

The Book of Daniel
Lesson 10 Notes Daniel 4:1-3
From Pride to Humility: The King's Proclamation

Introduction

As chapter 4 opens, we find that many years have passed since the incident of the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar has continued to thrive as ruler over Babylon with significant peace and prosperity (Dan. 4:4). Daniel has continued to thrive as well, with continued faithfulness in his ministry at the king's court (Dan. 1:21, 4:8). Within this context, we find an unlikely shift taking place in the narrative. The chapter records a public decree that Nebuchadnezzar has sent out to, **“all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth” (Dan. 4:1)**. This decree, written by Nebuchadnezzar himself, documents the king's own personal testimony of how **“the Most High God”** worked in his life to humble him, and bring him to the place where he truly understood that **“Heaven rules” (Dan. 4:26)**. While Daniel had already recorded two other miraculous encounters that Nebuchadnezzar had experienced with **“the Most High God,”** chapter 4 is where we see an apparent change occur in the king's heart. While it is impossible to know for certain whether the king was genuinely converted, there is compelling evidence to suggest that he was. As Walvoord says, “it may well be that this chapter brings Nebuchadnezzar to the place where he puts his trust in the God of Daniel” yet “even merely as a lesson in the spiritual progress of a man in the hands of God, this chapter is a literary gem.”

That being said, the personal interest that we see God taking in the life of this pagan king is nothing short of remarkable. As Matthew Henry observes, “the king writes to acquaint others with the divine providences of God that had related to him.” The word providence is not a word we have discussed much in our study, but it adds further dimension to the main theme of the book- God's sovereign rule over all the events of history. Vines defines providence as “the continuous activity of God in His creation by which He preserves and governs.” This clearly is another way of stating that the universal kingship of God has no bounds or limitations- God always does what is right and in accordance with His foreordained plan. In his article, *God's Providence Revealed*

in Scripture, Robert Rothwell of Ligonier explains, “As Christians, we know that everything happens for a reason because the personal triune God has created all things and has a plan for everything that happens. He is sovereign over all such that even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground apart from His will (Matt. 10:29). He works out all things, not just some things, according to the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11). This, essentially, is what theologians mean by *providence*—God has a plan and a purpose for the world and governs history such that everything from the least to the greatest contributes to the achievement of that plan and purpose. He isn’t merely a passive observer of history; rather, He has designed history to achieve a particular end and He directs history so that it will surely reach that end.”

The book of Daniel surely advances these rich theological truths. While it is obvious that the Babylonian exile would not have been a pleasant experience for Daniel and his friends to endure, the work that God was doing in the midst of their suffering clearly demonstrates the beauty of divine providence. Considering this, it seems fitting to pause and recall *some* of the simultaneous things God was doing through the exile. Special emphasis should be placed on the word *some*, because as we know, God is always doing so much more than we can observe!

In what ways was God demonstrating his divine providence through the exile?

1. God was fulfilling numerous prophecies He had made regarding Israel’s promised judgment (Deut. 4:25-31, Jer. 25:11-12, Dan.1:2).
2. God was putting His ultimate Kingship on display and revealing many glorious aspects of His character (Dan. 2:20-23).
3. God was sanctifying Daniel and his friends, and enabling them to set an example for us to follow (Dan. 2:8-21, Jer. 29:7, Heb. 11:33).
4. God was revealing His plan for the latter days (Dan. 2:31:45, 7:1-28).
5. God was continuing to show mankind their need for a Savior (Jer. 30:21, Isaiah 52-53, Dan. 9:26-27).
6. God was preserving the Messianic Line, so that His Word would be perfectly fulfilled preparing the way for Jesus to atone for man’s sin (Matt. 1:11-12).

7. God was always preserving a remnant, according to divine grace (Dan. 9:1-19, Rom. 11:3-5).
8. God was showing Israel that His plan for them could never fail for He was continuing to keep all the covenants He had made to them (Gen.12:1-3, 2 Chron. 17:11-14, Jer. 30-31, Dan. 2:36-45).
9. God was showing mankind the absolute folly of idolatry (Dan. 3:8-30).
10. God was working in the individual heart of a wicked king to bring him to repentance (Dan 1-4).

