

Daniel 4

- Tonight, we take the next step down the chiastic structure of Chapters 2-7 in the Book of Daniel

- In the chiasm, we've studied steps A and B so far:

A - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world
B - God delivers Daniel's friends from Gentile persecution
C - God humbles the Gentile king (Nebuchadnezzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty
C' - God deposes the Gentile king (Belshazzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty
B' - God delivers Daniel from Gentile persecution
A' - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

- Step A was Chapter 2, where Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream
- The main point of that chapter was to explain God's plan to place Israel under four successive Gentile authorities
- It gave Israel the context to understand their fate in captivity
- In Step B, we studied last time in Chapter 3, as Daniel's friends were spared supernaturally from persecution
 - That chapter reminded Israel that though they were under Gentile oppression, the Lord has not abandoned His people
 - Particularly, the remnant within Israel was assured of the Lord's continuing favor, even in the midst of this time of judgment
- Furthermore, it illustrated that even though God has written a coming history of empires and kings, nevertheless, He continues to exert His supernatural influence
 - Daniel 3 stands as refutation against those who believe God has created the world and stepped back to let it rule itself
 - Like a top set spinning on a table
 - Instead, the Lord is active and engaged in steering the world, even as He reveals His larger plans
- Now today, we reach the deepest part of the chiasm, Step C

- Step C and its corresponding alternate point, Step C', provide the "point" of the chiasm
 - In today's chapter, the Lord humbles the king of Babylon
 - He's the very man God placed in authority over Israel, and indeed all the world, yet he will be brought low
 - Ultimately, he will be restored
 - The point in these circumstances will become evident as we study through the chapter
- But perhaps the most interesting part of the chapter, is it's author
 - The chapter is written from the first person perspective of Nebuchadnezzar himself
 - It was penned by Daniel, but it's likely Daniel simply recorded the testimony of the king, who dictated it to Daniel for posterity
 - So we could say this is the only chapter of Scripture written by a Gentile, and perhaps the only one written by a pagan
- As we begin the chapter, let's take note that the chapter itself is structured as a mini-chiasm in an ABB'A' form
 - It begins with the king praising the Lord of Heaven for His mighty works
 - It moves into an account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream
 - Followed by Daniel's interpretation and its fulfillment
 - And it ends with the king praising the Lord once more
 - Let's begin with the first of those four parts

Dan. 4:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound!

Dan. 4:2 "It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.

Dan. 4:3 "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.

- In v.1, Nebuchadnezzar opens his account by addressing everyone on the earth

- It may seem a bit grandiose to think that his words would be sent to the entire world
 - Like assuming everyone else is as interested as you are in the poodle pictures you posted on Facebook
 - Because let's be honest...no one wants to see a poodle picture
- In this case, the king's assumption makes sense, given what the Lord told him in Chapter 2
 - The Lord declared he was king of all the earth, according to the interpretation of the dream
 - So Nebuchadnezzar is merely acting on that premise in addressing the entire world as his subjects
- Furthermore, the Lord made his words part of Scripture, which will endure forever
 - So both in the king's day, and in our day, these words go to the entire earth
 - His testimony is a testimony for all people for all time
- In v.2, Nebuchadnezzar says it seems good to him to declare the good things the Lord has done
 - He's referring to the story that is about to unfold
 - Looking back on what happened, he remembers the entire experience as something mighty, something great
 - As you read through his account, however, you may struggle to understand why he thinks this is so great
 - In fact, his story will read like a mini-version of the story of Job
 - Secondly, the effect of this experience for Nebuchadnezzar was to declare that the Lord's Kingdom was everlasting
 - Specifically, it is from generation to generation
 - This is an important summary of the purpose of Chapter 4
 - Earlier, we learned that the powers that rule the world would transition
 - One kingdom would give way to another

- A few generations would have power for a time, but then in a future generation, power would be lost to another kingdom
 - But the Lord is truly the One ruling the earth and His Kingdom is everlasting from generation to generation
 - Who better to declare this truth than the man who begins the statue as the head of gold
 - Even the man who received power to rule has come to recognize that his own ruling was subjected to the authority of God
 - Remember, this king is a Gentile and a pagan who took God's people captive, killing many of them in the process
 - Yet, this man declares that God Himself is greater and that His Kingdom is always in control
 - Remember this next time someone suggests that Hitler's reign of terror over the Jewish people proves God wasn't in control
- Now the king starts to tell the story of his dream

Dan. 4:4 "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.

