

The Most High God! Daniel 4:1-37 Counter Culture

Do you like to hear a testimony? Do you know that you have a testimony? – You do, every one of us.

A)Some, God pulled you out of the pit – some, He saved you from the pit – saved Young.

B)But you have a testimony of what God did to save you!

1)And that testimony is still being written to include how God is continuing to save you –

C)He continues to save us from jams, from our own stupidity

1)He continues to rescue us.

D)Paul the apostle made this statement in Phil 3 – the reason Jesus apprehended me

1)That is also a part of your testimony that is being written – the reason he apprehended you.

One of my favorite nights of the year at our Church is Thanksgiving Eve

A)Great night of music and worship – but the highlight is – testimonies

B)What God has done to change a life – bring hope – help thru a trial – great time of refreshing and blessing!

1)There are so many amazing stories in our Church

D)Today we are going to hear a great testimony

1)Maybe one of the most remarkable ever uttered

E)Testimony of a Powerful King – who was brought low – stripped of all – but found God in the process!

Story of Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion!

A)I fully agree with Chuck Swindol's take – that this is a looking back Testimony

B)V.1-3 and V.37 are in the present tense – intro and close –

1)V.4-36 He is looking back on what happened to him!

C)He starts off like many testimonies do by giving praise to God for what He has done!

RD V.1-3

Nebuchadnezzar the king,

To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.

2 I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that **the Most High God** has worked for me.

3 How great are His signs, And how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation.

Nebuchadnezzar is Professing His Belief in the Most High God!

A)Now he is going to tell us how He got saved!

B)We find that Nebuchadnezzar was in his Palace one night/

1)He is the most powerful man in the world!

He has achieved all his dreams – all his desires

C)He is in this protected place! The **enemy** can't get to him - No **ASSASSIN** can touch him.

D)But God has no problem! No one can touch him

1) But God gives him a **Very Scary Dream!**

V.4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.

Dreams are a funny thing – A lot of times caused by stress of bad food. – Movies or stimulation.

A)I don't dream much – but my wife sure does Dreams in Color – wakes me up.

B)My weirdest dream – HR Puff in Stuff.

1)Guy who wrote that was on acid – bizarre kids program – Wizard of OZ meets Sesame Street

C)Villain was this Witch named **Witchy Poo**

D) I had a dream I fell in love with Witchy poo

1)I woke up Kissing my pillow - Traumatic **Counseling - Probably why I don't have dreams BUT As bad as that was – Nebuchadnezzar had an even Scariest Dream - He didn't know what it meant**

A) So Nebuchadnezzar does what he always does when he dreams and doesn't know what it means

6 Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation. {What else is new
8 But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God),

This is funny to me – Nebuchadnezzar knows there is something different with Daniel and HIS GOD

A) BUT he is not ready to give in YET!

B) Same is true of our unsaved friends - YOU might be their last resort –

1 But when in REAL - jam call a Christian

D) **DON'T LOSE HEART!** – Feel like not getting through – opportunity will arise!

So Nebuchadnezzar Calls Daniel and I told the dream before him, saying: 9 “Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, **and no secret troubles you**, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation.

10 These were the visions of my head while on my bed:

I was looking, and behold, **A tree in the midst of the earth, And its height was great.** 11 The tree grew and became strong; Its height reached to the heavens,

And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth.

12 Its leaves were lovely, **Its fruit abundant**, and in it was food for all. The **beasts of the field found shade** under it,

The **birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches**, And all flesh was fed from it.

13 “I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there **was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven.** 14 He cried aloud and said thus: ‘**Chop down the tree and cut off its branches**, Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches.

15 Nevertheless **leave the stump and roots in the earth**,

Bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth.

16 Let **his heart** be changed from that of a man, Let him be given **the heart of a beast**, and let seven times pass over him.

17 ‘This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the **Most High rules** in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.’ {Cry of the watcher

18 “**This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen.** Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since 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 God is in you.”

I love that last line: The Spirit of the Holy God is in you!

