

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

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The Great Tree

Last week we derived certain principles of civil disobedience from the example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the first thing is that the issues are narrowly defined. You don't commit civil disobedience over any old issue that rubs you the wrong way. Basically the issues come down to two: worship and the destruction of innocent life. When we are told how to worship, who to worship or when to worship we have a right to say, I'm sorry, I can't do that. Or when the issue is the destruction of human life and we are told that we are going to be involved in genocide, euthanasia or abortion, we have a duty to say, sorry, I can't support that. After the lesson it was brought to my attention that our government may be taking part of our income tax and funneling it to Planned Parenthood to fund abortions. How is the Christian to respond to this? It's in the news this week that the government is telling us this isn't happening but I'm afraid it is happening. And I think we have a right as Americans to demand to know where our money is going and if it is being used to fund abortion. We should demand transparency. And if indeed our tax dollars are at work funding abortion when the majority of Americans are against abortion I think it is our right, our duty to commit civil disobedience over this issue because we are financially associated with the destruction of innocent human life. Just understand that if you do this there will be consequences and you have to be willing to take the consequences, which may not be pleasant but then again, who do you fear? God or man?

Alright this week we move into chapter 4 and I want to introduce the chapter with some observations. The first observation is that in Dan 2-7, the Aramaic portion of the book we have a chiasm (X), meaning chapter 2, the four metal statue depicting four Gentile kingdoms is paralleled and amplified by chapter 7, the four beasts depicting those four same Gentile kingdoms; chapter 3, in

the fiery furnace is paralleled and amplified by chapter 6, in the lions den, and chapter 4, the great tree is paralleled and amplified by chapter 5, the handwriting on the wall. So there's a chiasmic structure to this section of the book meaning these themes in chapters 2, 3 and 4 will be repeated but in reverse order in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The second observation is also a structural one and I want to point out the linkage of chapter 1, 2, 3 and 4. These chapters tell the story of Daniel and his three friends, but they also tell the story of king Nebuchadnezzar. And tonight we will come to the dramatic culmination of his story in chapter 4. So far what we know is that in Dan 1 Nebuchadnezzar was given victory over Jerusalem and took into captivity some of the royal house and nobles of Judah. These captives were then put into Nebuchadnezzar's re-indoctrination program so they could be installed in positions of authority in his governmental administration. To ensure this result each captive was given a new name and a special diet consisting of the king's choice food and wine. Daniel and his friends committed civil disobedience successfully and at the end of this training program were found to be ten times more qualified than any of the other students and were exalted in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. So Dan 1 presents Nebuchadnezzar as a brilliant military conqueror solidifying his kingdom. In Dan 2 the king has a recurring dream which none of his wise men could discover. Daniel reveals the dream and its interpretation as depicting God's plan for future history. Four Gentile kingdoms will rule successively; first, Babylon, the head of gold, then an inferior kingdom, Medo-Persia, the breast and arms of silver, then a kingdom over all the earth, Greece, the waist and thighs of bronze and finally, a divided kingdom, Rome, the legs of iron and the feet partly of iron and partly of clay. After these four kingdoms had run their course a fifth kingdom, Messiah, the stone cut out without hands, would crush and destroy all Gentile kingdoms and usher in an eternal reign. At the revelation of this future history Nebuchadnezzar gave lip service to the God of Daniel and exalted Daniel in his kingdom along with his three friends. So in Dan 2 the king is presented as being taught some theology by God; God obviously wanted to communicate to this man the future of world history. In Daniel 3 however, the king has radically re-interpreted the dream such that the entire statue is himself, the head of gold. He called all his government officials to an official ceremony to show loyalty to his future program for history. When told to worship the statue or be cast into a fiery furnace Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego displayed a

courageous faith in committing respectful but firm civil disobedience. As a result when cast into the fire they were not consumed, nor did the smell of fire even come upon them. Again the king was being taught theology, that there was a God who could indeed rescue them from his hand. And once more Nebuchadnezzar gave lip service to this God. So in Daniel 3 the king is being taught some more theology by God; God was not finished working with this man. God obviously has a plan for this man's life. So when we come to chapter 4 you want to link this back chapter 3 and chapter 2 and chapter 1. Daniel certainly is. Daniel is telling the story of Nebuchadnezzar's progress in learning theology in chapters 1, 2 and 3. But in chapter 4 Nebuchadnezzar finishes telling us the story. Chapter 4 is Nebuchadnezzar's own record of what God had to do to him to teach him theology. Now aren't you glad you get to learn it here in the comfort of your chair and not by going through what Nebuchadnezzar had to go through?

