

Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

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[0 : 00] Chapter 4 is a long chapter that we read in the book of Daniel. And we read about Daniel's dream and the interpretation of it.

And then it says to us in verse 28, All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.

And the king answered and said, Is not this the great Babylon which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?

While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken, the kingdom has departed from you.

Then at verse 34 we see at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven. My reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honoured him who lives forever.

[1 : 00] This is one of the many remarkable incidents among many of these remarkable incidents that are recorded for us about this tyrant king, this majestic king, King Nebuchadnezzar.

We find in the book of Daniel it is a book that fascinates people. It's a book with many visions and many extraordinary experiences and incidents.

It's a book like the book of Revelation that has captured people's minds down throughout the years.

And it's very interesting that this man, who was the dominant force in the world, this man Nebuchadnezzar, the king over the great Babylonian empire, which at that time was the great dominant force and power in this world, that God is working in his life for the good of the world and for the good of the church.

Because some of what was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar is still of great encouragement to us today. And so Nebuchadnezzar was being brought very slowly to learn and to understand who the living and true God was.

He was a slow learner. He didn't learn all these things immediately. And I suppose he's like ourselves. We're often slow learners as well. God has to teach us lessons over and over and over again.

[2 : 45] Lessons we think we've learned. Lessons that we think we understand. And yet it doesn't take much for us to realize that actually we haven't learned them at all.

And that was certainly true with regard to Nebuchadnezzar. Because by the end of chapter 2 you think, this man has come to a great understanding of who God is.

He looks like somebody who has bowed down before God, the living and true God, and has elevated the living and true God above all other gods. And that he has seen sufficient and understood sufficient of what Daniel was able to reveal to him to make a great statement regarding the living and true God.

But as chapter 2 goes on into 3 and then into 4, we realize that actually he hasn't really learned that much. Now as we know, Daniel, along with his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, was taken from, he was a Hebrew, and as we know, there was a lot of people captured when the Babylonian Empire ransacked Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, killed many people, but also took many captive.

And these, they certainly took the cream of the young people, the young brains, the young talent from Judah, and their aim was to indoctrinate them and to get them used to the ways and the practices of Babylon and then to use them for the good of the empire.

[4 : 27] And they changed the names, Daniel's name, that's when he was changed from Daniel to Belshazzar and so on. And one of the remarkable things about Daniel's life, one of the things certainly that I find so encouraging is that we live in a day where a lot of people, and I suppose I've

said it myself, where we're liable to blame the climate, the current spiritual climate or the lack of a spirituality in the climate, and to say, well, we live in a day that's where Christianity is being pushed further and further out of society.

We live in a fairly decadent society. We live in a fairly idolatrous society. And it's very easy to begin to say, well, nationally, it's tough being a Christian.

And we can sometimes blame the way things are on our own lack of effort and lack of discipline and our own lack of seeking the Lord and say, well, it's tough today.

People can say, I remember 30 years ago it was so much easier to pray. It was so much easier to be a Christian than it is today. Well, that might be true to a certain extent, but that doesn't excuse us because here is Daniel living in one of the most decadent, idolatrous cultures ever.

Here is a man who's living right at the very heart. He's in the very heartbeat. He's somebody that the actual king has taken, changed his name to become a name representing the gods of Babylon and who has tried to indoctrinate this man into the culture, into the customs, into the ways.

[6 : 22] And here is Daniel who is serving the king. Living in this society and yet, when you go through the Bible, we're hard pushed to find somebody who lived closer to the Lord than Daniel did.

Who was able to serve the king, to live in the state, to be part of that society, and yet to live a completely spirit-filled life.

somebody whose main focus in life was upon the Lord. And I think he's a great example to us of how a person can live within the society that we are living in today so that we cannot excuse where we are and the culture and the society and the customs of today and say, oh well, it's tough being a Christian.

It was far, far, far tougher for Daniel. Daniel, in fact, when you go to chapter 6, there was a decree set throughout the land forbidding prayer.

If you were seen to be praying, you were going to be put into the den alliance. That was tough. And yet Daniel maintained this spirituality right throughout in this culture that was so opposed to the living and through God.

[7 : 47] Now, as we know if we go through the chapter, and I know you're all familiar with the chapters within Daniel. You remember how in chapter 2, this man, King Nebuchadnezzar, had a dream.