A) Nebuchadnezzar saw something in Daniel that was so different – **a different Spirit**

B) True of us – The Spirit of God is really residing in us! –

1) Quest – Do people actually see a different spirit in us?

C) Holy Spirit of God is wanting to live thru you and me!

Daniel gives the interpretation:

¹⁹ Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him.

NIV Daniel was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified{He knows this is bad

So the king spoke, and said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.” {**I am a big boy I can handle it**
Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies! {Wish this was for someone else – your enemies

20 "The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, 21 whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home—

22 it is you, O king, {Ut oh – this is not good.

22 it is you, O king who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.

23 "And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him';

24 this is the interpretation, O king, { You think Daniel has Nebuchadnezzar's undivided attention here? Daniel says this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:

25 They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.

So Daniel gives the interpretation – that a time is coming Nebuchadnezzar when you are going to be driven from your palace out into the fields

A) Cut down from this mighty tree to a Stump

B) Tells Nebuchadnezzar he is Going to go insane – be like a beast – for 7 times or seven years.

1) Living out in the fields like an animal

C) There is actually a technical term for this -

1) **Zooanthropy** – animal man.

D) **Boanthropy – Cowman** {A) Medical accounts of this happening to people.

1) 1946 – British mental institution – a patient in his early 20's

E) Went out and ate the grass – **all he ate** – if you have ever had some hospital food – maybe understand that!

This is what happened to Nebuchadnezzar – not Demon possession – but Divine Judgment!

A) But in the midst of the Divine Judgment God also displayed an array of Grace! **Daniel says V.26**

26 "And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured {returned} to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules.

B) Daniel says – After 7yrs of living like this – God is going to return your Kingdom –

1) No one is going to usurp your authority – over throw

C) Question is there any historical evidence that this ever happened to Nebuchadnezzar – 7yrs is a long time be away.

Well Daniel is a high official – probably revealed – Nebuchadnezzar is going to come back.

A) And it was the Babylonian practice to never reveal the defeats or negative aspects of their Kings.

B) They only recorded the good stuff – the positive stuff – and this is what is interesting.

1) There is no historical record of King Nebuchadnezzar's governmental activity between 582 B.C. and 575 B.C.

C) That 7 year silence is deafening,

Here is the point. God was after Nebuchadnezzar's heart!

V.27 Daniel offers a timely word of advice!

27 Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."

REPENT

Now you would think that WITH everything that Nebuchadnezzar has experienced thus far with Daniel and his friends –

A) At this point HE WOULD fall on his knees and repent

B) He doesn't do that – NO RESPONSE AT ALL IS RECORDED!

C) My Guess is Nebuchadnezzar probably thought - **hey Daniel's first interpretation hasn't happened" Dan Ch.2**

1) **I haven't been overthrown – my Kingdom's power and prosperity and property, the places I rule, has only grown."**

D) "I will worry about this later!"

THAT is such an easy thing to do isn't it - to think Oh I have time –

A) Nebuchadnezzar probably does that & He is partially right

A whole year goes by and nothing happens !

B) Easy to think - nothing is happening God must approve. {Not that big of a deal

1) That Warning from the Bible doesn't apply to me

C) Precious church – be careful when you start thinking that way.

Remember Nebuchadnezzar is giving his testimony – he is recounting what happened

A) He remembers it vividly – this type of HEAVY- moment - **you never forget.**

29 **At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon.**

30 **The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"**

B) He remembers how He was Boasting in his accomplishments

31 **While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."**

33 **That very hour the word was fulfilled**

concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

V32 is key why this was going down – "until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."

A) At the end of Chapter 3 Nebuchadnezzar refers to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as servants of the Most High God

B) **EL EL Yon** – Nebuchadnezzar doesn't know Him - He Doesn't fear Him

1) But he is acknowledging him {Daniel ch.3

C) In Daniel 4 the term The Most High is referred to 6 times.

Definitely a theme of this 4th Ch. as Nebuchadnezzar is going to learn the hard way – who the MOST HIGH IS!

