

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **How Are the Mighty Fallen!**

Scripture: Daniel 4:1-37

Code: 27-12

We're gonna look at Daniel 4 tonight. Daniel 4. And these are narrative passages so we're taking them in kind of large chunks. Daniel 4 has 37 verses. Now if that was 37 verses of Pauline theology it would probably take us about 37 weeks to get through it. But since it's a basically a narrative passage, you kind of flow with the story a little bit and you can keep moving along. And we'll see how far we get tonight.

We've entitled this fourth chapter, How are the mighty fallen? How are the mighty fallen? Perhaps the most destructive word in any language is the word pride. Pride. Pride damned Satan and his angels. Pride has damned men throughout human history. Pride is destructive because it breaks that first and great command that we ought to have no other gods before God Himself. God is to be the first and only God. God is the only one to be worshiped. The only one to be praised. The only one to be served. And His will is absolutely supreme.

And pride asserts that man is to take a place of superiority over God. Or that an angel is to take a place of superiority over God. Pride places self above God. That's the essence of pride. And in the Scripture, through the prophets, God said, "My glory will I not give to another." And He laid down a basic premise. "My glory will I not give to another," means that He will not tolerate a usurper elevating himself above God.

Listen to what God said about pride. Proverbs 21:4, He said, "A proud heart is sin." Proverbs 6, He said, "These things doth the Lord hate, a proud look." Proverbs 16:5, "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, and arrogance." Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 29:23 says, "A man's pride shall bring him low." And Proverbs 11:2 says, "When pride comes, then comes shame."

Now just from the book of Proverbs, we gain an insight into how God feels about the matter of pride. It is a serious and severe sin and condemned repeatedly throughout the Scripture. It leads to abomination because it desecrates the name of God and the rightful place that He has. It brings about destruction, for the end of pride is judgment. And it leads to a fall and to shame.

In Jeremiah 49, there's a very interesting verse where the Lord gives a prophesy against Edam. You don't need to turn to it, but Edam was very, very proud because Edam was an area in east and south

of Jerusalem, an area in the wilderness and the desert that had many natural fortresses, and particularly the city of Petra. The great capital city of Edam was a city fortified by virtue of the fact that it was in the midst of walls of great high cliffs. And the only entrance, and I've been through that entrance, is just one wide enough for a single individual to pass. And so it was very easy for that city to be guarded by one soldier and almost invulnerable.

In Jeremiah 49:16, Jeremiah gives a prophesy against Edam. "Thy terribleness has deceived thee and the pride of thine heart, o thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that hold us the heights of the hills, though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle," watch this line, "'I will bring thee down from there,' saith the Lord. 'Also, Edam shall be a desolation and everyone that goes by it shall be appalled and hiss at its plagues.'"

If you were to go there today as I have, you would find that it is absolutely empty. There's no city there anymore. You say how could it ever happen? Well, Petra had water coming into the city in little troughs flowing down the sides of the cliffs. The troughs were still there. They cut off the water supply and pretty soon the people had to give up because they had no water. God brought them down.

James 4:16 sums it up. And you ought to jot that Scripture down. It's a very important one. It sums up God's view toward pride. It says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Now that is the lesson of Daniel 4. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. If you ever were looking for an illustration for James 4:16, you'd find it in Daniel 4. It is an apt and graphic illustration of that very basic truth. When you are proud, God fights against you. When you are humbled, God gives you grace.

Now a proper recognition of the sovereignty of God, a proper recognition of the supremacy of God, a proper recognition of the humility of man is what this chapter is all about. And the key phrase in the chapter, notice in verse 17, is, "That the living may know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men." That's the key phrase. The whole chapter is set to teach that truth, that everybody may know that the most high that is God rules in the kingdom of men. No man can set himself up above God.

You'll notice in verse 25, again, the same thing. "Till thou know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men." You'll notice that in verse 32 that, "The most high ruleth in the kingdom of men." In verse 34, "I bless the most high, praise and honor Him who liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion. His kingdom is from generation to generation." The theme then is to recognize that God is the ruler in the kingdom of men. Now when you don't realize that, you're in trouble.

In Acts 12, Herod was beginning to feel proud, and lifted up, and boastful, and he gave a great speech. And the people all shouted that it was the voice of a god and not a man, that he was feeding his soul on the glory that was coming his way. And he became puffed up and proud. And in Acts

12:20-23, the Bible says very suddenly, "He was smitten by God and eaten by worms and he died on the spot." And the text says, "Because he gave not God the glory."

In Jeremiah 13, Jeremiah said to the people of God, "Give God glory. And if you don't give God glory, he'll cause you to stumble on the dark mountains. He'll trip you up and you'll fall into death." In Romans 1 it says, "Because mankind gave not God the glory, He gave them over to a reprobate mind." It is a severe thing to set oneself up above God. Because God fights against the proud and spares His grace for the humble.

