

- This is **one of the most amazing chapters in all of scripture**. It is written as an affidavit of a Gentile king. He published this testimony throughout his empire, the then known world, to make sure everyone would know of the Most High God he had met and experienced personally. This king is truly a changed man, and he wants everyone to know why, and more importantly, WHO.
- Nebuchadnezzar is most likely in his 70's at this time, and nearing the end of his reign, and his life.
- Daniel has been in Babylon for about 40 years here, and is probably well into his 50's. He and Nebuchadnezzar had **forged a strong relationship**, and most likely a friendship as we see by Daniel's reaction to the events of this chapter.
- The events in this chapter are written by Nebuchadnezzar, told in flashback, and intended to give glory to El Elyon.
- Not only is this chapter a tribute to the God of Daniel and Israel, it is also a very clear revelation of exactly what God thinks of pride. God will go to great lengths to "cure" man from pride, saving him from certain doom. He certainly did so in this king's case, and now Nebuchadnezzar is giving God the glory. It would not be surprising to find Nebuchadnezzar in heaven one day!
- There is a very interesting **passage in Job that seems like a strange prophecy** of this particular chapter and its events: *"In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds, he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, to turn man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride, to preserve his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword."* (Job 33:15-18). This is an eerie precursor to exactly what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. Some who experience God's call will answer, even though it takes a lifetime, as Nebuchadnezzar did. Some will not.



¹Nebuchadnezzar the king, To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. ²I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. ³How great are His signs, And how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation.

- These **verses introduce the amazing events of this chapter**. The whole chapter is recorded by Nebuchadnezzar, who personally experienced these things. This is a memo to the entire world, his written testimony.
- The king had been warned about pride, but he did not listen. Consequently God stepped in to teach him the lesson of a lifetime. Nebuchadnezzar is obviously grateful, overwhelmed by the majesty and might of the God he has come to know well. He has the power to reach **"all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell on the earth"** and he is doing so here. What a proclamation!

- **“Peace be multiplied to you...”** This isn’t about world peace, or enforced peace by military strength. This is the peace of our hearts. It is the kind of peace that is obtained when someone knows he or she is a sinner, and yet God still loves and accepts them. This is the peace Paul spoke of in Romans 5:1-2 – **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”** This means there is no longer a gulf of sin between us and God. There is reconciliation, and the peace that comes with that. We are at peace with God. Nebuchadnezzar knew this peace and wanted everyone else to know it, too.
- **“I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me.”** This is Nebuchadnezzar’s personal testimony. El Elyon is no longer the God of Daniel, or the three young Jewish men he captured so long ago. He is Nebuchadnezzar’s God, and he testifies to what this God has done for him personally. This is what all of us are here to do – to give testimony to what God has done for us personally. We are reminded of the verse in Revelation 12:11: **“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”** Our testimonies are powerful. They can rebuff the enemy, and literally save lives.
- Although **his experiences could be termed humiliating**, this king is willing to share them all so that others may also learn his lessons, but also so they will know his God. This should also motivate us to do the same, whenever God provides such an opportunity. This once proud and arrogant king could never have shared such a story unless God had truly changed his heart, which is perhaps the greatest miracle God performs. This chapter is an extreme contrast to what we have known before of this king, and what history has recorded of him. No one is the same after God does His work in individual lives. This chapter is about Nebuchadnezzar’s conviction, and his conversion.

⁴I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. ⁵I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. ⁶Therefore I issued 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. ⁷Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation.

- Nebuchadnezzar had another dream, one that made him afraid. He did the same thing as before (chapter 2) and called in his “wise men” to interpret for him. Apparently he didn’t threaten to kill them this time, and at least he told them the dream. Still, they could not interpret it. Apparently this king has “mellowed” a bit since Chapter 2. He is a changed man as he tells this story.
- We know that **Daniel was the Chief of these “wise men.”** There is a great deal of Talmudic (*the Talmud is a collection of ancient Rabbinic writings and discussions about various issues in orthodox Judaism and serves as one of their main sources for orthodox position*) as well as secular evidence that Daniel founded a group of these wise men that were known as **the Magi**, and made an appearance in Bethlehem almost 600 years later. Perhaps Daniel passed on to them the ancient prophecies about the coming Messiah. For some reason, at this point, Daniel was apparently not among these wise men when they were called.



