

May 6, 2020 Daniel 4.1–18 Bible Study

Read Daniel 4:1–18 in your favorite translation. I will print the NET–2 translation.

4:1 King Nebuchadnezzar, to all peoples, nations, and language groups that live in all the land:
“Peace and prosperity! 2 I am delighted to tell you about the signs and wonders that the most high God has done for me.

3 “How great are his signs!

How mighty are his wonders!

His kingdom will last forever,

and his authority continues from one generation to the next.”

4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was relaxing in my home, living luxuriously in my palace. 5 I saw a dream that frightened me badly. The things I imagined while lying on my bed—these visions of my mind—were terrifying me. 6 So I issued an order for all the wise men of Babylon to be brought before me so that they could make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 When the magicians, astrologers, wise men, and diviners entered, I recounted the dream for them. But they were unable to make known its interpretation to me. 8 Later Daniel entered (whose name is Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom there is a spirit of the holy gods). I recounted the dream for him as well, 9 saying, “Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, in whom I know there to be a spirit of the holy gods and whom no mystery baffles, consider my dream that I saw and set forth its interpretation! 10 Here are the visions of my mind while I was on my bed.

“While I was watching,

there was a tree in the middle of the land.

It was enormously tall.

11 The tree grew large and strong.

Its top reached far into the sky;

it could be seen from the borders of all the land.

12 Its foliage was attractive and its fruit plentiful;

on it there was food enough for all.

Under it the wild animals used to seek shade,

and in its branches the birds of the sky used to nest.

All creatures used to feed themselves from it.

13 While I was watching in my mind’s visions on my bed,

a holy sentinel came down from heaven.

14 He called out loudly as follows:

‘Chop down the tree and lop off its branches!

Strip off its foliage

and scatter its fruit!

Let the animals flee from under it

and the birds from its branches.

15 But leave its taproot in the ground,

with a band of iron and bronze around it

surrounded by the grass of the field.

Let it become damp with the dew of the sky,

and let it live with the animals in the grass of the land.

16 Let his mind be altered from that of a human being,

and let an animal’s mind be given to him,

and let seven periods of time go by for him.

17 This announcement is by the decree of the sentinels;

this decision is by the pronouncement of the holy ones,

so that those who are alive may understand

that the Most High has authority over human kingdoms,

and he bestows them on whomever he wishes.

He establishes over them even the lowliest of human beings.’

18 “This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, for none of the wise men in my kingdom are able to make known to me the interpretation. But you can do so, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.”

COMMENTS:

We have a longer reading than normal for today. That is because our commentary will be limited until tomorrow when Daniel interprets the dream for Nebuchadnezzar. For now, just try to remember the outline of the dream.

Twice now God has granted the king special revelations of his wisdom, power and might. The first was in chapter 2 when Nebuchadnezzar had his troubling dream. That time the dream was favorable for the king when Daniel explained it to him.

Then in chapter 3 the king saw the power of Yahweh, the God of the Jews, when the three men were preserved in the hotter than hot fire which killed even the soldiers who got too close to it. The end of v. 29 gives the king's evaluation of what he and his ministers had seen: “For there exists no other god who can deliver in this way.”

He even seems to be addressing Yahweh because he names him as “The Most High God.” That was how he expressed the idea, “Your God is greater than my god.”

Then in v. 3 he lists how he has been favored by the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He had seen great signs and wonders. This God would have an everlasting kingdom and his authority would continue down through the generations.

It almost seems as if he came to the conclusion that this God would always favor him. That was the problem of the Sons of Israel who began to take for granted their covenant relationship with God. That is why even today, the greatly blessed America and our churches, there are signs we too have taken for granted our relationship with God.

Just make yourself a few notes on the dream and tomorrow we will hear what God was saying to Nebuchadnezzar then and what he is saying to us today.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Have you ever come to the place where you begin to think your relationship with God is so good that you can expect certain things from him? If so, you are mistaken. God will fulfill all his promises to us, but an unknown number will not be fully present until after the Second Coming of Jesus. Till that occurs, we are living the “in between time.” Or it is also described by some as “the already, but not yet.” We already know the final results for sin, death and Satan but it is not yet completed.