And you remember the dream there was gold and silver and bronze and part iron, part clay. And if Daniel was able to tell that this was representing the great empires that were to come, which we know in history as it unfolds, Babylonian was at the top, then there was the Medes and Persians, then the Greek Empire, and then the Roman Empire.

And during the time when there was this empire which was part iron, part clay, which was representing the Roman Empire, there was this stone that was cut without hands that came down and crashed into this huge image.

And this stone grew and grew and grew and filled the whole earth. And of course, we know what that was. That is God's kingdom which was established during the time of the Roman Empire.

Part iron, part clay, it was during that time when this amazing vision was given to Daniel, to Nebuchadnezzar. And so, we know that this is when Jesus Christ was born into this world, it was during the time of the Roman Empire, and his kingdom which has been established ever since has grown and grown and grown.

[9 : 18] Now, after that particular time, we find that Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed with Daniel. He saw that Daniel was different to all the other magicians and astrologers and enchanters and soothsayers and all the other people in the land who were able or often would say that they could interpret dreams and tell the future and all these things.

Nebuchadnezzar also, it's very interesting, we're told that in chapter 1, spent time with Daniel. He spent time with the wise men. And he found Daniel and his three friends wiser and better than any of the other people in the land.

So here's this massive man, this Nebuchadnezzar, he goes down in history as one of the great leaders ever in this world, this tyrant who holds the power of life and death just with a nod of his head, dependent upon his mood.

He could just, if he got up in a bad mood and said, I want rid of A, Y, X, Y, Z, he could do that. He had total authority and power. And yet we find him sitting with Daniel, with his friends, listening to them, discussing things with them.

I mean, it's quite remarkable, quite amazing. But as we say, despite all the influence of Daniel and his three friends, and despite the revelation that was given to him in chapter 2, we find that in chapter 3, the influence didn't last very long.

[11:02] And we find that Nebuchadnezzar made a huge image himself, and maybe it was something to do with the image he had seen in the vision. Remember how he commanded everybody to bow down, fall down before it.

If they didn't, they were going to be thrown into the burning, fiery furnace. And you remember Daniel's three friends refused. You give them another chance, they refused.

They were thrown into the burning, fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar, being the tyrant that he was, came to watch. And even the men who threw Daniel's three friends into the burning, fiery furnace, they themselves were caught up and burnt with the fire.

It was so intense. He did seven times. And yet as Nebuchadnezzar looked in, he saw not three but four men walking.

And again he began to shake because he knew he was in the presence of someone far greater. What he was seeing shouldn't be happening. And he recognized that this was God.

[12:08] Of course we believe it was a revelation, a theophany of the Lord Jesus that he was there with the three men within the burning, fiery furnace.

But the thing with Nebuchadnezzar, again at the end of chapter 3, he makes great declarations regarding the living and true God. He's becoming more and more and more impressed.

But you see, sympathy doesn't equal surrender. You can be as sympathetic to the Christian faith and yet not surrender to the king.

maybe there's somebody like that here tonight. All your sympathies go out towards the Christian faith. You think so much of Jesus Christ.

Of all the characters in history that have ever been, Jesus is the one who has impressed you most. You believe, you go to the Bible, you read through the Gospels and you're so impressed by Jesus and there are actually times that you speak to the Lord and you say this and you say that.

[13:18] And you have this enormous sympathy but you still don't have the surrender where you haven't yet bowed down before the Lord and said to the Lord, Lord, be king of my heart.

that's a hard thing. That's what we don't want to give up is our own will. It's a last thing we want to give in. We don't want to give up.

We want to hold on. Well, here's this man Nebuchadnezzar and he was not used to giving in to anybody. His will was law.

Whatever he willed, he did. But there was a greater will that he was coming to discover. was far, far greater than his will.

And that's what we find here in chapter 4 that God is going to break this man. After all he has shown him, he's going to break him. And so as we see Nebuchadnezzar had this amazing dream and it really it shook him.

[14:25] And the whole thing was just too much for him. And so he calls as is usual for all the wise men and the astrologers and the enchanters and everybody to come in and to tell him what does it all mean.

You know, it's quite interesting that the one person that he doesn't call is Daniel. Not until later on. I find that initially quite amazing.

because it says in verse 8 at last Daniel came in because it tells us that he made a decree in verse 6 that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me that they might interpret the image the dream magicians enchanters called the ends and so on.