So chapter 4 is written by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar or by a scribe, perhaps Daniel, taking the king's dictation and this is going to go down in the royal court records of Babylon. So I'm proposing to you that this chapter is an official court record. I can't prove that from chapter and verse. But that seems to be the tenor of the chapter. And I'm also proposing to you that it was done officially because this is his final testimony. He's telling us what God had to do to him in order to teach him that God alone rules from the heavenlies and bestows rule on whomever he wishes.

And that is a big task for a Gentile ruler to learn. If you haven't noticed already, Nebuchadnezzar was just as arrogant as he could possibly be. When he built the golden image of himself in the plain of Dura and told everyone in the kingdom to come and bow and worship he was making himself out to be God incarnate. Yet God kept working with this man to teach him humility. And you see lip service given to the God of Daniel and his friends, but it was nothing more than lip service, he did not bow the knee to this God. So understand when we come to chapter 4 Nebuchadnezzar is still thoroughly committed to the pagan gods of Babylon. But God is apparently not done with this man. God is going to teach this man one more theology lesson. God is going to once more give this Gentile king a dream and the dream is of a great tree that brings prosperity upon all the earth but is suddenly cut down and after some period of time re-sprouts. Now this is terrifying dream to Nebuchadnezzar. But it's a lesson that he must learn, that God is teaching

him. And the question is, will he learn the lesson this time, will it stick or will this man continue to be entrenched in arrogance.

So let's look at verses 1-3, they're introductory. **Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound!"** Now as we said, this is a proclamation Nebuchadnezzar made to his entire kingdom *after the lesson*, after he's learned all the theology he's supposed to learn in chapter 4 from the great tree. This is the result, he wants to teach everyone the theology he learns in this chapter. Verse 2, **It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.** Now I find it very interesting that he wants to declare what God has done for him to the whole kingdom. That's why I look at this as his testimony. He's got the highest position in the kingdom, he has authority to make official proclamations and have them deposited in the official court records, and so he's taking the opportunity to witness to his entire kingdom. And he's obviously learned the theology lesson because he's recounting **the signs and wonders**, which would be miracles, that God had done for him. So whatever happens in this chapter is miraculous and he has accepted the miraculous. Verse 3, **How great are His signs and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom And His dominion is from generation to generation.** Notice the tremendous confession, in Dan 3 Nebuchadnezzar was trying to establish his own kingdom as an everlasting kingdom. But after the events of Dan 4 he is admitting that God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, not mine. God is sovereign over all the nations. Now this is quite a change and he's telling everyone in his kingdom something has happened that has caused me to change. So I take it from this statement that he has accepted the metal statue of Dan 2 as the future of world history. He has accepted that he is merely the head of gold and his kingdom will pass away as well as all the kingdoms that follow his that will finally be replaced by the eternal stone kingdom. And if one heard that proclamation, he quite naturally would respond by asking, "Well how did you come to this point? What happened such that you changed from demanding that everybody worship the gods of Babylon and you as the physical embodiment of those gods that you are now admitting you are underneath this other God?"

Verse 4 begins to answer, **I, Nebuchadnezzar,** and this is how you would begin an official court record, you'd give your name and speak in the first

person to make clear this is your testimony. **I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.** Now this indicates somewhat the timing of this event. He was clearly done conquering kingdoms because he **was at ease in** his house and if you have wars going on in your kingdom you're not sitting back taking it easy. So it's after the period of Nebuchadnezzar's conquering. And we're told he was **flourishing in** his palace, meaning his kingdom was thriving, the administration had been streamlined, now he could just sit back and enjoy his kingdom. Now since he had defeated Jerusalem utterly in 586BC it's clear this is some time after that battle. I'd put this toward the latter end of his reign, probably around 575-570BC. He's going to reign until 562BC, the year of his death. And the events in this chapter take a minimum of eight years. So you have to back up at least eight years from 562 and I would suggest longer than that because of the prosperity that is implied after the eight years. So I take it these events occurred around 575BC in this man's life. He was taking it easy in his house, the kingdom was on auto-pilot.

