

# Daniel: *Dual Book of History & Prophecy*

The following are general time frames for the first four chapters of Daniel:

Chapter 1: 605-603 B.C., Chapter 2: 602-603 B.C., Chapter 3: 597-585 B.C., Chapter 4: 563-562 B.C.

**Job 33:14-30** *God does speak – now one way, now another – though man may not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds, he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, to turn man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride, to preserve his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword. Or a man may be chastened on a bed of pain with constant distress in his bones, so that his very being finds food repulsive and his soul loathes the choicest meal. His flesh wastes away to nothing, and his bones, once hidden, now stick out. His soul draws near to the pit, and his life to the messengers of death. Yet if there is an angel on his side as a mediator, one out of a thousand, to tell a man what is right for him, to be gracious to him and say, “Spare him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom for him” – then his flesh is renewed like a child’s; it is restored as in the days of his youth. He prays to God and finds favor with him, he sees God’s face and shouts for joy; he is restored by God to his righteous state. Then he comes to men and says, “I sinned, and perverted what was right, but I did not get what I deserved. He redeemed my soul from going down to the pit, and I will live to enjoy the light.” God does all these things to a man – twice, even three times – to turn back his soul from the pit, that the light of life may shine on him.*

## Chapter 4 – Pride, Punishment, Redemption

This story of King Nebuchadnezzar’s experience, written by his own hand, illustrates the ability of God to humble the pride/power of mankind and bring the world into submission to His sovereignty.

### King Nebuchadnezzar Introduced His Proclamation (Verses 1-3)

**1-3** Nebuchadnezzar addressed all people <sup>Daniel 3:4, 6:25</sup> with great humility and understanding that resulted from the experiences described in the rest of this chapter. First, he wished goodness on the people – something he had not concerned himself with prior to this time. Next, the king joyfully claimed there is a God over everyone, and this God cared about him and blessed him with “miraculous signs and wonders” <sup>Exodus 7:3, Nehemiah 9:10, Acts 2:22,43</sup>.

In his final introductory statement, the king recognized God’s power and eternal existence. This chapter is a testimony from the king to the world about how God taught him the truths of life. The first verse is a natural form of such decrees: name of sender, recipients and a general greeting.

### Once again, the Wise Men Could Not Interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream (Verses 4-7)

**4-5** Nebuchadnezzar started his story with a description of the initial circumstances of his experience: he was at home, content <sup>Psalms 30:6</sup> and prosperous <sup>Jeremiah 12:1</sup>. However, with all the tangible *things* he possessed, a dream made him afraid; in fact, the dream terrified him. Trust in worldly possessions is a sin <sup>Job 31:24-28</sup>; security can only be found in the Lord <sup>Proverbs 14:26, 18:10</sup>.

**6-7** In order to deal with his terror, the king commanded his wise men to come to him and interpret the dream. Unlike his previous dream, the king described this dream <sup>Daniel 2:5</sup> to his

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advisors and asked them to interpret it. Even though they were told the dream <sup>Daniel 2:4,10</sup>, the wise men had to admit they could not give the interpretation <sup>Genesis 41:8, Daniel 5:8,15</sup>.

### The King Described the Dream to Daniel (Verses 8-18)

**8-9** For some reason, Daniel was not with the "wise men" when Nebuchadnezzar spoke to them, but as soon as Daniel came, the king was confident in Daniel's ability to interpret the dream, because of his connection with the "holy gods" (the king's polytheistic perspective still existed at this time). The king addressed him as both Daniel (his Hebrew name, meaning 'my judge is God') to honor his association with the Hebrew God and Belteshazzar <sup>Daniel 1:7</sup> (his Babylonian name, meaning 'may Bel protect his life'), because the decree was going out to the entire Babylonian kingdom. While he was still polytheistic, the king recognized Daniel actually had the spirit of the true God ("the spirit of the gods" <sup>Daniel 5:11-12</sup>) in him (very similar to the Pharaoh knowing Joseph had the "spirit of God" in him <sup>Genesis 41:38</sup>).

Being "chief of magicians" <sup>Daniel 2:48,4:9</sup>, many scholars believe Daniel must have taught the wise men about Hebrew Scriptures, laying the foundation for the Magi who came to find the Christ <sup>Matthew 2:1-12</sup>.