⁸*But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before him, saying: ⁹“Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation.*

- *“But at last Daniel came before me ...”* Nebuchadnezzar calls **Daniel by his Hebrew name here**. This shows a great deal of respect. He goes on to call him by his Babylonian name (Belteshazzar) as well, since the rest of the world (to whom this proclamation was directed) would know him by that name. *“...according to the name of my god...”* does not necessarily mean that Bel was still “his god.” This was the god of the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar now has a new God...the one true God.
- We don’t know why Daniel was not there with the other wise men. But Nebuchadnezzar knew from experience that where others failed, Daniel could interpret and so he finally appeared. It could be that Daniel had risen so high up in the government structure that he no longer “hung out” with the wise men, but was “on call” for the king at any time.
- *“...in him is the Spirit of the Holy God...”* Some translations say this should read “the spirit of the holy gods” (plural, uncapped), indicating that Nebuchadnezzar is merely acknowledging that the God of heaven is one of the gods, and probably the greatest. However, there are other indications in this chapter and elsewhere that he indeed recognized God as a singular, almighty God. The words used are QADDISH ELOAH, Aramaic for QADHOSH (Kadosh) ELOHIM in Hebrew – the Holy God as consistently used through the Old Testament.
- *“...no secret troubles you...”* Daniel’s reputation for the interpretation of dreams is well-known at this point. This is an interesting phrase. It means, along with the comment about the Spirit of the Holy God, that God dwells in Daniel, and reveals secrets that no one else knows.

¹⁰*“These were the visions of my head while on my bed: “I was looking, and behold, A tree in the midst of the earth, And its height was great. ¹¹The tree grew and became strong; Its height reached to the heavens, And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. ¹² Its leaves were lovely, Its fruit abundant, And in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, And all flesh was fed from it.*

- These verses contain **the subject of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream**. It is about a tree that grew tall to heaven, wide enough to fill the earth. The tree was majestic and beautiful, abundantly full of fruit for all. The beasts and birds found sanctuary under and in this majestic tree.
- **In Scripture, a tree can represent a number of things** including a man (both commoners and great kings, pharaohs, etc, and a country (Assyria). The use here is both man and country. It implies a great and powerful world leader and empire. We will soon see it is Nebuchadnezzar himself.

¹³*“I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven.*

- **Who, or what is this “watcher?”** There is a great deal of speculation and disagreement about the identity of these “watchers.” The Chaldean word used here is “iyr” which literally means a watcher, or a guardian, and is usually used to imply an angel or messenger. Are they angels? We aren’t told directly, except they work for the God of Heaven. But this has given rise to some very interesting speculation. There is disagreement about different orders in the angelic kingdom.
- The Jewish Talmud teaches that God has a council of created angels who rule over matters and issue decrees in much the same way as the Jewish Sanhedrin did during the earthly life of Jesus. There even seems to be a hierarchy of angels who rule over some or all of the nations.

- We also know that the enemy has his minions trying to foul up God’s plans. There are other interesting ideas about these “watchers.” Before we go on to the commentary below, we must remember that this watcher is qualified by the added description of a “holy one.” This watcher works for God, and does His will. *But are there others that don’t??*

▪ **COMMENTARY:** “American-born Beit Shemesh (a city in Israel) resident Barry Chaimish, a self-professed UFOlogist, says, ‘Israel is recognized as an international UFO hot spot with an unsurpassed quantity and quality of evidence.’ In January 1995, a crew from Paramount TV’s ‘Sightings’ program came to Israel to film an episode and ended up with enough material for three, two of which have aired to a global audience estimated at 60 million. UFOlogists are at a loss to explain their lack of sightings in Israel’s near neighbors; it is as if the aliens, unlike most earthlings, are aware of Israel’s borders.”

- **COMMENT ON THE COMMENTARY:** If we could see the spirit world in action we would be overwhelmed. The spiritual realm is more real than our physical world, and there is a great deal happening there. The Scriptures are loaded with references to this fact. Too bad that so many people are willing to believe in UFO’s and strange para-normal stuff, but are completely unwilling to believe in God. *These watchers* are what we could call “angelic” since they are messengers and they act on God’s behalf. We know that some angels are not “holy” and have fallen away from God, doing not HIS business, but that of the enemy.
- **More about these “watchers,” when Daniel interprets this dream, coming later.**

¹⁴He cried aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, And the birds from its branches.¹⁵ Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, Bound with a band of iron and bronze, In the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, And let him graze with the beasts On the grass of the earth.¹⁶ Let his heart be changed from that of a man, Let him be given the heart of a beast, And let seven times pass over him.



- The “watcher” decrees that this **beautiful tree is to be chopped down and all its branches cut off.** Even the leaves are to be stripped and the fruit scattered. This tree will lose its glory completely and end up as a stump in the field.
- Although the tree is to be chopped down, **it is NOT to be uprooted.** Binding the tree with a band of iron and bronze may indicate it is to be preserved for future growth. Many trees will put forth new life when their stumps are left intact. Perhaps the binding served to further protect the stump from rotting or splitting apart. Some speculate that this is actually a reference to chains that may have bound Nebuchadnezzar when suffered a mental disorder. That’s coming up in a minute. At any rate this stump is now to remain outside, covered with “the dew of heaven.”
- **“Let his heart be changed from that of a man, Let him be given the heart of a beast...”** Notice that now the tree is no longer an “it.” The pronoun “He” is used to indicate this tree is a man. And this man will be changed from having a heart of a man to the heart of a beast. This means the man will believe he is a beast. It is no wonder that Nebuchadnezzar was troubled by this dream. He may have recognized himself already.