But in verse 5 he says, **I saw a dream and it made me fearful;** now it's on the basis of this verse that I call this Nebuchadnezzar's nightmare rather than Nebuchadnezzar's dream because he says **it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.** He wanted to relax but he couldn't relax after this. So verse 6 he brings in the wise men again. **So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dreams.** Now commentators think this man was stupid for bringing in the wise men again. Why, if they failed in Dan 2, does he think this time the results will be any different? Well, I frankly don't think he's lost his marbles here, I think this man was brilliant and I think this man is interested in finding out if they've learned anything from Daniel. They've been under Daniel's tutelage for years, so did they learn anything in all these years from Daniel? Was Daniel able to duplicate himself in these wise men? It's really unclear in verse 7 whether they could make know the dream or you're your English Bible says, **Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me.** But the actual Hebrew text of verse 7 does not say **they could not make its interpretation known**, it says "they were not making it known." In other words, they may have known what the dream meant, at least

approximately. They certainly knew enough of the dream to know it was not in Nebuchadnezzar's favor. So the indication of the text is they didn't want to tell him what it meant for fear of the repercussions. Everybody likes to tell the king good things. But nobody wants to tell him bad things because remember, this is the king whose favorite decree is to have you torn limb from limb, and nobody wants that. **But** verse 8, **finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god**, now observe that note, **according to the name of my god**. At this time this occurred Nebuchadnezzar was still thoroughly pagan, his god was Bel and Daniel was named **Belteshazzar** after the king's god, a name which means "protector of the king." And isn't it interesting that Daniel is the protector of the king, he's his right hand man, serves in his own court and as we're going to see even Daniel himself wished this nightmare did not have to do with the king. There's an attachment by this time between Daniel and the king. Daniel loved the king, even though he was an unbeliever, even though he could be quite ruthless in his punishments, Daniel loved him.

So verse 8, and here comes **Daniel...in whom** Nebuchadnezzar says, **is a spirit of the holy gods**; not the Holy Spirit, not from Nebuchadnezzar's point of view, he's heard of Daniel's God, Daniel proclaimed Him, but he always reinterprets Daniel's God according to his Babylonian worldview and that's what goes on and on and on and it's the same thing that happens to us when we try to talk to people about God and Jesus Christ. They just slurp them up within their pagan worldview and re-interpret them. So as hard as Daniel tried to keep the focus off of himself in Dan 2 it didn't matter, Nebuchadnezzar attributed the ability as something within Daniel, **a spirit of the holy gods** which is his way of saying Daniel has contact with **the holy gods**. He has no real idea what he's talking about.

In verse 9 he makes the request, **O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians**, you're the chief one, certainly you know **since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation**. Now Daniel had already discounted what the king is saying here. Daniel in chapter 2 told the king "there was no wisdom residing in me any more than any other living man." But you see, the flesh re-interprets those kinds of things and that's why it's so hard to communicate to unbelievers; here's Daniel years later and Nebuchadnezzar still doesn't get it.

Starting in verse 10 he shares the dream - a great towering tree coming up out of Babylon and spanning over all his kingdom. He says, **Now *these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great.***

11^cThe tree grew large and became strong And its height reached to the sky, And it *was* visible to the end of the whole earth. 12^cIts foliage *was* 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 sky dwelt in its branches, And all living creatures fed themselves from it.

Now this is nothing more than the condition described in verse 4, I was at ease, my kingdom was flourishing. But verse 13, **‘I was looking in the visions in my mind *as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.* 14^cHe shouted out and spoke as follows: “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; Let the beasts flee from under it And the birds from its branches. 15^cYet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, But with a band of iron and bronze *around it* In the new grass of the field; And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.**

Now I think what you are seeing is the development of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom, the tree growing up, it grows larger and larger, lifting up into the sky and its branches reaching out to what was then the inhabited earth. And abundant production of fruit and the fruit from fed the beasts that were under it and the birds that dwelt in it. So it was a source that supplied the needs of all who were associated with the tree. And then an angelic being came and chopped down the tree, but the tree didn’t fall as a unit, it’s not just one cut, it’s a series of cuts, the order is to cut the branches off of the main trunk. So the picture is that the source that supplied all the needs of those associated with the tree being destroyed. The birds that were in the branches flew away; the beasts that were under its shade ran away, there’s a disruption of the trees ability to provide the needs. But the stump was left in the ground and the angel put a band of bronze around it. Then it becomes ominous in verse 16 where the stump evidently represents a man, **“Let his mind be changed from *that of a man* And let a beast’s mind be given to him, And let seven periods of time pass over him.** Now this evidently is what disturbed Nebuchadnezzar. His fear is that he is the tree and that something very unpleasant is going to happen to him for **seven periods of**

