

1

**DANIEL: Who's Really in Charge?**  
**Daniel 4<sup>i</sup>**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Good morning, Trinity! For those of you that are guests, we want to say a special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. And whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are excited to have you today. And on behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we say welcome you today.

We would love the opportunity to connect with you. You can simply text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you do that, you will be sent a reply text that will have a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you. Again, we would love the opportunity to connect with you and to pray for you.

Today, we continue in our teaching series through the Old Testament book of Daniel. I don't know about you, but I have loved this study so far. And today, we come to chapter 4 of Daniel in a message I've entitled, "Who's Really in Charge?"

So, I want to invite you to turn with me in your copy of God's Word to Daniel chapter 4. If you do not have a bible with you this morning, there is a bible located on the seat rack in front of you. And if you need a bible, feel free to take that as our gift to you today. For the vast majority of those bibles, Daniel 4 is located on page 622.

**OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Scout and Coach**

There is a story about when a football scout visited with the head football coach and asked him what he was looking for in a football player. The Coach said, "Well, there's the kind of guy that when you hit him, he just stays down." The Scout said, "Well Coach, we don't want him, do we?"

The Coach said, "NO! Then there's the kind of guy that when you knock him down, he gets up. But if you knock him down the second time he stays down." The Scout said, "We don't want him either, do we coach?"

The Coach said, "NO. But there's the guy when you knock him down, he gets

2

up gets knocked down gets up gets knocked down gets up." The Scout said, "That's the guy we want right coach?"

The Coach said, "No. We don't want him either. I want to find the guy who's knocking all those guys down. That's they guy I want."

There are some of us that throughout life have had to attend the school of hard knocks in order to really learn a lesson. Today, we are going to see that king Nebuchadnezzar is that kind of person. In order to get through to him, he is going to have to attend the school of hard knocks.

**RECAP:**

Let me survey quickly the timeline in Daniel thus far. In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar invades Jerusalem takes captive the best and the brightest young Jewish men to be trained in Babylonian ways. Daniel and his friends resolved to honor God and live according to their convictions. God worked to prove these young men of conviction to be 10 times better than everyone else. That's Daniel chapter 1.

The king then had a dream that terrified him. No one could interpret the dream except for Daniel. That dream contained prophecy about other kingdoms that would be world powers. Most of that dream has been fulfilled and a part of the dream has yet to be fulfilled but will be when Jesus returns. Daniel was promoted. That's chapter 2.

Daniel 3 is one of the most famous stories of the Bible, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the burning fiery furnace. These young men refused to worship the idol Nebuchadnezzar set up and they were thrown into the fire. But God saw them through the fire just like He sees us through fires in our lives.

**BACKGROUND: Daniel 4**

I want to provide us with a little bit of background about chapter 4 before we dive in. This is an interesting chapter for a few reasons.

First, it is unique because it's an official autobiography.<sup>ii</sup> King Nebuchadnezzar is writing this story and he writes in first person. Secondly, it is interesting because the king records what would have been an embarrassing story about himself. By writing it, he is ensuring that people will read it. And he shares his battle with a mental illness. Thirdly, chapter 4 is a cool literary work. It presents

bookends. The king praises God, then shares his experience, and then concludes the chapter praising God again. Now, because of this structure, some scholars believe that verses 1 through 3 actually belong in chapter 3. I don't think so. I think he wants to set the stage of his belief in God and then talk about the details of how he came to faith, and then praise God for that again.

Something else that is important to know is the timeline of the events. We talked last week how 17 years pass between chapters 2 and 3. Here, another 30 years pass between the fiery furnace and what will be Nebuchadnezzar's second dream. We know that because of the clues given in verse 4. The building projects initiated by the king seem to have been completed, there was peace throughout the kingdom, and there is strong evidence that this dream occurred in the last 8 years of Nebuchadnezzar's life. Daniel is about 50 or 51.

With that background, I want us today to navigate this passage with a couple of key takeaways. First, we are going to see that God is really in charge here. God is in charge of who is in charge. Because that is true, believers can be influencers of culture. Daniel is going to give us key principles to how to be an influencer of culture. God wants us to influence the culture.

### MESSAGE:

So, let's look at those keys.