- **“...And let seven times pass over him.”** This is a period of time that Nebuchadnezzar would have the heart of a beast. Throughout the book of Daniel and other biblical writings, the use of the word “time” always means one year. Multiple years is “times.” In Daniel 7:25 we find this verse, dealing with the end of time: *“He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.”* A time is a year, times (the plural in a “both” sense here, not multiple sense) is two years, and half a time is a half of a year. Therefore a time, times and half a time add up to three and one half years. Likewise, the “times” used in chapter 4 refers to years. The total time that Nebuchadnezzar suffered under this illness was 7 years.
- **The same “time” usage is found in Revelation 12:14:** *“But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.”* Both of these time references (Daniel and Revelation) refer to a period of 3½ years (which in this case is “The Great Tribulation”- as Jesus referenced it) period, or half of the 7-year Tribulation. There are many portions of Daniel that align with the book of Revelation. This is just one small example.

¹⁷“This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.”

- **“In order that the living may know ...”** This verse is the key to this chapter. The main purpose of this chapter, and Nebuchadnezzar’s experience, was declared to be that men might understand something. *There are three things to know from this verse, remarkably appropriate today.*
 - 1) **“...the Most High rules in the kingdom of men,....** God has not abdicated and withdrawn from this world or the universe. The universe has not gotten away from Him. Once again, Psalm 2 is appropriate here, because it is a good reminder of this fact: *“The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."* (Psalm 2:2-6) God has a purpose in the world, and that purpose will be fulfilled. Nations rise and fall to teach men that God rules and overrules the kingdoms of this world. He even laughs at man’s vain attempts to be in control. This verse states one of the main lessons Nebuchadnezzar learned: **GOD IS SOVEREIGN. Period.**
 - 2) **He “Gives it to whomever He will,....”** The various political powers think they put men in power, but God sets up and manipulates these kingdoms according to His will. He gives power to whomever He chooses, and often His purposes and plan are beyond our understanding.
 - 3) Now here’s the kicker! He **“...sets over it the lowest of men.”** This third statement should be humbling to all political wanna-be’s—and to all of mankind. God says that He puts on the thrones of this world the “basest” (KJV), or lowest, of men. In other words, God gives us the kind of rulers we deserve and the kind we want. History is littered with rulers who have demonstrated the same evil intent, arrogance, pride and ambition as Nebuchadnezzar. God says He sets over the kingdoms the lowest of men: the years of history since Nebuchadnezzar have demonstrated the truth of this statement. **COMMENTARY: People complain about our government, our Congress, and all that sort of thing. My friend, we put them in their offices; we voted for them. God lets the basest of men come to power. That ought to be humbling to all of us—from Washington, D.C., on down.** (McGee)
- This verse should be **very unsettling and humbling to those with political aspirations**. Their intent better be to give God the glory and work for Him, or they will be numbered among the “lowest” of men, subject to the same lessons that Nebuchadnezzar had to learn!

¹⁸*“This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.”*

- Nebuchadnezzar restates the fact that no one else could interpret this dream except Daniel, because Daniel had something the others didn't have - the Spirit of the Holy God.
- **About 40 years have gone by since Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel met** under less than perfect circumstances. Daniel was a young Jewish “prisoner of war” and Nebuchadnezzar was the newly crowned king of the world. But in those 40 years many amazing things have happened, and Daniel has shown himself to be a *“servant of the Most High God,”* able to do things no one else can do, a faithful administrator, and now, most likely a trusted confidante, and a friend. Nebuchadnezzar has mellowed with age, but has also witnessed the ability of Daniel's God.

¹⁹*Then Daniel, whose name was Belshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, “Belshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.” Belshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!”*