And I told but they could not make known to me its interpretation. At last Daniel came in. That's why Daniel wasn't brought in to the last.

I think I know. Nebuchadnezzar knew as well because I think Nebuchadnezzar was scared of what Daniel would say.

[15:37] Nebuchadnezzar knew who Daniel was. He knew who Daniel believed in. Daniel was a man of great integrity and great uprightness and great honesty and he was going to say it just as it was.

And I think that's what was wrong with Nebuchadnezzar. He was scared. And that's why he said I want everybody else. I want to meet with everybody else. And he was wanting the enchanters and the those who would give him a good message to make him feel good.

None of them could do. And at the end it's Daniel who comes. And I believe that there are a lot of people like that with regard to church with regard to the Bible with regard to the Christian faith. I think that throughout the, I'm sure it's happened in this church and it's happened in many of the churches in this town and throughout the island and all over the place. Many people stop coming to church because they don't like what they hear.

That's the bottom line. They don't particularly like what they hear because some of what they hear makes them feel uncomfortable. Sometimes people stop reading the Bible because it makes them feel guilty.

[16:56] Now, the great thing is that the Lord doesn't make us just feel guilty in order to leave us riddled with guilt. The Lord doesn't just communicate things to us when we come to church in order to make us feel bad and leave us there.

His ultimate aim is always, always, to make us right with himself and ultimately to make us feel good.

Sometimes we have to be made to feel bad before we'll feel good. And that's what God does. That's what conviction of sin is all about. It is not in order just to make you feel bad and leave you there. It is in order to make you feel bad in order that eventually you will be made to feel good because you're right with God. And so a lot of people far too often they stop reading their Bibles and they stop coming to church because of this very thing.

Down the way here is Daniel and Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar. He just tells it to him straight. And what I love about Daniel is that he doesn't want to do this.

[18:09] This dream and he says I think Daniel, this shows us really what he's like. And he's saying that Daniel is dismayed.

See in verse 19. He was dismayed for a while and his thoughts alarmed him. And Daniel is kind of saying I wish this wasn't going to happen to you.

I wish this was going to happen to your enemies. I find this quite remarkable. Here's this as we say this tyrant king. He is brutal.

And yet you see Daniel standing before him. This man has the power of life and death in his hand and could order Daniel's death like that in a moment if he didn't like what Daniel was saying.

And yet there's an authority about Daniel that affects and impacts Nebuchadnezzar. And Daniel's heart, this shows us what a great man he is.

[19:10] He loves the king. He loves this tyrant brute. He loves him. And he's saying I wish this was for somebody else king and not for you. And you know where true love is, it's so infectious, it's so powerful, it impacts.

Because Nebuchadnezzar realizes that Daniel loves him, doesn't want to have to give this message but is still going to do it. He says on you go Daniel, just tell me.

And this is what true love does, true love wins through. And that's where we have to be even with the gospel. Because love has to tell people the truth.

Love has to tell people there's a hell. Love has to tell people that you have to get right with God. All these things have to be told. Because out of love, not for any twisted reason, it's because it's the truth.

it's passionate. And so Daniel is here telling Nebuchadnezzar. Now we see that a year later, we find Nebuchadnezzar. Time is going.

[20:20] He's walking around the walls and having time to go and it's worth examining if you get somewhere, if you can Google it or read about it, just what Babylon was like in the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar. And he's going around and he's standing there in this moment of great glory and pride. And he's looking around this magnificent city.

And he's looking right out into the plains beyond it. And thinking of this vast empire. And he says, oh, it's all mine. And I have built it by the power of my own hands.

What am I to devise? And he's blowing himself up in his mind with regard to who he is and bang, all of a sudden, what was prophesied takes place.

And he loses his reason, not altogether but largely. And he becomes, as we're told there, just like a beast. Boanthropy, I think it's called.

[21:25] There's a person becomes like a cow and actually can be making mooing sounds going around where they begin to think that they have become a cow.

And so we find that this amazing king has all of a sudden gone from the might of his palace and he's wandering about with the cows out in the fields for, well, I'd say, seven periods.

And he's there for so long that his hair is down like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws. And he's there until, what does he do?

Well, we're told until he lifted up his eyes to heaven. Verse 34, at the end of the days, I never had lifted my eyes to heaven. But before that, Daniel makes an appeal to him.

