

Daniel Chapter Four

A Lesson Learned the Hard Way

Scripture Reading: Daniel 4:1-18

In Daniel chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar saw Daniel not only interpret his dream, but also tell him what it was that he had dreamt. The king had been impressed by God's Word, but not transformed by God's power. Then, in chapter three, Nebuchadnezzar saw the power of God through the testimonies of Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego). Their love and loyalty to God did not waver, even in the face of an horrible death in a fiery furnace. Their miraculous deliverance from the flames and the appearance of another person in the furnace with them caused Nebuchadnezzar to further respect their God. However, it was still **their God, not his God**, that he respected. The king was willing to coexist with another God in his kingdom. He had changed some policies, but he was not a changed person. There was still a need for Nebuchadnezzar to have a transforming experience that would result in faith, love, and loyalty to the one and only God of heaven and earth. This leads us to the events of chapter four.

The Letter Sent: A Humble Testimony – Daniel 4:1-3

Nebuchadnezzar personally wrote this chapter of the Bible. It is an official Babylonian document. It was written over seven years after the life-changing experience took place. How do we know that Nebuchadnezzar was converted? Note his personal praise of the one true God (Daniel 4:2-3, 34-35, 37). Another noteworthy change is how he starts his testimony. "Nebuchadnezzar, the king, unto all people nations and languages that dwell in all the earth: **Peace be multiplied unto you.**" (Daniel 4:1) Nebuchadnezzar was not exactly famous for bringing peace on earth among all nations! This world-conquering ruler is now telling the whole world of his stubborn pride, his humiliating affliction of insanity, and the complete change of his worldview – publicly honoring God and wishing peace to all. That would indicate a conversion!

The Lesson delivered: A Troubling Dream – Daniel 4:4-18

Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in his house. That means everything was going well – no conflicts. He thought that he was prospering. There was no psychological reason for this dream. The king was not inwardly troubled, but this dream was troubling, even though he did not understand it. The Gospel means "good news," but it starts out with bad news. People may think that they are prospering and having a good time. Then they find out that they are sinning against God and that He is angry with sin. God will judge and condemn that sin and eventually bring this whole world down. Many people don't like that message. So, they ignore it or mock it. We'll see Nebuchadnezzar's natural response later.

The Lesson Explained: A Severe Warning – Daniel 4:19-26

Sometimes, when the Gospel is offensive to others, those who are proclaiming the Gospel try to modify it, to make it less offensive. They only make it less the Gospel. Daniel wrestled with the difficult news. He grieved and sorrowed. Then he told the plain truth to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel clearly stated the purpose of God: to humble a proud king and to be glorified by him. This tender but honest delivery of the truth that Daniel demonstrated to the king was a great example of how we should humbly, tenderly and honestly tell others about sin and salvation. See Psalm 126:5-6; Philippians 3:19-18; II Timothy 2:24-26.

The Lesson Applied: A Friend's Advice Ignored – Daniel 4:27

Daniel took no pleasure in delivering bad news to the King. Though Nebuchadnezzar was the destroyer of Daniel's nation and his personal captor, Daniel loved his enemy and served him over the years faithfully. Jesus was the friend of sinners (Matthew 11:19). He called us to come close to Him and find rest for our souls (Matthew 11:28-30). He taught us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44-48). You might think that, if you just show enough love and kindness, people will melt down and respond to your gospel. It won't happen unless the Spirit of God gets involved (John 1:4-5, 10-13; 3:3; 6:44; I Thessalonians 2:7-13). Daniel's loving advice was ignored.

The Lesson Fulfilled: A Great Humiliation – Daniel 4:28-33

The Spirit of God did get involved, but Nebuchadnezzar chose the hard way to learn. He had to see what his pride looked like to God. He had to lose his strength and reputation in order to look to God for strength and deliverance. Like building a tall building, before you can build up you must first dig down (Proverbs 15:33; 18:12 cp. Isaiah 40:6-8). Obviously, Daniel 4:33 was written by someone else and Nebuchadnezzar added it to his testimony.

The Lesson Learned: A Great Testimony – Daniel 4:34-37

This story of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion really parallels the testimony of Psalm 2. The Psalm prophetically warns of the pride and rebellion of the world against God and His Son. Ultimately, God will destroy the Kingdom of Antichrist and bring the world into submission. As in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, there will be a seven year period of world-wide insanity called "The Seven Years of Tribulation." This will be followed by one thousand years of peace in Christ's millennial kingdom (see note below). A warning is given, to all future kings and kingdoms, in Psalm 2:10-12. Nebuchadnezzar is a positive responder to such a warning. See Psalm 1:1-6; 9:15-20; 46:1-11; I Thessalonians 5:1-11; II Thessalonians 1:3 – 2:17; II Peter 3:1-18.

Note: To learn of this 7-year period, study Daniel 9:24-27; 12:1; Jeremiah 30:3-7; Matthew 24; Luke 21:5-36; Revelation chapters 6-18. For information about Christ's 1000-year kingdom study Jeremiah 30:8-9; Revelation 19:1 – 20:6. The MacArthur Study Bible is recommended.