

Daniel 4: Tranquility Lost and Recovered

“Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.”

Daniel 4:27

Introduction:

1. This chapter of Daniel is one of the exciting and worshipful chapters in the entire Bible. Humbly enjoy!
2. Let every sober hearer and reader consider their own lives, lest their tranquility be taken away like his.

I. The INTRODUCTION (4:1-3)

- A. Let us consider Nebuchadnezzar briefly to remember all that Scripture says about him.
 1. He had the world’s greatest empire and was a king of kings (2:37-39; Eze 26:7).
 2. God gave him total dominion over many different nations (Jer 25:8-11; 27:1-8).
 3. The Scriptures describe him as the servant of God (Jeremiah 25:9; 27:6; 43:10).
 4. He destroyed Tyre, Egypt, and other nations (Ezekiel 26:7-21; 28:14; 43:8-13).
 5. He shows great zeal and extremity (2:1-9,12 cp 2:46-49; 3:19-22 cp 3:28-30).
 6. Burning Jews on one hand, he gave Jeremiah mercy (Jer 29:20-23 cp 39:11-14).
 7. He did not learn to fear God from Daniel or his three friends (2:46-49; 3:28-30).
- B. This fourth chapter was written in Chaldean as an official proclamation to his empire.
 1. Observe the use of the first person by Nebuchadnezzar (4:1-2,4-18,34-37).
 2. The letter was sent to all people, nations, and languages under his wide reign.
 3. This chapter is a page from the historical archives of the Babylonian Empire.
 4. The king’s new humility was so great that he chose to tell of his terrible ordeal!
- C. Let us consider his opening remarks to fully appreciate the sober reflection he gives.
 1. Usually a terrible and warlike king, this letter opens with a salutation of peace!
 2. He testifies of God’s wonders, as we should (Mk 5:19; Ps 66:16; Dan 6:26-27).
 3. God is known by His judgments (4:3; Ps 9:16; 58:11; 78:1-8; 83:18; 106:21-22).
 4. He calls Jehovah “the high God,” which sets him apart from Babylon’s gods.
 5. How could a man think “it good” to tell details of things so personally horrible?
 6. Observe the exclamation marks! Nebuchadnezzar is praising the Lord strongly!

II. The DREAM (4:4-18)

- A. Nebuchadnezzar had rest and prosperity from God’s blessings upon him (Jer 27:1-8).
- B. God best describes the great wealth, glory, and power of the Babylon empire (2:37-39).
- C. Though confused by the dream, it still frightened the king (4:5; Job 4:12-21; 33:14-19).
- D. His false prophets and pagan devil worshippers could not help, just like before (2:1-13).
- E. Nebuchadnezzar here is no more a believer in the fourth chapter than he was in the first.
 1. He is still appealing to witchcraft for help and wisdom in time of trouble.
 2. He refers to Daniel as having the spirit of the holy gods, but misses Jehovah.
 3. He will know more at the end of this chapter, but he does not know much yet.
- F. Let us consider a few of the details of the dream as told by Nebuchadnezzar here.
 1. The tree was of great height, strength, fairness, fruit, and provided for all flesh.
 2. A watcher and a holy one came down – this is one angel coming from heaven.
 - a. Observe that these are two descriptions of the singular “he” of 4:14.
 - b. Angels are God’s strong ministers doing His commands (Ps 103:20-21).
 - c. They watch what we are doing (Eccl 5:6; I Cor 11:10; I Timothy 5:21).
 - d. And they are particularly involved in government (10:13,20; II Pet 2:11).
 3. The tree is a male person by the use of male personal pronouns by the angel.

4. The stump of the tree's roots was to be preserved by a band of iron and brass.
5. The order is for his heart to be changed from a man's heart to that of a beast.
6. Seven times is seven years by comparison (7:25 cp Rev 13:5 cp 12:6 cp 12:14).
7. Decrees or demands of angels are only by the approval or order of God Himself.
 - a. Angels cannot stand the violation of God's ordained authority hierarchy.
 - b. And the reason for their demand was to teach Nebuchadnezzar a lesson.
 - c. They respect each other, rulers among men, and except us to do so also.
 - d. Lest anyone fear, the holy angels only have wills for God's holy will.

III. The INTERPRETATION (4:19-27)

- A. Daniel was unable to speak for one hour due to astonishment at the interpretation.
- B. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to hear no matter what, but Daniel knew how negative it was.
- C. Let us consider the details of the interpretation as given by Daniel to the great king.
 1. The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar in all his glory as Babylonian sovereign.
 2. The decree was by the most High, rather than merely a bright idea of angels.
 3. For seven years you will be driven from men to live with the beasts of the field.
 4. The band upon the stump of roots is to preserve his kingdom while on vacation!
- D. Daniel immediately implores the king to consider his ways to lengthen his tranquility.

IV. The EVENT (4:28-33)

- A. Twelve months later, long enough for most of us to forget any lesson, the king boasts.
- B. While he was speaking, a voice came from heaven declaring that the dream was reality.
- C. Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest monarch in world history, spent seven years as an animal.
 1. He was driven out of the palace, as he began to act with his new beast's heart.
 2. He did eat grass as oxen eat grass. He was not fed with scraps from the palace.
 3. He was not sheltered in any home or barn, for the dew covered him every night.
 4. His hairs grew out like eagles' feathers, which shows a great bodily change.
 5. His nails grew like birds' claws, or talons. He was now a wild man altogether.

V. The LESSON (4:34-37)

- A. God gave him his understanding back at the end of seven years to lift up eyes to heaven.
- B. The set period of time had already been determined by the Lord before it even began.
- C. There is a combination of God giving him understanding and he submitting to God.
- D. The praise coming from this monarch now is some of the sweetest words to God ever!
- E. God gave him back his reason, his kingdom, his honor, his respect, better than before.
- F. He summarizes the proclamation by his present choice to praise the King of heaven.
- G. There is no evidence Nebuchadnezzar was born again by what we are told in Daniel 4.
 1. Only those bordering on universalism see regeneration in the life of this king.
 2. The Bible says nothing about any lasting change in the life of Nebuchadnezzar.
 3. History says nothing about any revival or reformation in the Babylonian empire.
 4. Reverent faith in God does not prove regeneration by itself (Jas 2:19; Luk 4:34).

Conclusion:

1. God is still in the business of giving beastly hearts to men, as every sodomite shows us (Rom 1:18-32).
2. God continues to deceive and delude those who reject His knowledge (Proverbs 14:14; II Thess 2:9-12).
3. If God judged ignorant Nebuchadnezzar so severely, how severe shall we be judged (Hebrews 2:1).
4. Let us fear the Lord and carefully examine our ways, lest their be a horrible removal of our tranquility.
5. Loving life and seeing good days (long tranquility) is by hating evil and doing good (I Peter 3:10-11).
6. Tranquility can be restored by repentance, as Ahab and Nineveh show (I Kings 21:25-29; Jonah 3:10).