

The Tall Tree Struck Down: God Humbles the Proud

Daniel Chapter Four

Daniel 4 is a warning to the proud. ***It opens and closes with a hymn of praise to the One True King!*** Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the people of this world are compared to trees (see Psalm 1:1-4). *“The trees of the field will know I am LORD. I bring down the high tree. I exalt the low tree”* (Ezek. 17:24).

I. In the beginning of Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar is a TALL TREE.

He’s not yet made a distinction between Bel and Nabu and God above (“Dani-EL” and “BELteshazzar” and NEBU-chadnezzar). In Nebuchadnezzar’s mind, *Daniel and his friends brought a new revelation of the God who stands behind Babylon’s gods*. In Daniel 3:29, he says, “their God,” not “my God.” By the end of Chapter 4, a conversion takes place. Nebuchadnezzar is brought to know God as LORD.

A. Bel and Nabu become irrelevant to the king. To know God is to renounce all other gods in life.

B. Nebuchadnezzar must make a total change in his way of living. “Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue” (Daniel 4:27).

II. The dream of THE TREE and its interpretation bring Nebuchadnezzar to his knees.

A. There was a tree in the midst of the land of Babylon. 1. It was large. 2. It reached to the heavens. 3. It could be seen throughout the earth. 4. The tree was leafy and full of fruit. 5. It was glorious.

B. The tree was to be cut down near to the ground. 1. Branches were to be broken off. 2. Its leaves stripped from it. 3. Its fruit was scattered. 4. A band of bronze and iron placed around the stump.

C. The tree is Nebuchadnezzar. 1. Like the tree, Nebuchadnezzar is to lose his dominion. 2. He will dwell with the beasts of the field (under judgment/dominion of men. 3. He will remain in this condition for seven periods of time, months, or years (probably seven months), like a beast.

III. Nebuchadnezzar is made new by the grace of God through the humbling process.

A. After seven periods means he is made whole (new) in the eighth period (see II Corinthians 5:17).

B. Jesus is raised on the “first day of the week” which is the eighth day. The eighth day is new birth. Nebuchadnezzar comes to recognize that the God of Israel is the King of kings (Dan. 4:34–37). Daniel is troubled. Would enemies take advantage of the king’s absence and bring turmoil?

IV. The tree in Daniel 4 is a symbol of the process all of us must go through to personally know God.

Jude writes a letter to the early Christians to “celebrate the common salvation we have” (Jude 2).

A. In the Garden, Adam and Eve rebelled against God and were barred from eating the fruit of the Tree of Life. This entrance to the Garden is guarded by two angels, with large flaming swords. Coming to YHWH for life involved coming before Him with a “sacrifice of innocent blood.” For “without the shedding of blood” (the death of the Innocent), there is “no forgiveness of sins.”

B. Jesus is our Tree of Life. In the book of Proverbs, we are told that wisdom *“is a tree of life for those who take hold of her”* (Prov. 3:18), that *“the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life”* (11:30), and that *“hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when desire comes it is a tree of life”* (13:12). Jesus says, *“I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God”* (Rev. 2:7). In the last chapter of Revelation, the Tree of Life is the center of our eternal city.

C. The fruitless tree is the person who rejects Jesus Christ as King. “Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?” (Luke 13:6–9). I’d rather be humbled by the WORD of God than the WORK of God.

12 Questions for Daniel Chapter 4

1. What do we know thus far about Nebuchadnezzar's personal character? (see 1:3-4 & 18-20; 2:12, 46-49; 3:1-6, 13-14, 19-20, 28-30)
2. Who is recounting this story about Nebuchadnezzar and why does the narration in Daniel change to Nebuchadnezzar here?
3. In verse 4 and following, how would you describe Nebuchadnezzar's attitude towards God before God strikes him down?
4. What is different from this dream and the process of having it interpreted from the last recorded dream in Daniel 2?
5. What is the central reason that Daniel gives for God "cutting down" Nebuchadnezzar?
6. Looking at his recorded words in verses 1-3 & 34-37, how would you describe how God has changed Nebuchadnezzar?
7. How does this second dream link up with the first in chapter 2?
8. Why does God require that we acknowledge His sovereignty?
9. What are some of the things in our world or in your personal realm which deny that God is all-powerful, sovereign, and in control?
10. How can we pray for God to bring glory to Himself in those situations?
11. In what ways do you struggle to acknowledge that God is Lord over all?
12. How does Daniel's courage and God's work in Nebuchadnezzar encourage you to trust in Him?