Now in this chapter we meet a proud man. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian Empire, the first of the great monarchs of the four empires that rules that part of the world. The great Babylonian empire. This man, monarch of monarch, king of kings, ruling all the world that he perceived became proud, and puffed up, and bloated, and inflated, and self-centered, and set himself up as God. And we saw in the last chapter, he even built a great big 90-foot high idol out of gold as an image of himself and forced everybody to bow down and worship. And when three didn't, they were thrown into a fiery furnace. So we understand a little about his ego.

But in this chapter, we see how God brings this man low and then gives grace to him in his humility. He resists him in his pride. He gives grace to him in his humility. And if I can extrapolate a little bit, I'd like to do that. I think there's more in this chapter than just the story of Nebuchadnezzar. I think Nebuchadnezzar is a symbol of several things.

First of all, I believe he is a symbol of any other individual in history who tries to do the same thing. He is sort of a model or a pattern for how that works out. Before all of the shahs, and ayatollahs, and the Amins, and the Hitlers, and the Mussolinis, and the whoever elses of the world who want to set up their petty, puny little kingdoms and rule as the monarch of their own self designed empires and set themselves up and their egos as that which is beyond and above God, this is a warning to them as well. And Nebuchadnezzar stands as a symbol of what God does with all people like that.

But beyond that, I think there is here a warning to us who may never rule any empire other than the little one we invent for ourselves. And we who in our simplicity a very uncomplex life and in our lack of public notoriety build an empire and crawl up on top and crown ourselves king, this is a warning to us, also. And I think even in a broader vein, I think what we see with Nebuchadnezzar here is a symbol also of how God will deal with all of the proud empires of the times of the gentiles. For He crushed the Babylonian Empire. He crushed the Medo-Persian Empire. He crushed the Greek Empire. He crushes the Roman Empire. It'll revive. He'll crush it again and establish the kingdom of Christ.

So you see this is not just Nebuchadnezzar. This is any other would be monarch of the world. And it is any man, woman, or young person of the world who sets up his own little empire and crawls up on

top and declares himself king and defies God. And it is also a symbol of how God has dealt with the whole of the gentile period known as the times of the gentiles. And so we learn much from it, a fitting symbol of how God judges pride and gives grace where there's humility.

Now I have to tell you this so you'll know going in. This is the climax of the spiritual biography of Nebuchadnezzar. Now we know that in the first three chapters, the Lord is working on Nebuchadnezzar, don't we? He drops Daniel in his lap. Daniel, first of all, defies Him by not being willing, along with his friends, Mishael, Azariah, and Hananiah, not being willing to eat the king's meat or drink the king's wine or do certain things that they do.

And so immediately he is forced to be confronted by these four young men. As he confronts them, and questions them, and deals with them, he finds that they are far and away beyond anybody in his kingdom in terms of their integrity, and their intelligence, and their education, and their wisdom, etc., etc. So beginning then in chapter 1, God begins to build an affinity toward them.

And then we find in chapter 2 that Daniel is given the responsibility of solving an incredible problem. The man had a dream, and nobody knew what it was, and nobody could interpret it. But Daniel could. And we remember that Nebuchadnezzar was struck by the amazing capability of Daniel to read visions and dreams and rightly interpret them. And again, God was driving a wedge, as it were, into the mind of Nebuchadnezzar.

Then in the third chapter, when the decree went out that they were to bow to the idol and they didn't, the three did not. Daniel must have been out of town somewhere. Immediately they were thrown in the fiery furnace and there appeared with one like with them, one like a son of the gods. And they came out. There wasn't any burning. There wasn't any smell of smoke. And Nebuchadnezzar again had seen God at work. Once in every chapter.

And now we come in the fourth chapter to the climax of his spiritual biography. I really believe in my heart, and this is a - you can't be totally dogmatic about this. I'll try to show you why I believe it. But I believe at the end of this chapter, Nebuchadnezzar truly comes to faith in the true God. Some have entitled the chapter, "The conversation of Nebuchadnezzar." I hate to let you in on the ending of the chapter. Why did I do that? Anyway. I wanted you to know how exciting it's gonna be as we progress through 'cause I want you to know something wonderful is coming.

Now as we look at this chapter, we focus then on the spiritual biography of Nebuchadnezzar, an incredible, astounding, amazing man. One of the geniuses of all of human history. Brilliant beyond those of his time. Equipped in many, many ways in a human sense. Puffed up and proud as the ruler of the world. And how God literally crushes him into nothing and turns him around. And he does it beloved through another dream. Another dream.

Job 33:14 it says, "For God speaks once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men in slumberings on the bed then He openeth up the ears of men and sealeth their instruction that He may withdraw a man from his purpose and hide pride from man."

Now here in Job 33, the statement is made that God uses dreams to draw pride out of men's hearts. It almost seems as if this is a fulfillment of that passage. "For God uses a dream to break the pride of this mighty monarch."

Now let's look at the introduction and the first three verses very quickly. "Nebuchadnezzar the king unto all people, nations, and languages." We said that that little triad simply encompasses everybody. It's just a common phrase of the time to embody all the people who would be in sound of this decree or this testimony. "Nebuchadnezzar the king unto all people, nations, and languages who dwell on all the earth, peace be multiplied unto you."