#### 1) Influencers of Culture... Are Humble.

Let's look at the contrast between prideful King Nebuchadnezzar and humble Daniel. Read with me verses 4-18 of Daniel 4. *I, Nebuchadnezzar, was **at ease** in my house and **prospering** in my palace. <sup>5</sup> I saw a dream that made me **afraid**. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. <sup>6</sup> So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. <sup>7</sup> Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation. <sup>8</sup> **At last Daniel** came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods—and I told him the dream, saying, <sup>9</sup> “O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that **the spirit of the holy gods is in you** and that no mystery is too difficult for you tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation.* [For the sake of time, let me highlight what He saw. A giant tree. It was a strong tree and

extremely tall, reaching to the heavens. The leaves were beautiful, and it produced enough fruit to feed the world. It was also a shelter for all the animals. Verse 13.] *<sup>13</sup> “I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, **a watcher, a holy one**, [an angel] came down from heaven. <sup>14</sup> He proclaimed aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. <sup>15</sup> But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. <sup>16</sup> Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let **seven periods of time** pass over him. <sup>17</sup> The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that **the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will** and sets over it the lowliest of men.’ <sup>18</sup> This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.”*

We can see the prideful position of Nebuchadnezzar from what we have observed of him in our study thus far. But also, later on in this chapter, verses 28 through 30, he expresses his pride. He was so proud of his work. He was at ease in his house, prospering, admiring, taking in all that he had accomplished.

You know, it is one thing to consider all we have been able to be a part of in our life. But it is another thing to take all the credit for it. In this chapter we see a very prideful king that was ignoring how God had blessed him and ignoring all the people that helped him get to where he was. He was walking in pride. He did not acknowledge verse 17, “**the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.**”

Now, contrast the king's prideful heart with the humility of Daniel. What is it that Nebuchadnezzar sees in Daniel? Verse 9. “**The spirit of the holy gods is in,**” Daniel. At this point in the story the king was telling, he was still polytheistic in his beliefs. But, nonetheless, he noticed God's work in Daniel. In all that Daniel did, he gave credit to The Lord's working in and through his life. While Nebuchadnezzar took all the credit from God, Daniel gave all the credit to God. This is the difference between pride and humility.

Scripture echoes the danger of a prideful heart in multiple places. James 4:6, “*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*” Proverbs 16:18, “*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*” And these are the two things that king Nebuchadnezzar learns. God opposed his pride by ultimately humiliating him as we will see. And it was Nebuchadnezzar’s pride that went before his destruction.

You know, humility always wins out, doesn’t it? I like verse 8 in this chapter. “***At last Daniel came in before me.***” Good ole humble Daniel comes to the rescue yet again. At last, finally! And what we learn about this part of the story is that a life of humility positions us to influence people in times of crisis.

People want to turn to the person that seems to have a clam resolve about them, a humble spirit. Influencers of culture are those that possess and approach their lives with a sense of humility. And if we are going to be people that influence our culture for Jesus, we must be people marked by humility. Influencers of culture are humble. Secondly, ...

## 2) Influencers of Culture... Speak the Truth in Love.

Let’s look at Daniel’s interpretation of the dream. Begin in verse 19. *19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was **dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him.** The king answered and said, “Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, **may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!**” <sup>20</sup> *The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth, [skip down to verse 22.] <sup>22</sup> it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth. <sup>23</sup> And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven periods of time pass over him,’ <sup>24</sup> this is the interpretation, O king: It is **a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, <sup>25</sup> that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and **seven periods of time** shall pass over you, **till you know that the Most High rules******

***the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.** <sup>26</sup> And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. <sup>27</sup> Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: **break off your sins** by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.”* A couple things about the dream then I want to draw your attention to truth that Daniel speaks in love.

Nebuchadnezzar is the tree that gets chopped down. A metal band is placed around the stump which means that both the kingdom and the king will be protected during the time of failure that is coming.<sup>iii</sup> Nebuchadnezzar will be restored, and the kingdom will continue for a bit.

The seven periods of time can mean a couple of things. It can refer to seasons. The Babylonians recognized two seasons a year.<sup>iv</sup> That would mean 3 ½ years. But most scholars believe the seven periods of time refer to seven years. Either way, the purpose behind this revelation was to bring the king to a place of humility recognizing that The Most High is in charge, even of those that think they are in charge. God desired to humble him.

Now, I want to highlight the love that Daniel has for king Nebuchadnezzar. More than likely, these two men had become close friends.<sup>v</sup> Even though their theologies, were not the same, they were friends. How do we know that? Well, for one, the king refers to both Daniel’s Hebrew and Babylonian names. The fact that he would refer at all to the Hebrew name means that he truly respected Daniel, he knew and cared for Daniel.