Dan. 4:5 "I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

Dan. 4:6 "So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

Dan. 4:7 "Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me.

Dan. 4:8 "But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying,

Dan. 4:9 'O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

- Once again, we find the king receiving a dream from the Lord
 - Also, the dream makes an impact such that the king can't stop thinking about it
 - Unlike the dream in Chapter 2, this time, the king is willing to tell them the dream up front
 - And then, he asked for an interpretation

- Why do we suppose the king is willing to do this now, when he didn't before?
 - The answer is that this method is the normal procedure
 - The king would call his staff of advisors and he would tell them the dream
 - And then, they would explain what they thought it meant
- Back in Chapter 2, the king departed from the normal pattern in demanding they reveal the content of the dream first
 - We don't know what reason the king had for changing the pattern in Chapter 2
 - But we know the Lord planted that desire in the king's heart to ensure the other men would be frustrated
 - Which ensured the king would meet Daniel
- By that same token, we wonder why the king even bothered asking the other guys for help this time?
 - Once you've discovered a man with the talent Daniel possessed, why waste time with lesser counselors?
 - A couple of reasons come to mind
 - Perhaps Daniel was busy elsewhere
 - Remember, he was made a man of power and responsibility in the province of Babylon
 - So it's unlikely he just hung around the palace
 - But it's also possible that the king had a sense of what the dream was revealing, and he was afraid to hear Daniel's interpretation
 - Therefore, he may have been shopping for a better answer
 - Furthermore, when the king turns to his regular counselors, still they couldn't offer any explanation, even knowing the dream
 - Is this just a group of quacks?
 - Their silence is especially surprising, since this dream is relatively easy to interpret, even without supernatural assistance

- In fact, the dream practically interprets itself at one point
 - So why didn't these guys offer any answer to the king?
 - The logical conclusion is that they understand the dream very well, but were afraid to give the answer
 - Because, as you will see, it's not good news
- Finally, notice in v.8 how the king describes Daniel
 - He repeats that Daniel is Belteshazzar, which he says is a name after Nebuchadnezzar's god
 - He then acknowledges that Daniel is a special man
 - Daniel has the spirit of "holy gods"
 - These statements are important because they confirm for us that at the outset of this story, the king is a pagan worshipper
 - He identifies with a pagan god, from whom he got Daniel's name
 - And he sees Daniel's powers as coming from other "gods"
 - He respects the power Daniel demonstrates
 - But that demonstration hasn't been enough by itself to lead the king to rethink his allegiance to his god and to seek after Daniel's God
- He then proceeds to reveal the dream to Daniel

Dan. 4:10 'Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great.

Dan. 4:11 'The tree grew large and became strong

And its height reached to the sky,
And it was visible to the end of the whole earth.

Dan. 4:12 'Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant,

And in it was food for all.
The beasts of the field found shade under it,
And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches,
And all living creatures fed themselves from it.

Dan. 4:13 'I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.

Dan. 4:14 'He shouted out and spoke as follows:

"Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,

Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit;
 Let the beasts flee from under it
 And the birds from its branches.

Dan. 4:15 “Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground,
 But with a band of iron and bronze around it
 In the new grass of the field;
 And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,
 And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.

Dan. 4:16 “Let his mind be changed from that of a man
 And let a beast’s mind be given to him,
 And let seven periods of time pass over him.

Dan. 4:17 “This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers
 And the decision is a command of the holy ones,
 In order that the living may know
 That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind,
 And bestows it on whom He wishes
 And sets over it the lowliest of men.”

Dan. 4:18 ‘This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.’

- The dream centers on a single great tree that dominates the earth
 - It reaches to the sky, such that the entire earth can see it
 - Interestingly, on a round earth, this is literally impossible
 - So we must assume that the king was dreaming of a flat earth
 - Since we know the earth is round, we wonder why the Lord doesn’t give the king a dream consistent with Creation?
 - The answer is simple...the king would have assumed the earth to be flat, as that was the common understanding in his day
 - Therefore, the Lord gave the king a version of the world in his dream that fit his expectations
 - He did this not to confirm the king’s viewpoint, but simply not to distract him from the main point of the dream
 - Imagine if the Lord had shown the king a round earth, that detail might have overshadowed the other, more important details