And by the way, peace as a greeting, shalom or whatever, was not common only to Israel. It was used all over the ancient world. We find it in multiple writings of multiple nations and it was the commonest form of greeting. So he said, "Peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 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." Stop right there.

Now this is really amazing. This is amazing. You say who wrote this chapter? Nebuchadnezzar did. Now I think he probably had it edited a little by Daniel. You say well, was Nebuchadnezzar an inspired writer? No. But God made sure that what Nebuchadnezzar said was accurately recorded. The Bible is accurate in this sense. When the devil speaks something in the Bible it isn't always true, is it? But it's truly recorded that that's what he said.

And so here it isn't that Nebuchadnezzar is an inspired writer. It is that Nebuchadnezzar is giving his testimony and Daniel was able to record it exactly as it was given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The wonderful thing about it is that it happens to be a wonderful testimony and I believe that's why the spirit of God instructed Daniel to put it in.

Now I want you to notice that it's in the first person. "Nebuchadnezzar the king unto all the people," etc. This is his personal testimony. This is kind of like Nebuchadnezzar giving his testimony on how he came to believe in the true God. This is his personal spiritual biography.

Verse 2, "I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me." Now he has finally seen - and this is, of course, a recap of really what you're gonna see in the

story. He is saying, "I'm gonna tell you the testimony of how I came to believe in the high God, the God above all of the deities of my own people. How great are His signs," he says in verse 3. Oh, he proved himself. "And how mighty are His wonders."

And by the way, signs and wonders are used together frequently in Hebrew in the Old Testament to indicate miracles. He says, "I've seen enough miracles to know that His kingdom is beyond mine. It's everlasting. His dominion is beyond mine. It is from generation to generation."

Now notice in verse 1 that he was speaking to all the earth. As far as he perceived it, he rules the whole earth. As far as the capacity that they had in that day to extend themselves and discover people and nations, they believed they rules the world. And so he's saying, "I'm telling everybody, the whole world as far as I see it, the story of the high God. The one who is the supreme being. I've seen enough miracles, enough signs and wonders, to know that this God is beyond any other God." So you have here the personal testimony of a pagan king. The first monarch of the times of the gentiles giving you his spiritual biography.

All right, let's look at the dream. Point number one, the reception of the dream. Verse 4, "The reception of the dream." This is his first hand account. It begins in verse 4 with what word? What is the first word? I. "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid. And the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me."

Now the word for rest means free from apprehension and free from fear. His kingdom did not have any significant problems at the time. The empire was very settled at this time. He was experiencing no serious attacks. He was prospering in a fantastic way. And by the way, the word flourishing there means to grow green. To grow green. Everything was greening in Babylon. Everything was flourishing in Babylon.

Now I would venture to say that this is likely between his 30<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> year of reigning. Because we're getting toward the end of his life. It's probably, get this, 25 to 30 years after the fiery furnace that this takes place. And by now, Daniel would be 45 to 50 years of age. So we have a tremendous time gap between 3 and 4 of 25 to 30 years. And God brings the second dream. It panicked him. It blew him right out of his comfort and his rest and he was totally fearful.

Now how did he react to this? Verse 6, "Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me." Boy, does he have a short memory. Those losers? The last time they came in, they couldn't tell him anything and he said he was gonna kill them all. Well, 25 years and you got to keep the system moving, I guess. So they were still around.

So he, "Made a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans," and they were the highest of the system of castes that they had. "The soothsayers. And I told the dream to them, but they did not make known to me its interpretation."

Now he calls back these same bunch of losers who couldn't help him at all the last time and he goes through this same routine. And in verse 18, the reason they didn't tell him the interpretation is it says they're not able to make known the interpretation. They couldn't tell him 'cause they didn't know. But this time, they didn't admit they didn't know. They just didn't tell him. So he gives them the dream and they're incapacitated.

And here we are right back at the folly of human wisdom. I tell you I was listening the other night. Patricia and I were driving up to the Couples Conference. And we were listening to a tape. We do talk now and then, but this time we were listening to a tape. And there was a man who was being asked multiples of questions about all the problems in the world in the church. And he just kept giving answers and answers and answers out of his own mind. And it was so frustrating. I kept thinking to myself, "If he would just refer to such and such a verse, that would answer that question."

But he would say, "Now according to what I believe and I am an educated man," so and so and so and so. It was a lot of double talk. Beating around the bush and never saying anything. By the time we were all done, we thought we'd arrived back at home because we hadn't gone anywhere. Around in circles.

The world doesn't have any answers. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "The natural man understandeth not the things of God." Jesus said He'd hidden the things from the wise and prudent of the world and revealed them to babes. The world never knows. They're ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. And so he's right back in the same pit again with the same guys who claim to know it all and don't know it at all.

Verse 8. I love this. Daniel was cool. He had a sense of timing. Get this, "But at the last, Daniel came in." Don't you like that? "At the last, Daniel came in." He just came in, saw the chaos, waited for the set up for his moment. And then it says, "Whose name is Belteshazzar." And since this is a testimony made by Nebuchadnezzar to the Babylonians in chapter 4 he wants them to know who Daniel is so he uses his Babylonian name. "According to the name of my god." His god was Bel. "And whom," I like this, "is the spirit of the holy God."