- Apparently Daniel **immediately understood the meaning of the king's dream**. His first reaction was astonishment. The word used here means to be astounded, shocked and surprised in amazement. As we see the dream fulfilled, it is easy to see why Daniel was so shocked. This was a pretty strange dream, and a very strange experience for this arrogant king.
- *“...was astonished for a time, ...”* The KJV says that Daniel was astonished “for one hour.” This can literally mean an hour, or a long moment. No matter how long, it is clear that Daniel was very troubled by what he knew the dream meant. The king must have noticed this and didn't want Daniel to be troubled by it or to withhold the meaning of it from him.
- Because of Daniel's reaction to this dream, their long history (40 years) together, and Daniel's nature, **it is probable that Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar have a close relationship**. Daniel has become the king's most trusted counsel. He holds a very high position in the kingdom of Babylon, and is the king's personal representative. Daniel's very nature indicates that he probably has behaved in a way that has endeared him to this king. Daniel is very troubled by what he knows will happen to Nebuchadnezzar. An enemy would not have this reaction. He is so troubled he doesn't really want to tell the king. But, understanding the content, and why God has ordained this, he knows he must.
- Notice that Nebuchadnezzar is using both the Babylonian name (Belshazzar) and his Hebrew name (Daniel) in this public edict to his kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar wants to recognize Daniel, and Daniel's God. He uses both names so everyone will know who this is. Daniel was most likely very recognized throughout the kingdom, but he was known as Belshazzar to most, not Daniel. The use of Daniel is out of respect and honor for who Daniel really is. This king has certainly changed.
- The **first dream that Daniel interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar was one that exalted him**. He was, after all, the “head of gold.” This must have inflated his already huge ego. However, this dream is much different. Daniel knows this king will be taken to the very lowest he can go, and God is doing this for His purpose, to tell not only this prideful king, but the entire world something very important.
- *“My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!”* Daniel is so upset by the meaning of this dream that he wishes it on the king's enemies. Some commentators have suggested that this is merely using some tact and diplomacy to “break the news” to the king. However, due to their long relationship, Daniel probably truly felt this way.

²⁰*The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth,* ²¹*whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home—* ²²*it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.*

- *“The tree that you saw, ...it is you, O king...”*, Daniel tells the king that he tree represents him. Like the tree, he has become strong and powerful, a world ruler. His empire has filled the then-civilized world. They know of his “greatness.” God is the One who raised up Nebuchadnezzar, and at this point in his reign, his “dominion” fills the earth, just like the tree in the dream.
- Keep in mind that when the Bible addresses empires, dominions and powers, it is primarily speaking of those in the closest proximity to Israel, or those that directly influence or govern Israel. **Some may ask “what about other kingdoms, like the Chinese dynasties?”** The Bible states that Jerusalem and Israel are the center of God’s world – the world as He sees it. Ezekiel tells us what God says about this: *“This is what the Lord GOD says: This is Jerusalem. I have put her at the center of the nations with countries all around her.”* (Ezekiel 5:5) The Bible does not deal with nations that do not impact God’s plan for Israel, and eventually for the whole earth. Other powers, empires, and dynasties have come and gone. They will not be referenced in scripture unless they have some role in God’s overall plan for human government, AS IT REVOLVES AROUND HIS CENTER, JERUSALEM. This is a critical point to understanding God’s view of this world, and one to remember as we interpret all of prophecy. We must keep a “middle east centric” position when we look at Bible prophecy regarding nations and empires, and especially as we interpret prophecy. Jerusalem is at the center of the earth as far as God is concerned. Historical earthly kingdoms will only be referenced if they play roles in the execution of God’s plan for Israel, and the eventual establishment of His kingdom on earth.

²³*And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him’;*

- **Daniel is essentially repeating the content of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream**, in order to make his interpretation. We spoke of “watchers” earlier. The “watcher” and “holy one” are of an order of God’s created intelligences. They apparently administer the affairs of this world, according to God’s will, and do indeed “watch” what happens in our world. The Book of Daniel makes it very clear that God has created intelligences who administer His universe and this world in which we live.
- **These watchers see all, hear all, and tell all.** Many people, including believers, today think they can live in secret - that no one is watching. There is no such thing as privacy when it comes to God and His earth. In Psalm 139:7-12 we read *“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.”* We should remember that there are “watchers” watching.
- Someone once said **“Secret sin on earth is open scandal up yonder in heaven.”** Something to remember!

²⁴this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: ²⁵They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.

- Daniel immediately **provides the interpretation, even though the meaning troubled him greatly.** Bottom line, Nebuchadnezzar is the tree, and he is going down. Not only will he be “chopped down” but he will believe he is a beast, and he will be essentially turned out to pasture with the other beasts of the field. He will even eat grass like oxen. He will live outside and be “wet with the dew of heaven.” He won’t know who he is. He will believe he is just another beast.
- *“...and seven times shall pass over you,...”* This condition will last for seven years. Nebuchadnezzar will remain outside, living as an ox (or other beast of the field) throughout this time.