- So on a flat world, one tree reaches to the sky and can be seen from everywhere
 - This tree was like Eden itself, feeding the world and protecting its inhabitants
 - The fruit was abundant
 - The branches were home to every bird
 - The shade accommodated every beast
 - But then, an angel from Heaven appeared to remove the tree
 - He did violence to every part of the tree
 - Only the roots of the tree and its stump were allowed to remain
 - The stump was shackled with bronze and iron
 - Then, the stump is allowed to simply sit in the field of grass
 - But then, at this point in the dream, the pronoun changes to “he”
 - It becomes clear at this point that the tree stands for a man
 - And that’s why I said it practically interprets itself
 - This man is to live in the wild like an animal
 - And he receives the mind of a beast, acting like an animal
 - And this strange period in the man’s life will continue for a period of seven
 - The reference to seven is not defined, but as we will see in the interpretation, it refers to seven years
- Then the angel declares in the dream that this has come to pass as the result of the decision of “the holy ones”
 - The use of a plural here is curious
 - At first, it suggests that the angels themselves made the decision to humble this man in this way
 - But that conclusion doesn’t make a lot of sense, given that angels are messengers and not decision-makers

- The more reasonable conclusion is that “the holy ones” refers to the Godhead itself
 - In other words, God (plural) decided this fate for this man
 - This would be another OT reference to the Trinity
- Finally, the reason given for this man’s strange downfall is to ensure that he understood that the power to rule came from above
 - This power is given out as the Lord desires
 - We could say, “easy come, easy go”
 - He even gives it to the lowest of men
- Rather than give commentary on the dream itself, I’ll wait for the interpretation to weigh into the significance of these things

Dan. 4:19 “Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.’ Belteshazzar replied, ‘My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!’

Dan. 4:20 ‘The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth

Dan. 4:21 and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged –

Dan. 4:22 it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.

Dan. 4:23 ‘In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, “Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,”

Dan. 4:24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:

Dan. 4:25 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.

Dan. 4:26 ‘And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.

Dan. 4:27 'Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.'

- As Daniel hears the dream, he too is frightened
 - The king doesn't appear to be surprised by Daniel's reaction either
 - We're getting the sense that everyone connected to this dream knows it's bad
 - Daniel is truly grieving over what he has to reveal
 - And this was a consistent feature of every prophet God sent to Israel
 - They usually had bad news for the people, and they often wept over what they had to reveal
 - The king reassured Daniel that it's ok to reveal the bad news to him
 - With that reassurance, Daniel then has the courage to move ahead and reveal it
 - But not before he commiserates with the king over what he's about to reveal
 - Daniel then tells the king what he, and probably everyone, knew: the tree was a representation of him in his rule over all the earth
 - Like the head of gold in the statue, this tree emphasizes the complete and total rule Nebuchadnezzar exercised over the earth
 - And each detail in the dream reinforced that picture
 - The birds nesting in the branches is a classic picture of Gentile populations
 - The beasts feeding represents the provision the king's empire makes to all its subjects
 - And the shade represents the power of the kingdom to protect and defend its citizens by enforcing a time of peace
- So the tree pictures the king, as the king himself represents the entire kingdom of Babylon

- Then, Daniel says the angelic woodcutter means that the Lord will drive Nebuchadnezzar away from his kingdom for a time
 - Notice the tree was cut down, but the root was not removed
 - It was left in the ground, which means it has the potential to sprout growth again
- Notice in v.26, Daniel tells the king that the fact that the root remains is proof that this calamity does not spell the end of the king's time as ruler
 - If the Lord intended to end Nebuchadnezzar's rule forever, the stump would not have remained
 - It would have been pulled out by the roots
 - So leaving the stump or roots of a tree means hope for a future restoration
- This is a powerful symbol in Scripture that the Lord uses repeatedly in a similar fashion for other people
 - In particular, the Lord uses this symbol to represent the Nation of Israel hardened and set aside for a time, but later restored
 - Paul says in Romans, speaking of how Israel was cut off for a time to give opportunity for the Gentiles

Rom. 11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, **Rom. 11:18** do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.