Now we don't want to spend all evening tonight trying to go back and forth, back and forth, on whether it means gods the plural and he's talking about some deities that he has in his mind or whether it means the true God. After my study, I lean to the fact that he's referring to the holy God. And for those of you who would like a little support for that, try Leon Wood's book on Daniel. He

takes that same view. And he's one of the finest writers on Daniel, just to give you a footnote so you don't think I'm in left field all alone.

But anyway, Daniel came in, "Whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god." Watch. "And whom is the spirit of the holy God." Now where did he get that information? He said he was the most high God way back when the first dream was told, didn't he? And he said he was the most high God way back when the fiery furnace happened 25 to 30 years before.

But where did he get the idea that God was a holy God? I'll tell you where. In the 25 and 30 years intervening, do you think Daniel never told him anything? You better believe that in that 25 to 30 years, Daniel, who was the prime minister in the whole empire of Babylon was feeding everything he could feed into the mind of that man. He cared about him and we'll see that in a moment.

Now I don't know where Daniel had been when he came in at the right moment, but he had a great strategic sense of timing. And when all the chaos was going on and they were all standing there with a blank look on their faces and their mouths shut and the king was trying to get the answer, he just came in at the last and relieved all of the pressure by giving him the answer. Isn't it wonderful that Nebuchadnezzar recognized as the years went by that the spirit of the holy God dwell in this man?

And the deities that you see of the Babylonians were not holy deities. Pagan deities are not any better than the men that worship them. But there was a holy God and his spirit dwelled in Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar knew that. He had a fuller understanding of the nature of God now than he did before.

I think it was not only what Daniel taught him, but I think it was probably what Daniel was like. I think he got an idea of the holiness of God from the holiness of Daniel, don't you? Daniel wouldn't defile himself with the king's meat and Daniel wouldn't drink the king's wine. And Daniel wouldn't indulge in the immoralities and the excesses of behavior that are against God. Daniel lived a pure, and a holy, and a virtuous life. And the conclusion of Nebuchadnezzar would be that he had a holy and a virtuous God. Because a man worships a God and that worship will reflect what he believes that God to be.

When Stanley found David Livingston in the heart of Africa, he stayed with him for six months. And Stanley was a professed skeptic when he found Livingston. But he came away from six months with David Livingston a Christian. And someone asked what Livingston said that converted him. To which Stanley replied, "It was not what Livingston said, it was what Livingston was that brought me to Christ."

Livingston, according to Stanley's report, never asked Stanley if he were a Christian. He never preached to him nor seemed to pray for his conversion. But Livingston was so thoroughly a Christian



that it dawned upon Stanley that one who was not a Christian was something less than a Christian. Pretty simple. Livingston was a man of God who permitted the Lord to live through him. And consequently, his life was a life of victory and blessing. And by the sheer influence and impact of his virtue, he brought that man to Christ.

And that I think is probably in Daniel's case what may have happened. Daniel not only spoke of the character of God, but manifested it, as well. And so we see the reception of the dream. He received it.

And now let's look at the second point, the recitation of the dream. Daniel comes in and he comes in at a strategic moment to solve the problem. Listen, I got to add another footnote to this. I don't think Daniel even hung around with the rest of that bunch. Even though he was a wise man and even though he was one of the erudite educated and one of the courtiers of the Babylonian court, I just get a feeling that he never messed with that bunch. He operated in a class by himself. They came in and later he came in. He made clear there was a distinction of identification.

Verse 9. "Oh, Belteshazzar, master of the magicians." Now he gives him the highest possible title, superior to everybody else. And by the way, the word magician, in order to be fair about it, is probably a word that should be translated in the broadest way, scholars. It embodied both mystical things, and education, and culture, and science, and wisdom, and all of that. And maybe we'd be more fair to translate it in another way so you don't think it's pulling rabbits out of a hat.

But the master of the magicians was basically the chief scholar. Here was the chief scholar. The most erudite. The most wise. The most knowledgeable. The most gifted. In fact, Daniel literally became a byword for knowledge, a byword for wisdom.

In Ezekiel 28:3 it says, "Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel." And that statement is made to the prince of Tyre. And behind the prince of Tyre is Satan. For a man, Daniel had incredible knowledge and wisdom.

And so he comes in and he not only had that, but he says that, "I know that the spirit of the holy God is in you." You not only have all the education, you not only have all the intellectual capacity, but you've got the spirit of the holy God in you. And watch this, "And no secret troubles you." I know that there's no secret that's a problem for you. "Tell me the interpretation of the visions of my dream that I have seen." Interpret my dream, he says. Nothing's too hard for you.

"Now here's my dream," verse 10. And this is a strange one. Why? "Thus were the visions of my head in my bed. I saw and behold a tree in the midst of the earth. And the height of it was great. The tree grew and was strong. And its height reached unto heaven." That's a big tree. "It just keeps growing and growing and growing and sticking right out of the flat plane of the earth, seemingly

nothing around it, it ascends and the sight of it extended to the end of all the earth." Now that's a big tree, folks.