time. Nothing is stated as to whether these were seven minutes, seven weeks, seven months or seven years but I take it they were seven years, but I wouldn't be dogmatic about it. It could have been seven months. And in verse 17 we have the purpose of the dream. **In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of men.** So there's the theology lesson. Theoretically he could have learned it just from the dream, he was told right here, God rules history, not you, God is sovereign over all men and all nations, not you. So if you rule it's because God gave you the rule, so worship Him.

And Daniel is now called upon to interpret this nightmare. Nebuchadnezzar knew this related to him or else he wouldn't have been so afraid, he knew he was arrogant, he knew he was responsible and it would be a natural thing to associate this dream with yourself if you were in that arrogant state. That's why an appeal to truth, a direct confrontation of unbelief with the truth is necessary to get people to bend the knee to the truth. They won't be comfortable facing the truth, and understand that about unbelievers; they feel much safer not being confronted with the truth. That's why they want the Ten Commandments removed, that's why they want prayer out of the public schools, that's why they want nativity scenes off the public square. It reminds them of the truth. So you know they know the truth, they're just suppressing it in unrighteousness, trying to avoid a confrontation.

Confrontation with the truth in a head on collision is the most terrifying thing to an unbeliever. Now Nebuchadnezzar is asking for it, give me the truth, I want to know for sure if that is me. So he is terrified but he wants to know. In verse 19, he's apparently not the only one terrified. **Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him.** Now can't you tell from Daniel's response that he loves the king? Can't you tell that he has an affection for the king? Of course you can, if you have eyes to see. Daniel had grown close to the king, he had probably been praying for the king's salvation for years, now he finds out what is scheduled to happen to the king and he doesn't want this for the king. He, like the wise men before, doesn't even want to tell the king. So the king says, **'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.'** **Belteshazzar replied, 'My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!'** Clearly a statement of tremendous love and compassion!

But he goes ahead in verse 20, **The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth ²¹and whose foliage *was* beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which *was* food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged— 22it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, just like a tree, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth,** just like a great tree. So Daniel identifies the tree as no other than the head of gold, both the head of gold in the dream of Dan 2 and the great tree in the nightmare of Dan 4 are king Nebuchadnezzar. So Dan 4 is giving us additional details about Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom that are not given in Dan 2, his kingdom will grow to become great and will provide abundantly for all those who dwell within his kingdom, but, verse 23, **'In that the king saw an *angelic* watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, "Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze *around it* in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,"** So the king's kingdom is going to be chopped up, the chopping off of the branches would be disruption of the kingdoms that he has subjugated because the tree is cut down. Nebuchadnezzar is going to be out of office for awhile and because his strong control is interrupted pockets of rebellion will break out on the part of the subjugated peoples against the kingdom itself. So pockets of civil war if you will, as the subjugated peoples try to regain their independence, and what makes it possible is Nebuchadnezzar is not there to hold the empire together.

So added to the Dan 2 vision is that during Nebuchadnezzar's reign there will come a period of civil unrest and war in the country for seven periods of time. Verse 24, **this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:** I find it interesting how Daniel sets this time forth in verse 24, **this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king.** So the decree of the Most High includes Nebuchadnezzar as a subject, signifying that the God of heaven rules over Nebuchadnezzar, he's not the one who makes the ultimate decrees, he's included within the decree of the **Most High** God.

