

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

## BOOK OF DANIEL

### THE LETTER (DANIEL 4:1-7)

#### A CHAPTER WRITTEN BY A PAGAN KING

Chapter 4 is unique because it is written by a character that has been an antagonist of sorts up to this point

- This was actually a letter written to Daniel, but edited and constructed by him. It was sent out to all of the world

### THE STATE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR AT THIS TIME

During the writing of this letter, Neby was probably post his complete conversion experience. So, this chapter is a literary gem for Christianity!

- We see the heart change of a man that was powerful, arrogant, ruthless, greedy, and hot tempered. v3 is almost psalm-like in its praise!

### THIS IS KIND OF A LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

After chapter 4, Neby vanishes from the Book of Daniel. We get to see the fruit of Daniel's interpretations and the remarkable events of the 3 Jews in the furnace in Neby. But, this only happened after he had his personal encounter with God.

- **Other's stories are great, but we must have our "aha!" moment**

### WHAT'S NEXT?

We get the tone of a CEO that has already achieved all they can in worldly terms. At this point, the warrior king is getting older, Babylon has subdued its enemies, the cities had been built up, and there was plenty of money

- Success is not evil, but **it is not the source of fulfillment and contentment we're designed to pursue**

### CLOSING IN ON RETIREMENT

Neby ruled for 43 years, and despite the peace, prosperity, and success he had, a new dream brought him terror and worry

- Again God interrupted the life of a pagan king and communicated with him directly. He was about to learn that **the enemies subdued outside were nothing compared to the enemy inside.**

### HERE COME THE CHALDEANS... AGAIN

The astrologers, diviners, sorcerers, etc., came in again, and again could not decipher the dream.

Notice Neby is not as brutal. Also, they may have not dared to tell him an interpretation because it was a negative one.

### THE BOSS WAS ABSENT

Daniel was the dean of the faculty of wise men, but did not immediately show up. Some see this as his good leadership because he let others step up, or he might have been told to refrain by God until the proper timing.

- **Humble and Teachable.** Some of the greatest characteristics of great leaders, innovators, servants, and successful people is humility and the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom

### THE TREE (DANIEL 4:8-12)

#### WHY IS HE CALLING HIM BELTESHAZZAR?

Remember, Daniel's name had been changed, and he was probably famous around the empire as Belteshazzar, not Daniel

- Some think this is a sign that Neby is still holding onto other gods, but it's probably just a formality because of the magnitude of this letter being sent out

### GRACE FOR A NEW BELIEVER

Though Neby still has some practices he needs to change, his comment "the spirit of the holy gods in him" points to a conversion that is new and needs maturation

- **We must be gracious with people who are new to faith.** Remember, Jesus took 3 years to disciple. But, **we must also wean people off "milk" to "meat"**

### THE ATTITUDE IS DEFINITELY DIFFERENT

Though Neby hasn't spiritually arrived yet, we see a major shift in his attitude towards the wise men and Daniel

- This is the key to true change. If one has **an attitude of humility and willingness**, there are no limits to the lengths God can take them to!

### TREES HOLD A LOT OF SYMBOLISM

In almost every culture, trees have a large connotation. People find pleasure in them, property values go up, they provide shade, food, and are just beautiful.

- They also hold great significance in the Bible: The Garden, the Tree of Life in Revelation, the Cross, Jesus parables/analogies

### SO, WHAT'S UP WITH THIS TREE?

The tree in Neby's dream was enormous, its "top reached the sky," and it was visible "to the ends of the earth." The leaves were gorgeous, the fruit was abundant, and it provided shelter and food for every creature

- Trees could be seen on jewelry and buildings in Babylonian culture.

### CONTROL (DANIEL 4:13-18)

#### AS HE PONDERED, SOMEONE APPROACHED

Neby says "an observer, a holy one" came down from heaven and yelled instructions concerning the tree

- The purpose of these angels is to make decrees and carry them out in order to reinforce that God rules human affairs. This is most prevalent in Revelation

### LACKING ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY

The instruction the angel gives is to cut down the tree, remove its branches, and scatter the fruit. Because of this, all of the creatures that find refuge in it will flee.

- The imagery would have been vivid to Neby, a man that had cut down many of the Cedars of Lebanon to build his buildings

### ONLY THE STUMP AND ROOTS REMAINED

What was left was bound with iron and bronze shackles to ensure it would remain lifeless around all the "tender grass of the field."

- Foreshadowing of the bondage Neby will soon go through in his insanity

### THE TREE BECOMES A MAN

The angel says that the man in this vision is to have his mind "changed from that of a man, and let him be given the mind of an animal." Mind here is also referring to the inner self, or the heart, emotions, morality

### ONE OF THE GREATEST OF HIS DAY

The highly sophisticated, intelligent, and reasonable king will soon be plunged into madness and behave like an animal for a specific amount of time

- The judgment would be for "seven periods" or approximately 7 years. Fun fact, 7 in the Bible is the number that signifies completion

### THE OVERARCHING THEME OF DANIEL

v17 best describes the thesis of the Book of Daniel: the sovereignty of God

- Oddly enough, this comes from the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar relating the message of God's angels, or the "holy ones"
- All that is about to happen to Neby is so people will know that **God is in control of all "kingdoms of men"**

### HE GIVES AND TAKES

God not only knows all, He is engaged in it too. He gives authority, influence, affluence, and abilities to people He chooses, and also has the ability to remove those giftings and opportunities

- A lesson we must learn is that no good thing comes from us, but only from the Father (James 1:7, Job 1:21)

### NEBY WOULD SOON LEARN THIS LESSON

He had been selected by God to rule a kingdom, but fouled it up by slaughtering thousands and becoming an arrogant tyrant. Now he will receive punishment.

- **There are always consequences for sin. God will show grace, and we can receive salvation and restoration, but sin always has a price**

### TELL ME AGAIN, DANIEL

Nebuchadnezzar concludes his account of the dream by calling upon his greatest leader and council, Daniel. Neby has confidence in Daniel simply because he has "the spirits of the holy gods" within him

- Of course we know this to be the only God, but remember Neby hadn't been fully converted at this point

### TRUSTING US WITH A KINGDOM

- Success is only by the benevolence of God. Everything we have is His. **We can only hold on to what we are willing to let go. Only when we lose our life, can we find it.** (Matt. 16:25). Our stewardship now, determines our stewardship in eternity

### PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

- We must humble ourselves to God through prayer, reading the Word, and submitting to His ways. We must humble ourselves to others. Jesus was a footwisher. Let go of our aspirations and replace them with His. Trust me, life is better.