- The root is Paul's picture of what remains of an Israel cut off for their unbelief
- The fact that a root remains, however, means that the nation has not met its end
- In fact, Israel will one day rise again, as Paul goes on to say

Rom. 11:23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Rom. 11:24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

[Rom. 11:25](#) For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

- So just as a tree root here is used to picture the return of Nebuchadnezzar on a future day, so it will be for Israel too
- Curiously, the tree stump in the dream is bound by a band of brass and iron
 - The symbol of a band suggests captivity or subjugation
 - And the metals of brass and iron suggest judgment
 - The Lord’s judgment is always pictured by brass in a furnace
 - And iron is a picture of ruling in power (e.g., “a rod of iron”)
 - So the meaning is clear: the king will be taken out of power as a judgment from God
 - Yet he is not being deposed, nor is he forgotten
 - He is only set out of power for a period of time
 - But during this time, he will endure a particularly humiliating set of circumstances
 - In v.25, we get the details of what God has planned for this king
 - First, the king will be driven away from mankind
 - He will trade the comfort and civility of the palace for life among the beasts of the field
 - Notice he will not make this change of his own desire, but he will be driven in this way
- What drives the king to do such a thing?
 - Back in v.16, we’re told that the king’s mind of a man was changed into the mind of a beast
 - Simply put, Nebuchadnezzar would start thinking (and therefore behaving) like an animal, rather than a human being
 - We don’t know to what extent his behaviors looked like an animal

- But the description indicates he lived like a wild man in the fields, without shelter
 - Perhaps attacking and eating prey, much like a lion, refraining to communicate with words
- Today, we would describe this behavior as insanity, and certainly it must have appeared to be that way in his day as well
 - Perhaps the Lord accomplished this change by permitting a demon to possess Nebuchadnezzar
 - Certainly, demon possession produces these kinds of bizarre behaviors, as we see with the man living in the tombs in Luke 8

Luke 8:27 And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs.

Luke 8:28 Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me."

Luke 8:29 For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

- So perhaps the Lord brought a demon to bear on Nebuchadnezzar
- Or perhaps the Lord did literally as He describes
 - Supernaturally, the Lord changed the king's mind from that of a human to something less
 - We can't imagine how that works, but we can't say it isn't within God's power to do so
- In either case, we need to give a moment's thought to what it means that God can do this to a person
 - Insanity is simply the name we give to unexplained, bizarre behaviors
 - The secular world gives no allowance to the possibility that bizarre behavior is the result of a supernatural cause

- Clinically, the condition Nebuchadnezzar experienced is called “zoanthropy” today, which tells us that other people have done the same
- But here, we clearly see that this malady is the result of the Lord producing insanity in the king’s life for a good purpose
 - While we can’t draw broad conclusions from one example, we should be more thoughtful about where abnormal or pathological behavior originates
 - Is the cause natural? Environmental? Genetic? Or is it the decision of God to bring a trial, a test or to make a point?
- Nebuchadnezzar's strange behavior resulted in the king abdicating his throne for a time, specifically for a period of “seven”
 - It could mean seven hours, seven days, seven weeks, etc.
 - The text doesn’t say and Daniel doesn’t specify either
 - Later, we learn that the “seven” refers to years
 - Knowing the Lord has declared this is coming, Daniel exhorts the king to do what he can to stop it
 - Specifically, Daniel says forgo sinning, repent and do works of mercy for the poor
 - It would seem this king had not been particularly concerned with the plight of the poor
 - And in general, Daniel doesn’t seem to think the king is particularly upright
- So can we assume that Daniel’s offer for mercy was inspired by the Spirit, or was it merely Daniel’s own point of view?
 - In this case, we might assume that Nebuchadnezzar’s plight was inevitable, since it fits into the Lord’s larger plan to demonstrate His sovereignty
 - If so, then it’s hard to imagine that the king could have done anything to stop this prophecy
 - But we shouldn’t assume that no opportunity existed for the king to avoid this fate

- It's a fundamental truth of Scripture that repentance can forestall God's judgment
 - The Lord gave that opportunity to Cain in Genesis 4
 - Jonah declared it to Nineveh
 - The prophets declared it to Israel

Ezek. 18:29 "But the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Are My ways not right, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not right?"

Ezek. 18:30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord God. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you."

Ezek. 18:31 "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?"

Ezek. 18:32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live."

- But the principle of repentance has a corollary
 - As repentance delays, judgment advances
 - So that at some point, the judgment is assured and the time of repentance has come and gone
- In the psalms we find a good example of this truth
 - The psalmist writes that God is a righteous judge, ready to strike against those who fail to heed warnings
 - And in that sense, the one who falls to judgment has dug their own grave

Psa. 7:11 God is a righteous judge,
And a God who has indignation every day.