Then verse 25 we have the explanation for why Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom will go into a time of civil war. **that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you,** now he's going to be subjected to a condition, miraculously of course, that's part of the introduction to the proclamation in verse 2, he wants to "declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me." Those are his words of reflection after the fact. He actually interprets this condition as one of grace; he's going to suddenly start acting like a wild animal. Now there is a natural condition called "therianthropy" and sometimes "zoanthropy" or "lycanthropy" in which a person believes that he has transformed into an animal and behaves like the animal. It's a rare but documented condition linked to bipolar and schizophrenia. "A review of the medical literature from early 2004 lists over thirty published cases of lycanthropy...Canines are certainly not uncommon, although the experience of being transformed into a hyena, cat, horse, bird or tiger has been reported on more than one occasion. Transformation into frogs and even bees, has been reported in some instances. A 1989 case study described how one individual reported a serial transformation, experiencing a change from human, to dog, to horse, and then finally cat, before returning to the reality of human existence after treatment. There are also reports of people who experienced transformation into an animal only listed as "unspecified". Dr Walvoord quotes a case from Dr Raymond Harrison. And this is interesting documentation. Harrison says, "A great many doctors spend an entire...career without once encountering of the kind of monomania described in the book of Daniel... The present writer, therefore, considers himself particularly fortunate to have actually observe a clinical case of boanthropy in a British mental institution in 1946. The 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... 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, and on inquiry from the attendant the writer was told the

diet of this patient consisted exclusively of grass from hospital lawns. He never ate institutional food with the other inmates, and his only drink was water....The writer was able to examine him cursorily, and the only physical abnormality noted consisted of a lengthening of the hair and a coarse, thickened condition of the finger-nails. Without institutional care, the patient would have manifested precisely the same physical conditions as those mentioned in Daniel 4:33....From the foregoing it seems evident that the author of the fourth chapter of Daniel was describing accurately an attestable, if rather rare, mental affliction.”¹ Now while this condition, or one similar to it has been diagnosed in the medical community, perhaps due to neurological factors in the brain, certainly the cause of Nebuchadnezzar’s condition was miraculous, God is humbling this man, He’s teaching this man some theology, the theology at the end of verse 2, namely **that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.** God wants recognition of that from Nebuchadnezzar. He simply wants him to give credit where credit is due, that he has his kingdom because God gave it to him. So the goal of the therianthrope condition was that the arrogant Nebuchadnezzar would humbly recognize God as sovereign of the universe. And every Gentile ruler needs to learn this theology lesson. And I suggest that’s the reason Nebuchadnezzar wrote this down and had it deposited in the official court records of Babylon. Why would you record the most humiliating incident in your entire life and have it entered into the official court records of the greatest empire on earth if you didn’t want later kings to read these records and learn what he learned? I can see no other way of interpreting this than Nebuchadnezzar’s final testimony to all Gentile rulers to humbly recognize that the Most High is ruler over all mankind and bestows rule on whomever He wishes. And He is therefore to be worshipped and glorified

Verse 26 and here we have explanation of the stump, **‘And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that *it is* Heaven *that* rules.** So the band of iron and bronze was to assure the protection of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom during these seven periods of time which are probably seven years or seven months. And you will notice that Daniel closes the interpretation in verse 27 with an exhortation. **‘Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by *doing* righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to**

the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.' Now I'm interpreting this as grace before judgment. Daniel recognizes that God always gives grace before judgment and so he gives him this good advice, repent from your arrogant rule and rule properly, as a king ought to rule and serve the people of your kingdom rather than oppress them, administer righteousness in the courts and thereby avoid this horrible mental disorder. So we have grace before judgment, grace always comes before judgment and if people will make use of the grace then they can avoid the judgment, but if they don't take advantage of the grace then one day grace comes to an end and all that's left is judgment.

Verse 29, **"Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.** Twelve months of grace, an entire year to consider your ways but to no avail, verse 30, **"The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'** Now he's saying this all within his heart, he's magnifying himself, he's crediting himself with all the majesty of his kingdom. And verse 31, **"While the word was in the king's mouth,** out of the mouth comes that which is in the heart, **a voice came from heaven,** not through Daniel but straight from God himself **saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you.** You know, get clear in your head right now why this is happening, I am doing this to you to teach you theology. You see, Nebuchadnezzar said it is by my power and for my glory that Babylon has been built. God says, no, no, no, it is not by your power, it is by My power, I gave you that position, I made you king, I built Babylon. Isn't it true that all the things that you need to do anything God gives you? Life, resources, all things, those are all gifts of God. And God says, because you refuse to give Me credit but exalt yourself in your own heart, I therefore demonstrate My authority over you, now you will go mentally insane, you will get off your throne and go on all fours and act like a wild animal and eat grass and sleep outside and remain unkempt for seven periods of time. And **immediately,** verse 33, **the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled.**

Now I suspect that he was kept in the royal garden park. It was customary for the royal rulers of the time to build garden parks and surely you know of the hanging gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient

world. So he would have had one of these secluded parks; the lions den Daniel will later be thrown into was probably within this park. And now the mightiest man is there on the grounds acting like an animal and eating grass, digging holes in the ground, a very embarrassing situation. This went on for some time.