Verse 12. "Its leaves were fair. Its fruit much. And in it was food for all. And the beasts of the field had shadow under it. And the fowls in the heaven dwelled in its boughs. And all flesh was fed from it." Now here's a tree that rises out of the earth in a solitary manner, extends into the heavens, glorious so that the whole earth can see it, it's so tall. And all of the beasts gather under its shadow. All of the birds land in it and they're provided food. And the whole earth can eat of its provision. That's what he saw in his dream.

And by the way, I might add this. Trees were frequently used in ancient times to symbolize great rulers. That's true. If you check out Ezekiel 17:22, it seems to be a parallel reference. If you check out Ezekiel 31:3, it refers to pharaoh as a tree. And in Amos 2:9, there's another indication along similar lines. And in some other ancient records, we see trees identified with great rulers.

So I really think that it wasn't that tough a dream to interpret. The tree seems to be Nebuchadnezzar. And this was some dream. Oh, beautiful tree. A productive, fruitful, flourishing tree. And the whole world was enjoying its abundance and it was feeding and providing for the world.

But the dream had a second part. And this was the shocker. Verse 13, "I kept looking in the vision of my head on my bed. And behold a watcher." Now that's Nebuchadnezzar's word for an angel. That's his word for an angel. One who is vigilant. It means a watchful one. A vigilant one. A guardian, which of course, is an angel. And he is seeing this angelic being and then holy one. "A watcher and a holy one." Now no two words could better describe the angels. They are vigilant. They are guardians. And they are holy.

And so he sees an angel. And he comes down from heaven and he cries aloud. "And he said thus, 'Cut down the tree and cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, scatter its fruit. Let the beast get away from under it and the fowls from its branches.'" In other words, the whole deal comes crashing down. That's the devastation and the destruction of the tree.

But there's a fascinating feature in verse 15. "Nevertheless, leave the stump and its roots," and it includes the stump and the roots, "in the earth. Even with a band of iron and bronze," and this was probably a fence. The best way to interpret that is you leave the stump and its roots. It's still alive. And put a fence around it. Leave it in the tender grass of the field. And then notice this. An amazing thing happens.

Verse 15, "And let him." Where does that come from? I never heard of a tree called him, have you? And now we're sneaking up on the interpretation, aren't we? Now we know that the tree is a man. "Let him be wet with the dew of heaven and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the

earth."

And we have come to a significant change. Him. That's a man. "Let his portion." So we come to him and his and now we're beginning to catch the interpretation. The tree is destroyed, chopped down. The whole thing comes to a crashing halt. But the stump is left and the stump is alive. And the roots are alive. And a fence is around it so nobody can harm it. And it's protected.

Verse 16, "Let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him and let seven times pass over him." Now the tree is a man. And the man is to give up his man's heart, watch it, and to get a beast's heart. And it is to be seven times that he endures this.

You say what are seven times? Well, in Daniel 7:25, we find out. Because there it says that the end of the tribulation, the last half, will be, watch it, a time, times, and what? Half a time. A time then equals what? One year. Seven years this individual is to be there, his kingdom cut off, the roots still alive and protected.

Now notice back in verse 16 for a minute. "Let his heart be changed." And the heart, you have to understand, the heart has reference to all of the thinking cognitive reasoning processes of man which control everything. And his mind is literally to become that of an animal. This is a monstrous psychological affliction known as lycanthropy, from lucas wolf, anthropos man. The wolf man. The werewolf concept comes from this. The guy who thinks he's an animal.

Raymond Harrison recites a personal experience with a modern case similar to that of Nebuchadnezzar that was observed in a mental hospital in 1946. And Harrison wrote this and I thought it was interesting. He said, "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."

And by the way, boanthropy is the word boa, which means bull or cow. And that is a form of lycanthropy where a person thinks they're a cow or a bull. Now this sounds kind of funny to us, but it wasn't too funny, I'm sure, to the people who go around eating grass and acting silly like that.

Anyways, "they observed," he says, "a clinical case of boanthropy in a British mental institution in 1946. The patient was in his early 20s. He 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 a good physique and excellent bodily health."

"His mental symptoms included pronounced antisocial tendencies. And because of this, he spent the entire day from dawn to dusk outdoors on the grounds of the institution. His daily routine consisted of

wandering around the magnificent lawns in 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 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 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 fingernails. Without institutional care, the patient would have manifested precisely the identical physical conditions as those mentioned in Daniel 4."

So this is not an unknown psychological phenomenon. In this case, it is induced by God. Now let's look at verse 17 and find out the point for all this. "This matter is by the decree," and he's telling the dream here. "This matter," this whole deal happened, "by the decree of the watchers," or the angels, "and the demand by the word of the holy ones," these angels. "And the reason is to the intent that the living may know," watch it, "that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will and seteth up over it the basest of men." In other words, in the dream the watchers or the angels actually told Nebuchadnezzar that the whole point of this dream was to show that the most high ruleth and the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he will.