Psa. 7:12 If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword;
He has bent His bow and made it ready.

Psa. 7:13 He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons;
He makes His arrows fiery shafts.

Psa. 7:14 Behold, he travails with wickedness,
And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood.

Psa. 7:15 He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,
And has fallen into the hole which he made.

Psa. 7:16 His mischief will return upon his own head,

And his violence will descend upon his own pate.

- The psalmist says the unrepentant sinner falls into the hole he made for himself
 - His decisions return upon his head
 - These truths don't deny God's mercy, nor do they contradict the grace God extends to every believer so that our sins aren't counted against us in eternity
 - We're simply learning that whatever mercy God may be prepared to extend to us, His mercy depends on timely repentance
- So perhaps Daniel's declaration to Nebuchadnezzar was an offer of mercy from the Lord, which gave Nebuchadnezzar opportunity for a time
 - But if so, the king didn't make use of the opportunity

Dan. 4:28 "All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.

Dan. 4:29 "Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.

Dan. 4:30 "The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'

Dan. 4:31 "While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you,

Dan. 4:32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'

Dan. 4:33 "Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

- In v.28, we get the bottom line: it all happened
 - Remember, this narrative was written by the king himself
 - So in a sense, he's confessing to having ignored Daniel's advice
 - And he ignored it for some time
 - The events of the dream didn't come to pass until twelve months later

- This delay would seem to confirm the psalmist's observation
 - The king was busy digging his hole for a year
 - And that year of waiting was clearly grace from the Lord
 - But in the end, the king fell in
- The king's downfall is clearly pride in his position over the kingdom and the world
 - Daniel intimated the king's pride problem in his advice to Nebuchadnezzar
 - And now, we see the king himself confessing to this problem
- In v.30, the king relates how he was reflecting (probably to himself) on how great Babylon had become
 - Ancient records recovered from Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon document the king boasting of the splendor of his kingdom
 - Josephus quoted another historian of antiquity, Berossus, who said Nebuchadnezzar had much to boast about
 - His impressive building exploits were some of the most ambitious in all ancient history
 - Babylon's capital city was walled to a circumference of about 17 miles
 - The king's palace sat inside the city, behind a second wall running about 5 miles in circumference
 - The river Euphrates ran through the palace
 - The hanging gardens of Babylon inside the palace were one of the lost seven wonders of the world, fed by an elaborate water supply
 - Statues of bulls and dragons lined a huge processional avenue leading to a huge ziggurat temple to Marduk,
 - But the key comment in Nebuchadnezzar's boasting is in found in v.30, where he says he himself made the nation great by means of his own might and for his own glory
 - He couldn't have been more wrong on every count

- He didn't make Babylon great, the Lord did
 - He didn't accomplish anything in his own might; it was the Lord's power that created Babylon
 - And Babylon wasn't elevated to bring Nebuchadnezzar great glory; it was for glory to God
- The king's pride blinded him to the work of God going on through him, despite God having already revealed the details in the earlier dream
 - God told him he had been elevated to the position of king of the world
 - And the Lord said he was placed there for a purpose not his own
 - And the dream even told Nebuchadnezzar that he wouldn't hold the position forever
 - Nevertheless, the king has let the whole affair go to his head and now he thinks it's all a result of his power, wisdom and good looks
 - He's forgotten God, and this is always the way pride works
 - Pride is like spiritual amnesia
 - It causes us to forget God in every sense, and our ego is only too happy to step into the vacuum we created
 - Pride was the first sin in God's creation, and since that beginning, pride has been at work in the hearts of humanity to cause us to forget God

Rom. 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Rom. 1:21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

- Nebuchadnezzar knew God, at least in the sense that he knew that Israel's God existed and had power over him
- And he knew the Lord's words, as revealed through Daniel
- He even had a second dream warning of a coming judgment
- And yet here, he is telling himself that he's big man in the universe