²⁶And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules. ²⁷Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

- *“...your kingdom shall be assured to you,...”* Nebuchadnezzar has just received the worst news of his life. He trusts Daniel, so he knows that this interpretation is probably going to happen just as Daniel described. However, at this point, **Daniel offers a small ray of hope.** He indicates that the command to leave the stump and roots means that Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom will be returned to him, but only after one condition: *“...after you come to know that Heaven rules.”* There is a purpose to this experience, and this is it. Nebuchadnezzar will come to know that God is Sovereign. Simple message, but so hard to learn, for all of us.
- *“Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you;...”* Daniel is very troubled by the interpretation of the dream, and fears for Nebuchadnezzar. He feels compelled to offer some very good advice – Godly advice. *“break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor...”* He tells the king to leave his sins by living righteously. He also tells him to show mercy to the poor. He understands that it is Nebuchadnezzar’s attitude and arrogance, thinking he is above the Most High God, that has earned him this “disciplinary” experience. He is hoping to avoid some of the anguish this king will suffer by turning him away from his sins. This is a scriptural principle. The people of Nineveh repented when Jonah grudgingly put them on notice. They averted God’s judgment at that time, temporarily.
- *“...by showing mercy to the poor....”* When the Jews were brought to Babylon most of them settled along the Chebar River, northeast of the city of Babylon. They were free to live in their own communities, but work was difficult and they were probably conscripted to work on Nebuchadnezzar’s expansive building projects. They were dependent on the Babylonians for work, and this probably left them poor, at least to begin with. Perhaps Daniel is acting as an advocate for his people who were suffering in this way. He was placed in this position for God’s purpose, perhaps largely to look out for the best interest of the Jews, even in exile.

²⁸All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. ³⁰The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?”

- **We jump forward now one year.** It is apparent that nothing has changed for him, and his attitude and pride are as big as ever, perhaps bigger, as he surveys his kingdom.

- Nebuchadnezzar heard Daniel’s interpretation of the dream, and also his plea for him to change his ways and repent. But here he is now still full of pride.
- **“All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ...”** God gave him time to change. He didn’t. Now is the time for the dream to be fulfilled.
- Nebuchadnezzar has **good reason for his pride, at least in our worldly thinking.** Babylon was no small city, and full of incredible splendor and marvelous construction projects he had sponsored. This great city on the plain of Dura was 15 miles square with 350-foot walls that were 87 feet thick. Six chariots could race abreast on the top of the walls, which they did during special games. There was also a second wall inside with a huge moat, filled by the Euphrates river which flowed through the city (this river was used to defeat Babylon literally overnight, which we will discuss in chapter 5).
- A **Babylonian inscription** has been discovered that reveals this pride:

*I, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon,
I am the son of Nabopolassar, King of Babylon.
I who erected the Ezida Temple,
I who built Procession Street,
The street of the Forgiven Son, The Street of Nebu,
And paved it with shimmering stones.
Nebu, you the divine minister, grant me immortality.*
- Nebuchadnezzar was also responsible for one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world – the **Hanging Gardens of Semiramis**. Interesting little note, Saddam Hussein offered great rewards if anyone could figure out how these gardens were irrigated. No one knows, or can even guess!
- Nebuchadnezzar had a great deal to be proud of. Not only was he responsible for this remarkable city, but he was king of the world. It all belonged to him, as God gave everything into his control. However, instead of recognizing the God of heaven as the One in control, Nebuchadnezzar took all the credit. Pride is still detestable to God. **This is the theme of this chapter – God hates pride.**
- **Now God is going to humble him.** He is to be driven out of his palace, out to the pasture where he will make his home and eat with the oxen. However, God has also promised that this “season” of humbling will eventually end (after 7 years), and that Nebuchadnezzar, and his kingdom, would be restored.
- **A LOOK AT PRIDE:** Pride is one of the things God hates, and it is something that, unfortunately, characterizes man. Caesar Augustus said of a city which he captured, *“I found it brick, I left it straw.”* He had utterly destroyed it. Another Caesar made the statement *“I found Rome wood, and I left it marble.”* Pride is the most common human sin. But what does man have to be proud of?
 - Jeremiah 9:23-24 says: *“This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,...”* This is something we should remember – in fact we should remind ourselves of this frequently. Jesus Himself spoke of this sin. **That is why leaven is used as a term for sin, because it “puffs up” the whole “lump.”** It corrupts the whole by puffing up. Leaven is used repeatedly in the old and new testaments as a symbol for sin for this reason (*Passover, Unleavened Bread, the search for Hametz [leavening] practiced even today*). The entire Bible is full of warnings regarding pride. In fact, if Nebuchadnezzar knew God’s Word, he should have paid attention to Proverbs 16:18: *“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”*