A) That the Most High is God – He is to be worshipped!

B) Last week - I made the statement at the Vista Way Campus that this whole – supreme court ruling on Marriage

1) Is not an issue about equality – it is really an issue of Worship.

C) **Worship isn't just about singing** – it is about our lifestyle – **ALLIANCE** - Living our lives for a God

who is Sovereign

1) He is Sovereign in the affairs of men. –

D) He knows Best – He is to be trusted and followed

God is the most High - He belongs on the throne in our lives!

A) The first mention of this term THE MOST HIGH is found in Genesis 14.

B) After Abraham's victory over the four kings – he returns from the battle and is met by Melchizedek.

C) Melchizedek is referred to as the Priest of the Most High

1)first mention – Most High – EL EL YON

An interesting place where this term is used is in Isaiah 14.

A)It is there that the fall of Satan from Heaven. **Angel Lucifer is recorded!**

B)Isaiah 14 records the Problem –

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!

How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!

13 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven,

I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’

Now I find it interesting that Satan doesn’t say – I will be like the redeemer.

A)Or I will be like the one who binds up the broken hearted.

B)I will be like the one who sets the captives free

1)He doesn’t say: I will be like the *all wise God or like the all knowing God.*

C)Of all the attributes of God – Satan Keys in on this one.

1)I will be like the Most High – **In other words I will put my throne in PLACE OF HIS THRONE**

I will take Him off the throne and I will put myself in His Place.

A)And that my friends is really what has been at the heart of all rebellion, ever since.

B)I will take **God off the throne of my life** and put myself in His place.

C)That is man’s problem, that is our nations Problem.

The Problem with this nation is we think we know better than God.

A)Our nation was founded many years ago on a Judeo Christian Ethic.

B)Not a Judeo Christian doctrine or theology, but a Judeo Christian Ethic.

C)A system of right and wrong, that is based on a Sovereign that determines what is right and wrong.

D)That Sovereign who is God has given us a book – the Bible that lays out right and wrong.

1)That lays out – how life is to be lived in the fullest most satisfying way.

Our founding fathers were God fearing men who realized that there is a Sovereign God who rules over the affairs of men.

A)Benjamin Franklin said *“If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without God knowing it, I doubt that a nation can rise without His Help.”*

B)But NOW in this nation we have decided that we want to take God off the throne.

1)No longer do we want to be **one nation UNDER God** – we want to be **one nation OVER GOD!**

C)**Prayer out of our Schools** – We take the 10 Commandments out of our Courts.

1)We try to take Christ out of Christmas

D)And now taken God out of Marriage!

But before we get too mad at our nation and our supreme court Justices

A)Be honest – we struggle with this all the time in our personal lives

B)**Bible tells us husbands** – Love our wives as Christ loved the Church. – Serve them

1)Prefer their needs above our own – And yet we resist that – thinking – She will walk all over me.

C)Wives: Equal opportunity offender - Wives submit to your husbands – let him lead – you support.

1)Can’t do that God – he will take us in the wrong direction. – **“He is not that smart”**

Couples come in for marriage counseling – our first goal is not to figure out how to get the wheels back on

A)We first need to discover why they came off.

B)Or as I heard it put this week – our primary goal is to figure out where is the idol?

C)At what point or area in this thing - did they take God off the throne and put **themselves on the throne.**

But it is not just something that married couples struggle with – not just in marriage

A)How many things are there in our personal lives – where our hands are all over the steering wheel.

B)And our actions are declaring - I can't trust God in this – He needs my help

C)All of that is a worship issue.

1)A failure to acknowledge that He is the most High God

God is Sovereign – He loves us – He knows best

A)He is worth trusting!

B)It really comes down to that - If God is the MOST HIGH – How Should We Respond?

1)What should our lives look like in relationship to that.

C)Nebuchadnezzar had to learn this the hard way- what about you? What about me?

4 Incredible TAKEAWAYS in this story!

#1 Reminder: Those who exalt themselves will be humbled!