- When time runs out for repentance, God's judgment arrives swiftly and without additional warning
 - In v. 31, Nebuchadnezzar reports that even as he was uttering his prideful boasts, he heard a voice from Heaven proclaiming his sentence
 - God's pronouncement includes a dose of sarcasm
 - Before the final boast exited Nebuchadnezzar's mouth, the Lord had already nullified his boast
 - The king's declaration was overridden by the Lord's declaration
 - Nebuchadnezzar said, "I'm the king of the hill!"
 - And the Lord's response was, "Not anymore."
 - The Lord declared sovereignty has been removed from him
 - At that very second, a switch was thrown in Nebuchadnezzar's brain
 - Immediately, his mind became like an animal and his behavior followed suit
 - If you find yourself wondering if God is treating him fairly, remember how we got to this point
 - The king should have known the Lord was over all and assigning authority as He desires
 - He had two dreams to explain it and he had the experience of Daniel's friends to demonstrate it
 - Yet it still required this dramatic experience to get the point through to him
 - Ironically, God made Nebuchadnezzar to look insane
 - But the real insanity was the king acting as if the God Who had revealed Himself so clearly didn't actually exist
- The Lord explains how Nebuchadnezzar's life will go for the next seven periods
 - First, he will go away from mankind
 - Nebuchadnezzar had just been marveling at the magnificence of his palace, and now he will be denied the comforts of it

- Instead, he will literally live outdoors in the fields where wild beasts live
- No doubt, he will be the talk of Babylon, as the people marvel over how far he has fallen
- In keeping with his new animal nature, he will eat only grass, which probably means he will eat various green plants, but nothing particularly normal for a human diet
 - He had been enjoying the luxuries afforded a king who demanded only the best
 - All the while denying mercy and provision to the poor in his kingdom
 - Now, the Lord visits those sins back upon the king by denying him even the most basic human food
- Yet even in these harsh conditions, we can still see God's grace
 - Normally, a man living out in the fields for a long time would not survive very long
 - For example, wild predators would have been a real threat, especially lions
 - Secondly, desert days are brutally hot under the sun, and the nights can be quite cold, especially in the winter
 - So if the animals didn't get him, exposure would have
 - And then there is his diet of grass
 - He ate food that normally wouldn't sustain a person for long, and may have even been harmful
 - Under those circumstances, it's hard to believe the king could have survived outdoors that long without God's grace and supernatural protection
 - He survived because he was the stump, cut down, chained in judgment, but not dead, not destroyed
 - He was to remain this way for a period of "seven"
 - And that period must have been a period of seven years for several reasons

- First, the description in v.33 of his appearance implies a very long time
 - Specifically, his hair grows to the point of looking like eagles' feathers
 - That description suggests long, unkempt matted hair, long enough to resemble an eagle's wing, which is about 22 inches (56 cm) long
 - And his nails are as long as an eagle's talons, which are 2 inches long
 - Men's hair and nails don't grow that long in just seven weeks or even seven months
 - It would require seven years
- I imagine the people of Babylon would have taken great fascination in the plight of their king
 - As long as he was alive, he was still the king, though I suspect others were handling the business of the kingdom in his absence
 - In fact, it seems likely that Daniel played a significant – if not the prominent – role in governing the nation in his absence
 - We might also suppose that Daniel righted Nebuchadnezzar's wrongs regarding the poor or otherwise
 - And finally, we know Daniel understood the king would return to power one day, so he probably advised the staff to prepare for that day
 - It would not go well for anyone who tried to undermine the king in his absence when the king returned to discover their disloyalty
 - So the Lord achieved a fair judgment against the king, while also correcting his errors in rule and elevating Daniel once again
 - We suppose that Daniel also found ways to show kindness to the rest of Israel in slavery
 - It would have been a tremendous encouragement to the people of God to see their adversary humiliated while Daniel took charge
 - That's the point of this chapter, again

- The power of God resulted in God's people under Gentile rule
 - But God continues to protect the remnant
 - And the Gentile authorities God installs still owe their position to the Lord and therefore, they rule only by His grace
- Eventually, even Nebuchadnezzar got the point

Dan. 4:34 "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason 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 endures from generation to generation.

Dan. 4:35 "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And among the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can ward off His hand
Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

Dan. 4:36 "At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.

Dan. 4:37 "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."