- Also, in Proverbs 16, **pride** (or “haughty eyes”) **tops the list of the things God hates**. (See also: Proverbs 6, 1 Corinthians 4:6-7, Philipians 2:3-4, 1 Timothy 6:4-10, 17, James 4:13-17, Proverbs 16:5, 18, 21:24, 26:12, 29:23)
- **WHY does God hate pride?** So much is said about it in scripture there must be a very important reason. To us, on the surface, it doesn’t seem as bad as some other sins, but this one is singled out as one that God hates. So why does God hate sin? **The answer is something to keep in mind – pride is how sin entered the world.** In Isaiah 14:3-14 we read: (*read this carefully, as it contains an amazing amount of information*) **“On the day the LORD gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage, you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ended! The LORD has broken the rod of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers, which in anger struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression. All the lands are at rest and at peace; they break into singing. Even the pine trees and the cedars of Lebanon exult over you and say, “Now that you have been laid low, no woodsman comes to cut us down.” The grave below is all astir to meet you at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you-- all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones-- all those who were kings over the nations. They will all respond, they will say to you, “You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us.” All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you. How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.”**
- We see here a prophecy of the end of the king of Babylon (*not only Nebuchadnezzar here, but his grandson who was on the throne when Babylon fell, in the next chapter*) – but we also see much more than that. God speaks beyond the king of Babylon to one who brought pride to earth, our enemy. God just plain hates pride, and it seems that all those who live in it will be brought down. **We are also given a very interesting account of the fall of our enemy. What brought him down? Pride. What introduced sin into the creation? Pride.** God hates pride and will not tolerate it. But he is also merciful. Nebuchadnezzar’s fall from the pinnacles of his success also afforded him the opportunity for eternal life.
- We should remember the passage in Job 33:17-18: **“...to turn man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride, to preserve his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword.”**
- **Pride creates a huge cavernous gap between us and God.** We stand in the way of His work in our life. We believe we are kings and queens and sit on our own thrones. We keep God away by claiming for ourselves what He has done. This gap cannot be bridged until we surrender to Him.

³¹*While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!”* ³²*And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”*

- **“While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven:...”** Nebuchadnezzar barely got the words out of his mouth, and another voice spoke his sentence. At **that very moment, the king’s illness came upon him**, he believed he was an animal, and therefore lost his kingdom.
- Here is also a restating of the original proclamation from the dream, from Daniel’s interpretation, and now from the voice from heaven.

- Yet another indication that **God always does what He says, and says what He does**. There is nothing “symbolic” here. This is a literal sentence that was literally and completely fulfilled. The voice also reaffirms that all kingdoms are in God’s hand and His control. Nebuchadnezzar has gone from self-proclaimed “king of the world” to eating grass in a field like an ox.

³³That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

- **God always keeps his promises and never goes back on His word.** By this time, Nebuchadnezzar may have forgotten the dream, because we see him surveying his kingdom and admiring himself (full of pride) when God’s prophetic dream was fulfilled. He obviously did not listen to Daniel’s warning a year before.
- What Nebuchadnezzar experienced was a **temporary mental illness** that has been documented throughout history, even today. It is called **“zoanthropy”** (from the Greek “animal” and “man”) where a person believes they are an animal, and lives and acts like one. Many commentators believe Nebuchadnezzar thought himself to be an ox, but the scripture merely says he ate grass *like* an ox. It does not specify the type of animal he believed he was. Many cases of this illness have been documented. People have thought themselves to be animals, and this very unusual condition has been linked to widespread superstitions such as werewolves, animal guardian spirits, vampires, totemism, etc. Many so-called great world leaders have suffered from some sort of madness. However, in this case, God brought on this insanity.
- Some commentators have indicated that Nebuchadnezzar was **prone to a type of insanity** that is often found in these kinds of autocratic rulers. They say that this was a family “skeleton” that is now exposed. However, if we believe that God is sovereign, and that as the narrative tells us, that HE brought this condition upon Nebuchadnezzar, it does NOT imply that the king had this illness prior to this event. What he suffered may occur today, and is a valid form of mental illness, but in this case God is the One who brought this upon Nebuchadnezzar for the purpose of showing the king (and all mankind) that He is Sovereign. We can get lost in the academics of this and forget that God is a miracle worker and does indeed have perfect control. We don’t hear about people suffering from this illness being told by God in a very distinct dream before the event that they would become ill and suffer in this way – for a distinct purpose. **God brought this on.** This was not some “skeleton” in Nebuchadnezzar’s family history.
- This is a sample of such a commentary about this illness: **COMMENTARY: A historian tells us that a number of other world rulers have suffered from some form of mental instability: Antiochus Epiphanes, Charles VI of France, Christian VII of Denmark, George III of England, Otho of Bavaria, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Napoleon. It has also been in the Spanish royal line, the Russian line (among the czars), and also in the English line. Henry VI of England was a real madhatter, and suffered from something similar to hysteria. Hitler also had that problem. And here, the head of gold, Nebuchadnezzar, was a lunatic. He had bats in his belfry. He was not ruling with a full deck in his hands. He was just a little off, if you please. All of this was revealed in his extreme emotionalism—he would move in any direction and to an extreme.**
- We believe that **many world rulers have been subject to this type of insanity because of their evil lust for power, and their self-exaltation.** It is that very lust that causes the illness.