Notice in verse 27, Daniel, say to Nebuchadnezzar, this is a judgment that's going to come upon you, but you can keep that back by just repenting before God.

[22 : 55] Repent to your sin. Start living in an upright way. Start loosing, start being merciful to people. Because he lived, he was so oppressive.

Start practicing being merciful to people. But so we find that Nebuchadnezzar doesn't, and here we find that at the end of the days, he lifted up his eyes to heaven.

And then we find that Nebuchadnezzar goes on to make some of the most amazing recorded statements of who God is.

Because this is what he says, my reason returned to me. That's when his reason returned when he lifted up his eyes. And I blessed the most high God and praised him and honored him, him who lives forever.

It's one of the great essential discoveries that we have to make is the eternity of God. That he is the one who is underived. He is self-existent.

[24 : 00] He isn't being sustained by anybody else. All life is derived from him. Nothing comes into being without his express command.

You're here and I'm here because of his command and will. And we will be until he commands otherwise. Everything is under his authority, his rule, his dominion, his control.

Whether we like it or not, that's how it is. And Nebuchadnezzar came to understand that. It's quite amazing. Way, way back, this tyrant king comes to understand the authority, the rule, the majesty, the dominion, the glory, the authority of God.

God. And so we find that he comes to see the unchanging nature of God. For his dominion is an everlasting dominion.

And his kingdom endures from generation to generation. See, we live in a world of change. We change. We're children. Then we're adults.

[25 : 07] And before we know it, if we're spared, we're beginning to fade into old age. It all happens so, so quickly. But here is the living and true God.

He is unchanging throughout the generations. Generations come and go. Kingdoms come and go. Nations rise and fall.

But God remains the same forever and ever and ever. Nebuchadnezzar has come to understand that. And this kingdom that he has is an everlasting kingdom.

you know how true it is. They tried to put Jesus to death 2,000 years ago. And they thought logically, get rid of Jesus. We got rid of him.

That's it. That will be the end. Just get rid of Jesus. And that's the end. How wrong that Jesus they tried to get rid of and those who followed him.

[26 : 03] As we saw and as it says in Daniel of this stone that grew and grew and grew and grew and continued and beginning to fill the whole world. And that's where we are today with millions and millions and millions and millions of followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's an everlasting kingdom. Thy kingdom hath none end at all and doth through ages all remain.

And then he says all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing.

He's looking around and he's saying Lord you're everything. It's like what Isaiah said. Isaiah looked on the nations of the world as a drop in a bucket.

Isn't that quite a thought? You put one wee drop of water in a bucket and look at it and you say that's how Isaiah contrasted and compared the vastness of God in eternity to the nations of this world.

and that is what's so hard for us often to understand to comprehend. So he in this morning just of the holiness and it's in many ways tying in with where Manoah and his wife were being brought where they came to that place where they fell down before the Lord and they saw the Lord for who he was.

[27 : 27] Well that's what Nebuchad Nedzer did. He came to see the Lord for who he was and who he is. There are many many things that we could say but of Nebuchad Nedzer we'd say of all his great discoveries and all his great projects the greatest discovery he ever made was that as he says himself here of the living and through God he does according to his will among the host of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand or say to him what have you done?

And you notice what the Lord did for Nebuchad Nedzer this is the last thing see what it says at the same time my reason returned to me and for the glory of my kingdom my majesty and splendor returned to me my counselors and my Lord sought me and I was established in my kingdom and still more greatness was added to me I love that still more greatness was added to me this is the rule of the kingdom seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all the other things will be added to you and here here's this tyrant brute of a king who has been so humbled by God and has made some of the most awesome declarations regarding the majesty and the eternity and the glory of God God reestablished him in his kingdom and made him even greater still it's an amazing God we worship and I pray that all of us will come to know more and more of God's greatness and glory and majesty let us pray Lord our God we we pray that we might be humbled in your presence and to realize that we are before a God like whom there is no other and we pray that we may be able to see more and more of you and we pray Lord that you will deal graciously with us we pray to bless all the young children today that were here and those who were presented for baptism we pray to bless parents as they seek to instruct and to teach their children well and we pray Lord that these days will be a social blessing to them and to all of us as we reflect even upon all that took place this morning we pray to bless

Malcolm as he speak to the fellowship tonight about the work of Steadfast Global and we pray to encourage that work we ask Lord to be with us in everything do us good guide us as we journey on taking away our sin in Jesus name Amen