The second reason we know that these two men had grown to be friends is by the concern Daniel had about the meaning of the dream. It dazed Daniel for a while, the text says. He expressed his desire that the dream be for the king’s enemies and not for him. In other words, Daniel was truly concerned and upset about what his friend, the king, was going to have to face.

I think we also see a visible expression of concern here. Before Daniel can tell the interpretation of the dream, Nebuchadnezzar recognizes Daniel’s distress. Second part of verse 19. “*Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.*” His face must have said it all.

The point I am trying to make is that Daniel truly loved the king. When he could have anger against the king for destroying his home and exiling him in a foreign land, or rejected the king for his errant worldview, Daniel loved the king instead.

I think this speaks volumes on how to influence culture. Doesn't it? It is easy to want to reject people that do not share a biblical worldview. It is easy to detest that which stands in contrast to biblical doctrine. But the example we see in Scripture is that influencing culture requires love for the people of the culture.

Daniel loved Nebuchadnezzar even though he was lost and hostile. Paul, the greatest missionary the world has ever seen, loved people so much that he engaged them in the marketplace, even if it means being stoned by them. Missionaries today to leave their homes and go to foreign lands because of the love they have for others. And love must also drive us. **We will never position ourselves to influence the lost if we do not first cultivate a love for them.**

Now, let's be clear here, though. While Daniel loved Nebuchadnezzar, he still spoke the truth, but it was saturated in love. Daniel held nothing back. Some commentators believe the reason the other wisemen couldn't tell the interpretation is because they didn't want to have to tell the king a hard truth.<sup>vi</sup> But love doesn't hide the truth. We tend to think that if you love someone you protect them, shield them, from hard truths. That's not love. It's the opposite.

I believe Daniel said what he said with a tear in his eye. Shaken with trepidation, hear the words of Daniel to the king. Verse 19. ***"My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!*** [Skip down to verse 27.] ***Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins*** [In other words, O king, repent] ***by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.***" Do you see the tear streaming down his cheek? Truth saturated in love.

**If we want to be a people that influence our culture, we must boldly proclaim the truths of God's Word but do so with a tear in our eyes.** The truth Daniel proclaims is the same truth Jesus proclaimed and is what we are to proclaim. Matthew 4:17, ***"From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"***

The reason we should preach this message with a tear in our eye is because of the devastation that awaits those who do not repent. Luke 13:3, ***"No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."***

### **ILLUSTRATION: Penn and Teller**

I once read an article that told of a time when Penn, from the famous pairing Penn and Teller, was given a bible following one of their shows. Penn is an outspoken atheist. When he was given that bible, he posted a video on YouTube about it. In that video, he makes a profound statement. "How much do you have to hate someone to hold back an action that you believe determines whether they live or die?"

Sharing the truth of eternity with someone, though it might be received as narrow-minded or difficult, is the most loving thing you can do. And when it is done in love, your true concern becomes obvious and impactful.

So, influencers of culture are humble and speak the truth in love. Thirdly, ...

### **3) Influencers of Culture... Trust God's Sovereignty.**

Let's look at how Daniel did this. Verses 28-37 of Daniel 4. ***28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, [the gardens of Babylon were considered to be one of the 7 wonders of the world.vii] which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"*** [We see the pride]. ***31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, 32 and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will."*** ***33 Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws. 34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to 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; 35 all the inhabitants of the earth are***

*accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"*<sup>36</sup> *At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me.*<sup>37</sup> **Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.**

I imagine Daniel was wondering when the interpretation of the dream was going to be fulfilled. A year passed. I bet he thought, "Did I miss something?" But what we see is the patience of God. 2 Peter 3:9 says, *"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*

It was not Daniel's place to determine the time of the punishment. It was simply his job to communicate the truth, urge repentance, and leave the rest up to God. In this same way we should trust God's Sovereign work.

We see here where Nebuchadnezzar is struck with a mental illness, lycanthropy.<sup>viii</sup> This is still an illness some deal with today. It is the belief that one is an animal and that leads them to behave as an animal. The king believes himself to be an ox and began behaving like an ox and even growing out his hair and his nails to resemble an animal's appearance.

I'm sure this worried Daniel. They were going to have to invoke the 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment. What was going to happen to the kingdom? How would the acting king lead? How would that person deal with Daniel's people, the Jews? Again, in God's sovereignty He worked His ultimate will both for His people and for king Nebuchadnezzar.