- This is a spiritual and physical consequence for believing in self-power and turning away from God. Many of these rulers have brought this upon themselves, and God has allowed it, or perhaps even brought it, as He did with Nebuchadnezzar.
- This entire account is also a **strong reminder that even in times when we don't "see" God act, He is still very much in control**, and His perfect will is always accomplished.
- Many think that because of Daniel's friendship with the king, **he became Nebuchadnezzar's caretaker** during this 7-year period of humbling by God. There is strong evidence in the Talmud and Rabbinic tradition that this is indeed what happened. Someone would have had to oversee his care. That was probably Daniel.
- Who was running the kingdom at this time? Many also believe that Daniel may have been the one keeping the empire together during this time. He was in the official position to do so, and probably very well-equipped by God for this purpose. In his mercy, God allowed these 7 years to be peaceful for the Babylonian empire.

³⁴And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding 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 is from generation to generation.

- *"And at the end of the time ..."* The promised 7-year period of time was fulfilled. The number 7 is found throughout scriptures, so often we can't begin to enumerate them. Seven means "perfectly complete." This term of insanity for Nebuchadnezzar was perfectly complete in seven years, not one day shorter or longer. We do serve a very precise and very literal God!
- *"...lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me;..."* At the end of his "sentence" Nebuchadnezzar knew where to look. God had given him understanding about what had happened to him, and why. He also knew to immediately thank and honor the one true God.
- Perhaps **God spoke to this man's heart**, even while he lived as a beast of the field. He had understanding of God as the One who is eternal, and whose kingdom never ends.
- History corroborates this event in the life of Nebuchadnezzar: *"Josephus [important Jewish historian] attributes to the Babylonian historian, Berosus, a definite reference concerning a strange malady suffered by Nebuchadnezzar before his death."* (Albert Barnes)

³⁶All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

- **Nebuchadnezzar has learned now that God is running things** - that He is in control of this universe. He accepted this thing that had come to him as the will of God for him, yielding his proud mind to the will of God. That is what a great many world rulers, and believers, need to do today.
- **This king's pride is gone.** He understands that the "inhabitants of the earth" amount to nothing. He now knows that the God of heaven will have His way, according to His will, not man's. No one can change that will, or question His ways. *A very important lesson for all of us.*
- It is interesting that the king would use the phrase, *"the inhabitants of the earth."* This exact phrase is also used 20 times in the book of Revelation, and always refers to the unsaved, the lost, those who consider earth their home, not heaven. In Nebuchadnezzar's use here, perhaps he is saying that without God, all the inhabitants of the earth, all mankind, are nothing. We ARE nothing, without Him. We are cherished, beloved, saved and treasured WITH Him.

- Nebuchadnezzar’s testimony should **remind us of Job’s wonder when God finally responded to him** after the many dry and worthless words of his friends. God teaches men that He alone is sovereign, and his response to Job is one we should remember: (Job 38:1-7) *“Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: ‘Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. ‘Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?’”*
- Likewise, **Job’s answer to God**, after four full chapters of God’s declaration to Job, is also noteworthy. Job learned the same lesson Nebuchadnezzar did – there is no one and nothing above the Most High God. Here is what Job had to say back to God: *“Then Job answered the LORD and said: ‘I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.”* (Job 42:1-3)
- These passages in Job reinforce the main message that Nebuchadnezzar learned: **God is Sovereign.** It is a lesson all of us must learn and remember, as well. Sometimes we forget that.
- There is also another thought to remember here. **God is merciful.** **COMMENTARY: What happened to Nebuchadnezzar was an act of supreme grace on the part of God. The fact that he was put into a catastrophe personally was grace not judgment, because God could have just let him go on like an Adolph Hitler, or some other ruler of the past like Alexander the Great. Many of them built empires and beautified their capitols, cities, etc., and yet, they died lost in their pride.** (Hal Lindsey)
- This idea of God’s mercy in the midst of personal trial is also one to keep in mind when we think about and study the coming Tribulation period. Some ask why would a merciful God allow these things to happen? There will be horrors unthinkable during that time. However, the scriptures tell us that **God desires that no one die apart from Him** (2 Peter 3:9).
- When do we come to God the most? When we are in trouble and need Him. We are quite fine, often forgetting Him, the rest of the time. So God will do everything He can to bring mankind to Himself, even if it means bringing the trials and tribulations on the earth in a concentrated dose at the end of time. There will be a greater soul harvest at that time than any other time in history. Better to suffer the tribulation and find salvation than eternal separation from God. THAT is God’s mercy, not His wrath. His wrath is saved for those who could have had His mercy, and refused it.

