as the king speaks in his arrogance the judgment is re-announced, it's rationale is re-iterated and carried out
 - 2. When God is done with someone, He acts immediately and spectacularly
 - a. Flood (Genesis 6-9) - drowned
 - b. Korah and his rebellion (Numbers 16) - swallowed up by the earth
 - c. Annanias and Sapphira (Acts 5) - dead where they stood
 - d. King Herod (Acts 12) - eaten by worms
 - 3. Nebuchadnezzar is driven to insanity
 - a. He is afflicted with a form lycanthropy a psychological condition where one believes themselves to be and takes on the traits of an animal
 - b. In this case boanthropy, taking on the traits of a cow
 - c. Roland K. Harrison in his "Introduction to the Old Testament" recounts:
"A great many doctors spend an entire, busy professional career without once encountering an instance of the kind of monomania described in the book of Daniel. The present writer, therefore, considers himself particularly fortunate to have actually observed a clinical case of boanthropy in a British mental

institution in 1946. A patient was in his early 20's who reportedly had been hospitalized for about five years. His symptoms were well developed on admission, and diagnosis was immediate and conclusive. He was of average height and weight with good physique, and was in excellent bodily health. His mental symptoms included pronounced anti-social tendencies, and because of this he spent the entire day from dawn to dusk outdoors, in the grounds of the institution. His daily routine consisted of wandering around the magnificent lawns with which the otherwise dingy hospital situation was graced, and it was his custom to pluck up and eat handfuls of the grass as he went along. On observation he was seen to discriminate carefully between grass and weeds. The writer was able to examine him cursorily, and the only physical abnormality noted consisted of a lengthening of the hair and a course, thickened condition of the fingernails."

4. How embarrassing for a man of Nebuchadnezzar's ego
5. So what is going on in the kingdom while the king is out in the field?
 - a. We aren't really sure where the king is
 - b. Some believe he just lived out his time shut up in the palace gardens
 - c. Maybe we was out in the wilderness
 - d. Potentially his son Abel-Marduk ran the affairs of the kingdom
 - e. Potentially Daniel had a hand in keeping things together
 - f. I believe that Daniel was watching over the king or at least keeping tabs on his whereabouts so that he could bring the king back after the appointed time
 - g. Whatever transpired God supernaturally protected and maintained the kingdom so that it could be restored

IX. The Restoration

- A. After the allotted time has passed Nebuchadnezzar comes to his senses
- B. His pride is broken and he acknowledges that God is supreme and does as he pleases
- C. The writing returns to the first person
- D. Nebuchadnezzar recounts what he has learned
- E. I believe at this point that Nebuchadnezzar's conversion is real

1. He transitions from “your god” and “you” responses to “I acknowledge” the things that God wanted him to learn
2. He is also restored to greater glory as He responds to God properly in humility

X. Summary

- A. God always works all things to his purposes
- B. He will not tolerate and draws the line on pride
- C. He is patient in His dealings with us in order to bring about his glory
- D. He will go to great lengths over long periods of time to do this...No one is too far gone for God
- E. His patience should cause us to work diligently on His behalf for a beneficial outcome
- F. I pray that we will act in humility...it’s a hard row to hoe when God is opposed to you...and that we will be concerned for and work hard for those who will fall under his judgement

Just as Daniel did.