Now verse 18, "This dream I, Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now thou, old Belteshazzar," or Daniel, "declare the interpretation of it for as much as all the wise men in my kingdom are not able to make known an immediate interpretation, but thou art able." And here he says this for the third time. "For the spirit of the holy God is in thee."

Oh, isn't it wonderful how Daniel stood out in the middle of his society? Because of a spirit controlled and spirit filled life, if we can use New Testament terminology. So we see the reception of the dream in verses 4-7 or 8. And then we see from 9-18 the recitation. Now the revelation of the dream. You want to know what it means? Here it comes.

Verse 19, "Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was perplexed for one hour." Now the one hour is probably not literally one hour. The phrase means for a little while. "And his thoughts troubled him." Was he perplexed because he didn't know the answer to the dream? No. Why was he troubled? Why was he disturbed? He was disturbed, now mark it, because he did know the interpretation of the dream and his heart was a heart of compassion for Nebuchadnezzar. And he was sorry and sad that it had to come to this, you see.

And I want you to notice something else. The fascinating thing takes place right here. Nebuchadnezzar stops speaking in the first person. Why? From here on out, folks, Nebuchadnezzar is no longer able to speak for himself because he becomes a raving maniac. And he goes back to

the first person only in verse 34 when he gets back his senses. But in the interim, it moves from the first person as if it is moving away from him because he's totally unable to reflect rationally on what happens.

Daniel stands there for a little while and doesn't say anything. The king spoke and said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream or its interpretation trouble thee." Don't be afraid to tell me. "Belteshazzar answered and said, 'My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee and the interpretation of it to thine enemies.'" And what he's saying is I wish what I have to say was true of your enemies and not you.

What a compassionate man. It wasn't the silence of perplexity. It was the silence of compassion. He just didn't want to tell him what he had to tell him. And I think in even saying that, he sealed in the mind of Nebuchadnezzar that he loved him. If he had just blurted out the condemnation, Nebuchadnezzar might have questioned Daniel's compassion. But this is what proves again to that man how deeply Daniel cared.

There's a great lesson there beloved. We know the message. And we know there's a message of judgment, and doom, and hell. But we never preach that message with a vindictive heart, do we? We never preach it in a harsh, and damning, and unloving, and judgmental way. But I could never, and I hope you can't either, talk to anybody about the loss of their eternal soul, about the judgment of God in their life, without a sense of sadness and compassion.

That was Daniel. Daniel hurt because he had to tell this king with whom he had been these many years and for whom he had prayed, and prayed, and prayed, and prayed year after year. And to whom he manifested the virtue of his faith in God. He had to tell him something he did not want to tell him.

We should have that kind of compassion. J. Allen Blair says years ago in London there was a large gathering of noted people. Among the invited guests was a famous preacher of his day by the name of Caesar Malan. A young lady played and sang charmingly and everyone was thrilled and very graciously, tactfully, and yet boldly, the preacher went up to her after her music had ceased. "I thought as I listened to you tonight, young lady, how tremendously the cause of Christ would be benefited if your talents were dedicated to Him," he said. "You know, young lady, you are a sinner in the sight of God. But I am glad to tell you that the blood of Jesus Christ, His son, cleanses you from all sin."

Well, the young lady was shocked. And she snapped out a rebuke for Malan to which he replied, "Lady, I mean no offense. I pray God's spirit will convict you." Blair says they all went to their homes. The young woman retired but couldn't sleep. The face of the preacher appeared before her and his words rang through her mind. At 2:00 in the morning, she sprang from her bed. She grabbed a

pencil and a piece of paper. And with tears running down her face, this young lady, Charlotte Elliot, wrote these words. "Just as I am without one plea, but that they blood was shed for me. And that thou bids me come to thee, oh, Lamb of God, I come."

Because one preacher was compassionate enough to be confrontive. There's a balance there. So Daniel cared, but he went on anyway and spoke the thing that he had to speak. And what did he say? Hear it well.

Verse 20, "The tree that thou sawest which grew and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven and the sight of it to all the earth, whose leaves were fair and its fruit much. And in it was food for all. And under it which the beasts of the field dwelt and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation," here it comes. Underline it.

Verse 22, "It is thou, oh, king." Remember what Nathan said to David? "Thou art the man." "It is you, oh, king." Most preachers back down in the crisis like that. Daniel didn't. You're the man.

Then came the second part, verse 23. "And whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from heaven, this angel, and saying, 'Cut the tree down and destroy it, yet leave the stump of its roots in the earth, even with a fence of iron and bronze, a strong fence, in the tender grass of the field. And let him be wet with the dew of heaven. And let his portion be with the beast of the field.'" And by the way, it recites the dream just verbatim. "Till seven times pass over him."