- Just as God controlled the timing of Nebuchadnezzar's descent into madness, so does the Lord dictate the moment of his recovery
 - The king testifies now in the first person again, that after the 7 years were complete, he then regained his senses
 - And as if released from a prison of the mind, the king immediately does what he should have done in the beginning
 - He raises his eyes toward Heaven and makes a declaration that matches the one that opened the chapter
 - He praises God and he declares that God deserves honor, the One Who lives forever and ever
 - The fundamental difference between man and animals is that God made man in His Own image so we could relate to Him
 - The Westminster Confession declares that the chief and highest end of man is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever

- It requires the mind of a man to know and glorify God for all that He is
- And an animal mind can't do that
- Nebuchadnezzar wasn't using his mind to fulfill his purpose, so the Lord took his mind for a time
- Now that his mind has returned, he immediately begins to use it for its consummate purpose
- In the second half of v.34, the king emphasizes the never-ending dominion of the Lord, which was the point he needed to understand
 - God's rule is eternal and always in effect
 - Men come and go as God appoints, but God is the true sovereign
 - And He remains sovereign, regardless of whether men on earth acknowledge Him as such or not
 - He doesn't grant everyone the chance to learn this truth this side of eternity
 - But sooner or later, every knee bows and every tongue confesses
- Furthermore, the king acknowledges the absolute sovereignty of God
 - Perhaps this was the more personal lesson for the king
 - In v.35, he says all the inhabitants of earth are accounted as nothing
 - He doesn't mean that God cares nothing for the people of His Creation
 - He means that in any conversation about power and world outcomes, the only actor that truly matters is God
 - God is the absolute author of History
 - Some imagine the Lord reacts to circumstances so as to direct them in a certain direction
 - Like someone guiding the steps of a toddler running down the sidewalk

- Others go a step further and imagine God is only an observer of His Creation, intervening periodically in response to prayer or exceptional circumstances
- Neither of these views could be farther from the truth, and Nebuchadnezzar testifies from firsthand experience that the answer is very different
 - God is in control of all things
 - Imagine the worst thing from human history that you can remember, and the Lord caused it to happen
 - Imagine the best that's ever happened, and the Lord made that happen too, as He says in His Own Word

[Is. 45:5](#) "I am the Lord, and there is no other;
Besides Me there is no God.

I will gird you, though you have not known Me;

[Is. 45:6](#) That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
That there is no one besides Me.

I am the Lord, and there is no other,

[Is. 45:7](#) The One forming light and creating darkness,
Causing well-being and creating calamity;
I am the Lord who does all these.

- Nebuchadnezzar saw the Lord give him great power and then take it away
 - He went from the best of times to the worst of times
 - And now, he finds himself back in a position of power once again
 - How can this be explained in any other way?
 - The Lord Himself revealed the plan to Nebuchadnezzar in advance and set the time at seven years to be sure everyone knew He commanded it
 - Furthermore, the king adds in v.35 that no one is in a position to second-guess God in what He does
 - No one can stop Him
 - No one can challenge Him
 - This is what it means to be God

- The king's account ends with two verses that show the degree to which the Lord's work changed his heart
 - First, the king was fully restored to power
 - His counselors returned to seeking his leadership
 - Probably Daniel was at the forefront, bringing it about
 - This was true grace for a man who was thought to be insane for seven years
 - The king also recognizes that his own pride was the cause of his downfall
 - He acknowledges that the Lord worked to humble him and he seems genuinely pleased to have been brought to this point
 - Nebuchadnezzar is an example to prove that humility is a preferable way to go through life than to live in pride
 - When we seek to be prideful, we imagine it gains us an advantage in life
 - But experience teaches us that pride diminishes us in the eyes of others and gives cause for the Lord to bring us low
- Finally, look at how the king addresses the Lord in the final verse
 - He gives Him praise and honor as the King of Heaven
 - These terms would seem to suggest that Nebuchadnezzar is rejecting the prospect of other gods in favor of the one true God
 - Perhaps he has become a follower of the one true God
 - If so, then we would say that he was saved
 - When we contrast his words to those in the beginning of his account, it would seem his heart had changed
 - But it could still be possible that his respect for God simply means he placed God above all other gods
 - Only God knows for sure what happened in Nebuchadnezzar's heart
 - In the end, the lesson is clear: the Lord controls those who control Israel

- Remember, even after Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses and praised the God of Israel, he didn't free Israel
- The people of God may have assumed that Nebuchadnezzar's (possible) conversion would have resulted in their freedom
- But it didn't, because God was in control of that too
- And the people of God were in captivity because God brought them there
- Chapter 4 of Daniel reminds both Jew and Gentile that God is in control. Period.