Now during that time the kingdom is in great danger, there will be civil wars break out, there will be the threats of usurpers to assassinate Nebuchadnezzar. But Nebuchadnezzar would remain and I suggest that Daniel watched over him, Daniel protected him and Daniel guarded the throne for him. So you can see human responsibility and divine sovereignty there.

But verse 34, **“But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward 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, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’** Okay, now I think you can make a pretty good case that this is a profession of faith. And I think you have to recognize in verse 34 that his condition during this time did not totally destroy his ability to act responsibly, for you see that he **raised his eyes toward heaven** and that’s when his reason **returned to** him. I think Nebuchadnezzar was conscious the entire seven periods but he could not act rationally, he was trapped in this most precarious condition but that if he were to simply look up to heaven, that would be the recognition God was looking for. And that’s what he did in verse 34, that’s the moment this man was saved. It took seven periods of time to break this man’s pride and get him to admit that God rules in the heavens and bestows rule on whomever he wishes.

Verse 35 and these are powerful statements of God’s sovereignty, if you struggle with God’s sovereignty struggle with these verses, **All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to**

Him, ‘What have You done?’ I don’t think anyone is more qualified to say that than Nebuchadnezzar. If God can change your mental state into that of an animal I think He can do whatever He wants and you can’t do anything about it. And you can’t challenge whether He is right or wrong in anything He does. Now that solves a lot of things if you think it through. Whatever happens happens ultimately because of the will of God and you can try and rationalize and skirt around these things but you can’t argue with God. You may not understand how God can be the ultimate cause of all things and yet not be accountable for sin, but that is indeed the truth. And I think if you’ll come to grips with the Scripture and stop rationalizing you’ll be much better off. The Scriptures don’t ask you to rationalize, they ask you to accept that God has it all worked out. And if you do you’ll at least be where Nebuchadnezzar was by the end of this chapter.

Verse 36, at that time **my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.** We have the principle of he who humbles himself will be exalted. Verse 37 and this is the closing words of the official court record, **Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.** Now I don’t think unbelievers praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven. I think that’s an activity believers do. He didn’t do that at the end of Dan 2 or Dan 3, so to see it here gives me the impression that this man has learned the theology lesson and I do think you will see this man in heaven. God cut Nebuchadnezzar down to size. The tree that had grown strong and flourished became a stump. Yet God preserved the stump with its roots. Once the king was humbled and looked to heaven, the stump re-sprouted and grew to be even stronger than before, flourishing as a mighty tree.

Now what are we to learn from this chapter? There are many things. I will not exhaust them. First of all I think we must learn that arrogance will characterize the times of the Gentiles. According to the image of Dan 3 Nebuchadnezzar was perhaps the most arrogant Gentile ruler ever. But his arrogance was broken. Later kings and rulers should learn the lesson and humble themselves before God breaks them. Secondly, God rules from the

heavens, He gives rule to whomever He wishes, He raises and lowers kingdoms. No kingdom rises and no kingdom falls without God doing it. That gives you a philosophy of history. Thirdly, to give Israel hope. Even though Israel is dispersed among Gentiles and living under the thumb of arrogant Gentile rulers ultimately she will be brought safely through this time and restored to her kingdom because God is faithful to His promises. The nations are not out of control; God has the nations under control. Fourthly, God was gracious to humble the first great Gentile king and have him record it and enter it into the official court record of the greatest superpower on earth. If Gentile rulers will heed Nebuchadnezzar's testimony and humble themselves, putting their trust in God, God will establish their position and make their kingdoms flourish. Fifth, God has chosen certain individuals before the foundation of the world for salvation. Nebuchadnezzar was clearly one of those men. However, sixthly, this is not without means, God uses means to call forth His elect, He sent this man dreams, He sent this man Daniel, he even set love in the heart of Daniel for him. God uses means to create the elect in history. And seventh, Nebuchadnezzar illustrates that you can resist God's grace for a time, but if God has chosen you for salvation then you cannot finally resist Him. He will put pressure on you that will be sufficient to result in the genuine human response of faith. Therefore God's grace is ultimately irresistible. Alright, next time chapter 5, Belshazzar.

ⁱ John F Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, 109-110.

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