³⁶At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. ³⁷Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

- **Not only did Nebuchadnezzar regain his sanity, he regained his kingdom.** This would never have happened without God’s will. Can you imagine any ruler, anywhere, at any time, regaining his kingdom after 7 years of eating grass like an ox in the field? No way. But when God speaks, He fulfills precisely. His kingdom was restored, and he also retained his honor and all the former splendor. He even had added “excellent majesty.” He would probably have been overjoyed just to regain his right mind. In this case God added extra to what had been taken from him. He did the same thing when he restored Job.



- It would have also been highly unlikely to keep such a large world empire intact for seven years without the king in charge. Only God could accomplish this. No outside powers threatened, no internal rebellion arose. God enabled Daniel to run this kingdom smoothly in Nebuchadnezzar's absence. He alone is the one who preserved it.
- ***“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice....”*** Nebuchadnezzar has just related the most personal story, what could have been “my most embarrassing moment” to the entire world. He WANTS the world to know what happened to him and why. Now he makes it clear that despite what God did to him, he is thankful, and will even praise and honor the only King, the “king of heaven.” That is the whole point of telling this story, to inform those in his kingdom that there is another King, one who is completely true and just. One who is in complete control. And this king is grateful. He is the epitome of the “new creature” that God creates in a repentant heart that finds Him. This is truly an amazing story. We should not be surprised to find Nebuchadnezzar strolling the streets of heaven one day.
- And the final words of this worldwide public declaration underscore the king's point: ***“And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.”*** In other words, watch your pride. Dump it, get rid of it. The only One worthy of glory is the King of God, God Almighty. This pointed piece of information, a warning of sorts, is just as applicable today as it was then. Man's heart is only changed when he comes to God on his knees. If he will not change his own heart, then God may intervene as He did with Nebuchadnezzar.
- This lesson about pride is found throughout scripture. Paul cautioned us not to think of ourselves more highly than we should and that advice is just as needful today as it was then. ***“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”*** (Romans 12:3)
- This edict written by a Gentile king is **one of the greatest tributes to the Most High God in all of scripture.** We should read it often, because it is a lesson for us as well.
- Nebuchadnezzar lived about one more year. There is evidence here and other places in scripture that Nebuchadnezzar was saved, that this is a testimony of his conversion. This is the last we read of Nebuchadnezzar, but we may meet him in eternity.

SOME INTERESTING THOUGHTS TO CLOSE...

- **This is not just a story in the Bible.** There are huge amounts of archeological evidence to support not only the actual person, but this event as well. We have referenced the records of Josephus, but there are also inscriptions and a very interesting scroll found in Cave 4 at Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. This references a ***“malignant disease that smote the king of Babylon by the decree of the Most High God for seven years.”*** Once again, scripture is vindicated – and trustworthy.
- There is a great deal to learn from this event. It is a good exercise for you read it over and make a list of the many things that the Holy Spirit would have us know. **It's underlying theme is that God is Holy and God is Sovereign.** He is in control and places rulers and kings where and when he wants them. That is a particularly timely message today. The other underlying theme is the fact that **God hates pride,** and will most definitely bring the prideful down, or as the Word says, “debase” them or bring them low. Why? Verse 17 tells us: ***“...In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.”***
- **POSSIBLE DOUBLE FULFILLMENT?** Some scholars and commentators see a **double fulfillment** in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. As usual, we should be aware of these possibilities as we have seen God communicate truth to us using types and other “similitudes” in scripture.

- Some believe that Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was literally fulfilled the first time when he went mad and acted like a beast in the field. But they also say there is good reason to believe that it **will be fulfilled a second time in the larger sense**, when the Antichrist comes on the scene.
- The Antichrist will be a world leader just like Nebuchadnezzar was. His deeds will also be like those of a madman. He will be so evil that the Bible calls him a beast (Revelation 13). Think about the similarities. Nebuchadnezzar went insane for seven years, and the reign of terror of the Antichrist will be seven years during the Tribulation. The Tribulation will be a time of insanity and confusion.
- Here’s a [sample commentary](#) on this thought:
COMMENTARY: And so the voice that came from heaven and commanded that the tree representing Nebuchadnezzar, the king, be hewed down and cut to the ground, is a picture of the coming of the Lord who will cause the nations to become stark mad in their insane delusion of self-achievement and self-grandeur, and then will follow seven years of the greatest confusion the world has ever known.” (M.R. DeHaan)
- There are too many **likenesses and similarities found throughout the book of Daniel to the Tribulation and end times periods** not to at least consider them. There are also forthright prophecies about these times. Daniel is a critical book to understanding God’s plan for those end times. Not only are these first six chapters of stories portraying actual events, they are also most likely pointing to events that have as yet not occurred, but will in that period we call “the end times.” This is a very common scriptural tool that God uses to point us to His truth.
- May we always know that God is in control. No matter what we see with our eyes, or feel in our emotions, nothing can change that truth.