Considering these truths, it is remarkable to contemplate the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4, because it highlights what a mighty, yet loving God we serve. Truly as Nebuchadnezzar would later say, ***“I 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. (Dan. 4:37).***

Nebuchadnezzar’s Opening Remarks (4:1-3)

Daniel opens chapter 4 with a record of the proclamation that Nebuchadnezzar had sent far and wide. He writes, ***“Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages who live in all the earth: ‘May your peace be great! I am pleased to declare the signs and miracles that the Most High God has done for me.’*** Here we see the king expressing eagerness to share his own personal testimony regarding the God of Israel. Matthew Henry expresses the significance of this chapter when he writes, “He thought it seemly (good) that it was his duty, and did well become him, that it was a debt he owed to God and to the world, now that he had recovered from his distraction, to relate to distant places, and record for future ages, how justly God had humbled him, and how graciously He had at length restored him. All the nations had no doubt heard what befell Nebuchadnezzar, and rang of it, but he thought they should have a distinct account of it from himself, that they might know the hand of God in it, and what impressions were made upon his own spirit by it.” As the chapter unfolds, we will see in great detail what “distraction” befell this prideful king, but for today the emphasis is merely on his opening remarks.

The attributes of God that the king first extols relate to His ability to perform signs and miracles. He says, ***“How great are His signs and how mighty are His miracles!”*** Clearly, the king had witnessed irrefutable proof that the God of Israel was unlike the Babylonian false gods that he was so familiar with. At this point in his life, Nebuchadnezzar had already seen the God of Israel give him a dream -along with its miraculous interpretation, three men delivered from a fiery furnace, and now his personal experience with the removal and restoration of his sanity. “At last Nebuchadnezzar had come to realize that Yahweh (the Most High God), not himself or the gods of Babylon, was sovereign” (Miller).

The king’s belief in God’s ultimate sovereignty is confirmed by the next statement he makes in verse 3, ***“His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.”*** Here we see the theme of the kingdom of God continue to be highlighted -as it is throughout the Bible. What the king had come to understand was that the God of Daniel was the true King of this world. He would say later in the chapter, ***“he removes kings and appoints kings”*** and ***“rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will.”*** This truth is what theologians often refer to as the universal kingdom of God. As Psalm 103:19 states, ***“The Lord has established His throne in the heavens and His kingdom rules over all.”***

While it is critical to understand that God sovereignly reigns over everything, and He is always providentially fulfilling his will, it is also important to understand that God’s kingdom has an “already not yet” component. As one author writes, “God is already King, but on the other hand it is also true that God’s kingship lies in the future” (Greatness of the Kingdom). This aspect of God’s kingdom, referred to by theologians as the mediatorial aspect of God’s kingdom, is addressed in the book of Daniel many times. In chapter 2 we saw it described as ***“the stone that struck the statue and became a great mountain and filled the entire earth.”*** It will come about in the future when ***“the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.”***

As we proceed through the book of Daniel, we will cover these ideas more, yet for now the truth to grasp is that Nebuchadnezzar had come to see the truth of God’s

sovereignty. "He, the most mighty monarch then on earth, had seen that his throne had no stability; he had seen that God had power at His will to bring him down from his lofty seat, and to transfer his authority to other hands" (Barnes Notes on the Bible).

Additionally, Nebuchadnezzar had finally come to admit and even publicly testify to all, "that there is a God that governs the world and has a universal, incontestable, absolute dominion in and over all the affairs of the children of men. And it is the glory of this kingdom that it is everlasting. Other reigns are confined to one generation, and other dynasties to a few generations, but God's *dominion is from generation to generation.*" (Matthew Henry)

References

Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation by John F. Walvoord

God's Providence Revealed in Scripture Tabletalk Magazine

Matthew Henry Commentary

Old Testament 2 Notes by TMU Professor Dr. Todd Bolen

The Greatness of the Kingdom by Alva J. McClain

The Macarthur Study Bible

The New American Commentary: Daniel by Stephen R. Miller

Vine's Expository Dictionary