I believe we also see God's sovereignty in verse 37, Nebuchadnezzar's conversion, his salvation.<sup>ix</sup> **"37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble."** Of all the people on the planet at that time, he was the least likely to surrender his life to The Lord. But God. There is no one outside of the reach of the grace of God. We should trust God that His Word will not return void.

Influencers of culture are humble, speak the truth in love, and trust God to work everything for His glory.

### **CONCLUSION:**

As we conclude here this morning, I want to ask the band to come back up and lead us in a time of response. As they come, I want to ask you to consider king Nebuchadnezzar for a moment. One of the reasons that I believe he comes to faith in this experience is because of the components of his testimony.

He tells about his life prior to this experience. He was extremely prideful, arrogant, self-dependent, and polytheistic. Then he talks about what led to his life change. Battling a mental illness, God delivered him through it. He accepted the fact that he was errant in His ways and that God's judgment was just. He then told about how he began, praising The One, Most High, King of Heaven. This demonstrates not only a changed life but an acknowledgement of sin, and a change in theology, from polytheistic to monotheistic. Salvation in my view.

I think Nebuchadnezzar's story here confronts us all. It confronts us in three ways. First, have you come to the point in your life where you recognize that you are a sinner and in need of surrendering your life to Jesus? If not, your response here today is one of salvation. That while we were sinners, missing the mark of God's perfection, Jesus died in our place, by faith and trust in Him, we can be forgiven of our sin and enjoy a relationship with God. The other side of that decision is that apart from Jesus, we are still dead in our sin and face the reality of Hell. The first way this story confronts us is salvation.

Secondly, we are confronted with the reality of repentance. Truth be told, there are areas in our lives in which we need to repent, turn away from. What is it in your life that The Lord is speaking that truth to you?

Thirdly, this story confronts us in the area of influencing culture. Do you truly love the lost? Do you communicate the truth of God's Word with a tear in your eye? Do you proclaim the truth, or do you remain quiet so as to not offend? Are you leveraging your life for more than just what you do for a living? What areas of your life are you still walking in pride? These are the questions that confront us.

God desires to meet us where this story crosses our path. Do business with God this morning. Respond to His leading in your heart.

## ENDNOTES:

---

<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation of this message: Travis Agnew, “*Daniel [Series Overview]*”, article published on [travisagnew.org](http://travisagnew.org) on August 13, 2020; Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary: Daniel*, B&H Publishing, Nashville, 1994; Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Resolute: OT Commentary on Daniel*, David C Cook Publishing, 2000; J.A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Peeters Publishing, 1928; Bruce M. Hurt, “*Daniel 4 Commentary*,” article written October 28, 2021, accessed at: [https://www.preceptaustin.org/daniel\\_4\\_commentary](https://www.preceptaustin.org/daniel_4_commentary), February 2, 2022; Troy Rackliffe, “*Daniel part 5*,” preached at Glade Community Church in Daniels, WV, October 2020; Mark Driscoll, “*Kingdom Down #4: Jesus is King*” accessed at: <https://realfaith.com/sermon-series/kingdom-down/> February 1, 2022; Skip Heitzig, “*I Dare You: Submit!*,” taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, February 3, 2013. Gene Whithurst, “*The Book of Daniel Commentary*,” document sent to me via Gene.

<sup>ii</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Resolute: OT Commentary on Daniel*, David C Cook Publishing, 2000, page 61.

<sup>iii</sup> Gene Whithurst, “*The Book of Daniel Commentary*,” document sent to me via Gene, page 40.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> My friend and mentor, Troy Rackliffe, makes this point in his sermon entitled “*Daniel part 5*,” preached at Glade Community Church in Daniels, WV, October 2020.

<sup>vi</sup> Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary: Daniel*, page 135.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>viii</sup> T.A. Fahy, “*Lycanthropy: A Review*,” article published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Volume 82, January 1989, page 37. “The diagnosis of lycanthropy referred to a delusion of transformation into a wolf-like animal, but it has come to be used with less specificity.”

<sup>ix</sup> Many scholars believe this was Nebuchadnezzar’s salvation experience. However, there is disagreement on this. As Miller states (*The New American Commentary: Daniel*, page 144), “Wood, Young, Luck, Rushdoony, and Walvoord believe that the king had a genuine salvation experience; but others, including Calvin, Keil, Pusey, and Archer, think that the king’s faith fell short.”