"This is the interpretation, oh, king. And this is the decree of the most high which has come upon my lord, the king." Here it comes. "That they shall drag thee from men and thy dwelling shall be with the beast of the field. And they shall make thee to eat," and the word is literally herbage. "They shall make thee to eat herbage or grass like oxen. They shall wet thee with the dew of heaven." That is living outdoors with dew just like the rest of the earth. "And seven years shall pass over thee until thou know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of man and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

Now listen. Just summing up. It's clear. Nebuchadnezzar was gonna be humiliated. He was gonna lose his mind. He was gonna become a beast, insane for seven full years. Now you can't perceive this in the drama that occurred because you cannot perceive Nebuchadnezzar at the height of his glory. If you can imagine, for example, the president of the United States becoming a raving maniac stuck out on the White House lawn and enclosed in a little fence where everybody could see him crawling around eating grass for seven years, you might begin to conceive of what was going on. What an incredible, unbelievable, humiliation.

But verse 26, "And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee after thou shall have known that the heavens do rule." And there is a ray of hope. Look at that verse 26. The reason the stump was left was because Nebuchadnezzar wasn't gonna

die. But after seven years, he would get his throne back again after he learned his lesson.

And the lesson he needed to learn was this. Every kingdom is God's. And God rules everything. And if he sets up some base man, as verse 17 says, it's only because God has done it, not because that man has done it.

Having said that, Daniel makes an appeal in verse 27. "Wherefore oh, king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee. Break off thy sins by righteousness and thine inequities by showing mercy to the poor." In other words, let there be righteousness in the light and let there be the proof of it by the deeds to those in need. The king must break with sin and enter into a righteous relationship with God. And then he must prove that righteous relationship by virtuous deeds.

It sounds to me like what Jesus said in Matthew 22. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And love your," what? "Neighbor as yourself." First get your relationship right with God, turn from sin, accept His righteousness. And then begin to do good to those around you.

Isaiah 55:7 puts it this way. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. And let him return to the Lord and He will have mercy on him and to our God and He will abundantly pardon."

He's calling for Nebuchadnezzar to repent, turn from his sin, turn to the Lord, accept the righteous standard, and begin to be merciful. And by the way, we don't have time to go into it, he was a merciless, murderous king. And so there was much to change.

But you know what? Even after this dream and its interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar refused to repent. He refused. Like Felix who said to Paul, "When I have a convenient season, I'll call for you. I can't be bothered right now." He refused to repent. If Nebuchadnezzar, I believe, in verse 27, if he had repented, God would have never allowed this to happen. You say, "Well, what makes you think that?" Well, God said he was gonna destroy Nineveh. But Nineveh repented and He didn't do it, right? God speaks judgment, but when men repent, God turns from His judgment. But Nebuchadnezzar didn't repent.

And so we see the reception of the dream through verse 8, and the recitation through verse 18, and the revelation through verse 27, and now the realization in verse 28. Watch what happened. It came to pass. But look, "All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar," when? "At the end of," how long? Twelve months. Now you tell me God isn't a patient, gracious God. How long did God give Nebuchadnezzar to get his act straightened out? One whole year. And Nebuchadnezzar was a vile, and evil, and murderous man. But God gave him 12 months to hear the wonderful and gracious appeal of Daniel. God is so patient.

You think about the flood. God says, "I will destroy the world by water." He told them. You know how long it was 'till he did it? 120 years. Now that's patience, isn't it? And the whole time God waited, He had Noah as a preacher of righteousness. God gave him the year. And God had already given him 30 years of Daniels influence before this.

The Lord God said to Samuel when he was mourning over Saul, "I have given him years and years to repent and change. And now I've rejected him." In other words, it's too late to be mourning. I gave him time. By the spirit of the Lord, Jeremiah cried to wicked Judah, "Repent." He refused to repent and in judgment, Nebuchadnezzar came in 605. Jeremiah lifted up his voice again and said, "Repent." And Nebuchadnezzar, when they didn't repent, came back in 598. And Jeremiah lifted up his voice again and said, "Repent." And they didn't. And so he came back again in 586. But God made it in shifts, as it were, each time giving them another opportunity to repent and they refused.

Verse 30. Just to show you how far he was from repenting, catch this. "The king spoke and said," he's standing on the top of his palace looking around at this incredible city. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" Pretty disgusting, frankly. He is so bloated. He looked over all of that stuff.

Babylon was the largest and most powerful city of antiquity. The city was a perfect square, a 15-mile square. There were wide streets, strong fortifications, numerous public buildings, sufficient land for farming and pasture. The population was approximately 1,200,000.

The city was surrounded by a deep, wide moat filled with water and the wall was 87 feet wide and 350 feet high. Now that's a wall, folks. The city was literally fortified. By the way, on the wall, they could drive chariots four abreast. The streets were intersecting through the city and running to 12 different gates. The Euphrates River ran through the city. There were tremendous levees in the city. There was all of these incredible palaces.

There were the Hanging Gardens which were the first that we know of in ancient times of an air-conditioned building. Unbelievable how he did it. With all the greenery at the top and the water tripping through and it air-conditioned the whole thing. He built it to please his wife. Men have done stranger things to please their wives.

Actually, you know what he did? In the middle of the city, he literally on a flat plane in the middle of the desert he built a 400 foot mountain for his wife and turned it into the Hanging Gardens to keep her cool. And she could climb up to the top and just sit there and soak up the wonderful cool air by a great big huge ten-foot wide staircase.