1 Peter 5:5, 6 - "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

We have a Choice: Humble ourselves before God or be Humbled by God!

A)Nebuchadnezzar's pride was seen in the fact that he thought all he accomplished was because of him!

B)Nebuchadnezzar took all the glory for the greatness of his kingdom; he did not give glory to God.

C) Nebuchadnezzar Says I will exalt myself and God says – You will be humbled.

#1 Reminder: Those who exalt themselves will be humbled!

2. Reminds us that God is AFTER man's heart!

A)All that happens to the king will be done NOT for his ultimate destruction, but for his Salvation & restoration.

B)For Jonah it was a Whale – Nebuchadnezzar – becomes like a beast

C)God pursues us – He is so after our hearts –

1)Some of you pursuing – right now – Save you

D)Already saved but not fully surrendered –

1)Sometimes he allows difficulty to come into our lives

God's judgment is painful because he is cutting away the sin that pulls us away from him.

A)Think of it this way: Go to the doctor – He says tests reveal Cancer – ok - small hasn't spread

B)We can do surgery and remove it!

1)You respond – no thanks – surgery hurts – leaves a scar – NOT GOING WITH THAT!

DOC SAY "If we don't do the surgery, you'll die," Only way to live is to endure the pain!

A)So too God's disciplinary judgment is rarely easy and never painless.

B)In Nebuchadnezzar's case, it was utterly devastating and totally humiliating.

C)Sometimes God has to prune the tree down in order to save it.

1)But that cutting process may go on for many months and it may be done in a most public fashion.

D)But ultimately God's heart is to save / to bless / to restore -

V.34 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding 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 is from generation to generation.

35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

36 At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me.

Amazing that after his reason had returned that he not only gained his former glory but he surpassed it as well!

A) So that is how Nebuchadnezzar came to believe and follow the most High God – Jehovah.

B) End of his testimony – V.37 – speaking back in the present tense

37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

#1 Reminder: Those who exalt themselves will be humbled!

2. Reminds us that God is AFTER man's heart!

#3. REMINDER: Authority is not a position of status but a place of service.

A) Men seek to rise to positions of power and authority so that others under them might serve them.

B) So it was with Nebuchadnezzar:
Nebuchadnezzar failed to grasp the purpose for his kingdom in the divine economy.

C) He looked at his kingdom in terms of how well it promoted and displayed his own power and glory, not in terms of the purpose for which God had ordained it.

D) God places men in authority so that they may serve those under them.

Leadership is not characterized by status but by service and self-sacrifice.

Jesus' example: Night of His betrayal day before His death – Washing feet!

A) That was the picture of His whole life.

B) Leadership is about – helping those under you discover their gifts and fulfill their full potential

C) As believers – In the home – in ministry environments

1) Our goal is to help people discover who they are in Christ – **how gifted** – help them flourish in their *offings*!

#4. Reminder: God's discipline lasts until we learn the lessons He wants to teach us.

A) I am sure some of you feel as if God is shaking you tree right now.

B) And you want to know how long it will last. The only possible answer is, I don't know.

C) The trials of life are ordained by the Lord for our benefit. –

1) He alone knows when they will begin and end.

D) But of this much I am sure. **God will never shake your tree one moment longer than necessary.**

1) Fire never hotter than one degree necessary -

So if you find yourself in a hard and uncertain place, and if you long for days of contentment and peace, be patient.

A) Wait on the Lord. Don't run ahead of God.

B) And don't waste time telling him how to do His Job!

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and in due time he will lift you up.

Sooner or later, all mankind will be humbled before God and acknowledge His sovereignty.

A) Nebuchadnezzar bowed before God after seven years of humiliation.

B) He became a worshipper of the One true God. He will continue to worship and serve God for all eternity.

C) What Nebuchadnezzar did many years ago, every man and woman will do in the future.

1) One day – Everyone is going to bow – Confess

D) He is Most High God – Sovereign - King of kings – Lord of lords

1) He is the Divine rescuer