

• *The story so far*

We have seen what it was like for a servant of God to be living in a pagan empire (Daniel chapter 1), and how God has a mighty plan to bring in his own empire (Daniel chapter 2). We have seen how the worship of God is likely to be opposed by pagan kingdoms (Daniel chapter 3). Now a fourth story about Nebuchadnezzar tells us how God is able to save a pagan king and and a realization of the reality of God.

• *God is able to bring a pagan king to salvation*

• *Nebuchadnezzar's open letter telling his story*

The chapter begins with Nebuchadnezzar's open letter to his country concerning what happened to him. Nebuchadnezzar is its main author. He announces himself^{□1} and then tells his story^{□2}. The part that he was unable to tell himself is told by someone else^{□3}.

□1 4:1-3
□2 4:4-37
□3 4:19-33

• *God is able to humble the proud and bring them to salvation*

The story tells how Nebuchadnezzar had a dream warning him of what was to come^{□1} and how he was humbled by becoming insane^{□2} and then was brought to repentance, to sanity and to salvation^{□3}. Our story begins at the end. It starts with a conclusion. Nebuchadnezzar learned through terrible suffering that God is able to humble the proud. He issued a public confession and explained what had happened to him.

□1 4:4-18
□2 4:19-33
□3 4:34-37

• *Nebuchadnezzar forced to learn the greatness of God and the eternity of his kingdom*

Nebuchadnezzar addresses himself to all the nations that were within his empire^{□1}. God is One who is well able to bring about miraculous events^{□2}. Nebuchadnezzar had been forced to learn (i) the greatness of God's power and (ii) the eternity of God's kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar himself – one of the greatest monarchs of the ancient world – was brought by God to acknowledge that the God of Daniel was vastly greater than himself.

□1 4:1
□2 4:2

The remainder of the chapter goes on to tell in fuller detail how Nebuchadnezzar was brought to this acknowledgement of God's great royal power.

The state of the king before he comes to salvation

First we note the state of the king before he comes to salvation. Nebuchadnezzar was living an easy and prosperous life when something happened that disturbed his peacefulness^{□1}. He had a very troubling dream^{□2}. His wise men could give him no help^{□3} but eventually Nebuchadnezzar asked the help of Daniel^{□4} who is to tell him both the vision and its interpretation^{□5}. In Daniel 4:10–17 Nebuchadnezzar himself tells us his readers what his vision was. He sees a tree^{□6} which is tall and flourishing and gives protective shade^{□7}. But then in the vision an angel speaks^{□8} and the tree is cut down and no longer gives protection^{□9}. The tree is still alive, and it has the potential of recovery but for a while it is entirely useless^{□10}. In Nebuchadnezzar's vision he himself is directly addressed. An unidentified voice decrees that he will become insane and animal-like^{□11}. The purpose of the experience Nebuchadnezzar is about to undergo is that he might be brought to a knowledge of God's power and sovereignty^{□12}.

□1 4:4
□2 4:5
□3 4:6-7
□4 4:8-9
□5 4:9
□6 4:10
□7 4:11-12
□8 4:13
□9 4:14
□10 4:15a

• *An easy and prosperous life*

• *A troubling dream of a tall and flourishing tree cut down*

• *A voice decrees that he will become insane and animal-like*

□11 4:16
□12 4:17

• *The king seeks Daniel's help*

The king told Daniel he had had a dream (but he did not at the time say what it was) and he wanted to know its interpretation. He knew Daniel's gift in this matter was greater than any others in his kingdom^{□1}.

□1 4:18

• *The King's high regard for Daniel and knowledge of God – yet he had not come to salvation*

• *He lives for himself and had no heart for the exclusive worship of the God of Israel*

• *No real love for God's people*

• *Shaken and compelled to acknowledge the reality of the God of Israel*

• *Complacent*

• *In God's dealings he loses his arrogance and turns to Daniel for help as his last resort*

• *Salvation begins with repentance – the first breath of faith*

We must notice the state of the king at this time. He had a high regard for Daniel (as we saw in 2:46). He knew the God of Daniel was real^{□1}. He knows that God can speak and reveal secrets^{□2}. He has been generous to God's people^{□3}. Yet he has not in any way come to salvation! He lives for himself. His statue for which he demanded worship^{□4} was possibly suggested by the vision he had had in which he was the head of gold! He regarded himself as the representative of the god he wanted to be worshipped. He had not really learnt the kingship of God (despite what he said in 2:21; and despite what Daniel said to him in 2:37–38). He had conquered Israel, and had the equipment of the temple in the temple of his god^{□5}. He had no heart for the exclusive worship of the God of Israel^{□6}. He is willing to speak admiringly of the God of Israel, but he does not give him exclusive worship. He has no love of Yahweh, the God who redeemed Israel by the blood of the lamb. He has no real love for God's people and is quite ready to put Shadrach and his friends into a fiery furnace (3:19–23 – despite what had happened in 2:48–49). But what had happened to the three Hebrew worshippers of God had shaken him. He had been astonished at what had happened^{□7}. He was compelled to acknowledge the reality of the God of Israel^{□8}.

Despite all that had happened to him, Nebuchadnezzar was complacent. He was happy and successful in his palace, thinking his reign would continue for a long time, and that he had no cares or anxieties.

But God knows how to intervene in the life of a Nebuchadnezzar. God sets out to bring him to repentance. He is brought to be afraid. He saw pictures and visions in his mind that alarmed him^{□1}. He loses his arrogance and feels that he needs help^{□2}. Everyone let him down. No one could help him. He had to turn to Daniel as his **last** resort. He was reduced to desperation in his desire to find out what was happening to him.

Salvation begins when we are brought to repentance. Repentance in **this** sense is the first breath of faith. It is the demonstration that faith is rising in a person's heart. It is the only hope of salvation. Nebuchadnezzar is being brought to repentance. God is having mercy on him.

□1 2:47
□2 2:47
□3 2:48
□4 3:1-7

□5 1:1-2
□6 3:8-13

□7 3:24
□8 3:28

□1 4:5
□2 4:6-9

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