And I don't even have time to go into all the rest of it. There was gold everywhere and brass everywhere and it was just something else. And he got up there and looked at it all and just said to himself, "You're the hottest thing since sliced bread. You might as well admit it."

And just like Herod in Acts 12, when those words were in his mouth, it happened. Verse 31, "And while the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven saying, 'Oh, King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken the kingdom is departed from thee.'" God gave him 12 months. At the end of 12 months, that's where he was. God said that's it. "They shall drive thee from men and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make thee eat grass like oxen and seven times shall pass over thee until thou know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will."

You know some people are just hard cases, aren't they? "And the same hour," verse 33, "was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. And he was driven from men and did eat grass like oxen. And his body was wet with the dew of heaven 'till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws." Stop right there.

Pretty awesome event, wouldn't you say? There he is, outside. Everybody can see him. Somehow he was fenced in, crawling around like an animal on the ground eating grass. His hair like the feathers of an eagle. His fingers like bird's claws with their nails thick, crusted, curved. A raving maniac for seven years.

Now I'll tell you something. In a kingdom like that, you've got a lot of grasping underlings. You've got a lot of people who would like to knock off Nebuchadnezzar. But God never let one of those grasping, ambitious nobles in that kingdom lay a hand on that throne. Because God said Nebuchadnezzar would get it back.

If you go later on in the history and you find after Nebuchadnezzar's death, you find an incredible milieu of political intrigue as they try to take over that throne. But for seven years, while the man is a raving maniac, nobody lays a hand on that throne. And I believe God used Daniel in the meantime to control it until it could be given back to him.

I dare say again that all the shahs, and ayatollahs, and Amins, and all the Maos, and Hitlers, and all the rest of the would be people who want to dominate the world and stand on their towers and say how great they are ought to take a great lesson and a good look at Daniel 4 and learn that it is God that gives men the kingdoms they have. God brought him down.

But the story doesn't end here. From the reception of the dream, the recitation of the dream, the revelation, the realization, we come to the restoration. Fabulous. And I want to just very quickly, a couple of minutes we'll be done. Verse 34, notice, "And at the end of the days," what's the next

word? I. Back to the first person. He's back to his senses. "I, Nebuchadnezzar, restored, transformed." What did he do? "I lifted up mine eyes unto heaven. And mine understanding returned unto me. And I blessed the most high, and I praised, and I honored Him who liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion. And His kingdom is from generation to generation."

Oh, man. David ought to put music to that. It sounds like a psalm. "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. And He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. And none can stay His hand or say to Him, 'What doeth thou?'" Oh, he got the message, didn't he? He's transformed.

Jeremiah says, "Thus saith the Lord, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom. And let not a mighty man boast of his might. And let not a rich man boast of his riches. But let him who boasts boast of this that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord.'" And Nebuchadnezzar finally knew it at last.

The love of God and save the high and the mighty if they get humbled. Do you know that? And I'll tell you something. God will humble every man someday. Best that we be humbled while we still have the opportunity to accept his grace, right? Maybe that's how you got saved.

I remember that I was stiff in my neck against God and God threw me out of a car at 75 miles and hour and slammed me down the pavement, slammed in the hospital for three months, and broke me. And out of pride came humility. And out of humility came repentance. And out of repentance came redemption.

And so this is Nebuchadnezzar's own testimony. Verse 36, "At the same time my reason returned to me and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor, and brightness returned unto me. And my counselors and my lords sought unto me. And I was established in my kingdom. An excellent majesty was added unto me."

Now get that. His reason came back. His glorious kingdom, his honor, his brightness returned. And watch this. Even the counselors and the lords sought after him. They didn't say, "Don't go near that raving maniac. He's been freaked out for seven years. Stay away." Everybody accepted him. The kingdom accepted him. The whole deal as if nothing had happened.

"And I was established. And excellent majesty was added unto me. All that a king could be. But I had the right reaction. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, what do I do with my life? I praise. I extol. I honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth and His ways justice. And those that walk in pride, He is able to humble." Did he get the message? Well, you know it.

You want to know something, folks? You may meet Nebuchadnezzar in heaven. And then when you're there, you can get him together with Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and you can discuss as long as you want what went on in the fiery furnace and everywhere else.

What a great truth. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. I close with a poem. Listen. Like a bird that trails a broken wing, I have come home to thee. Home from a flight in freedom that was never meant for me. And I who have known far spaces and the fierce heat of the sun ask only the shelter of thy wings now that my day is done. Like the bird that trails a broken wing, I have come home at last. Oh, hold me to thy heart once more and hide me from my past.

Let's pray together. May I pray a prayer as we close of an old puritan and may it be out prayer. Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, thou hast brought me to the valley of vision where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights. Hemmed in by mountains of my sin, I behold thy glory. Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the victorious soul, that to have nothing is to possess everything, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive.

Lord, in the day times, stars can be seen from deepest wells. And the deeper the wells, the brighter the stars. Let me find thy light in my darkness, thy life in my death, thy joy in my sorry, thy grace in my sin, thy riches in my poverty, thy glory in my valley. In Christ's name. Amen.

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