**10-12** Nebuchadnezzar began to describe the "visions I saw while lying in my bed" (Biblically referred to as a time of reflection <sup>Psalms 4:4</sup>), beginning with an "enormous" tree "in the middle of the land". The tree grew so big that it "touched the sky" and could be seen from all over. The leaves of the tree were "beautiful" and the fruit "bountiful", and the tree provided "shelter" and food for the "beasts of the field" and the "birds of the air".

**13-17** The king continued by describing a messenger (a "holy one") coming down from heaven. He loudly called for the tree to be cut down and stripped of its branches, leaves and fruit, ruining its ability to feed and shelter. The stump and roots would remain, but not grow at this time. It seems apparent the tree and the stump referred to a man who would live with the animals. The man's "mind" would be transformed to that of a beast for "seven times". The "decision announced by messengers" was a judgement upon the man, in order to compel him to realize that the "Most High" God was/is sovereign <sup>Psalms 83:18, 103:19, Romans 13:1</sup>.

The messenger saying "the Most High" could give kingdoms to the "lowliest of men" <sup>1 Samuel 2:7-8, Job 5:11</sup> was in direct contrast to the prideful perspective and statements of King Nebuchadnezzar <sup>v.28-29</sup>.

**18** The king reiterated his confidence Daniel would be able to interpret the dream <sup>Genesis 41:15</sup>.

### Daniel Interpreted the Dream for the King (Verses 19-27)

**19** Daniel (Belteshazzar) was "terrified" <sup>Daniel 7:15,28, 8:27, 10:16-17</sup> by what he had to tell the king, so he paused for a moment. Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel not to worry about whatever he had to say, but Daniel still wished that the dream only applied to the enemies of the king.

Point to ponder: Some suggest the reason for Daniel's terror was that he had prayed for and grown close to Nebuchadnezzar and was afraid the dream would result in the king rejecting God <sup>see note v.33</sup>.

**20-22** Daniel began the interpretation by restating the characteristics of the enormous tree.

He redescribed the tree's leaves, fruit and shelter <sup>Ezekiel 31:5-6</sup>, and then announced the tree  
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and its characteristics (greatness, abundance, power <sup>Jeremiah 27:6-7, Ezekiel 19:11, Daniel 5:18-19</sup>) were symbolic of King Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian kingdom <sup>Ezekiel 31:2-3</sup>.

Trees are common Biblical symbols for men/kingdoms <sup>Psalms 1:1-3, 37:35, 52:8, Jeremiah 17:7-8, Ezekiel 17:22-23</sup>.

**23-26** Daniel reminded the king about the messenger ("holy one" <sup>Deuteronomy 33:2, Daniel 8:13</sup>) coming down from heaven, who announced the demise of the tree <sup>Job 24:20, Ezekiel 31:10-12</sup>. He then prepared the king for the dream's interpretation in a decree from God <sup>Jeremiah 40:2</sup>. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar he would lose his kingly position, and begin to live as a wild animal <sup>Daniel 5:21</sup> for "seven times". Following that time span, he would finally recognize the sovereignty of God ("the Most High") <sup>v.17</sup> over all earthly kingdoms <sup>Daniel 5:21</sup>. The meaning of the stump being left was that the king would be allowed to regain his royal position when he acknowledged "that Heaven rules" <sup>Job 25:2, Psalm 22:28, Daniel 2:37, Ephesians 1:18-21</sup>.

The word "messenger" from heaven undoubtedly referred to an angel (*Greek aggelos: messenger*).

The meaning of the stump "bound with iron and bronze" is controversial, but since the stump refers to Nebuchadnezzar in his 'bestial' condition, the binding may refer to his bondage to sin <sup>Romans 6:16</sup>.

The king living like an "animal" <sup>v.15,16,23,25,32</sup> is an accurate analogy of a person living without God.

In this chapter, each use of the phrase "seven times" <sup>v.16,23,25,32</sup> refers to seven years. When "times" appears by itself (without a numerical value and in this context), it specifically refers to two years, as later used to define the length of the Great Tribulation by Daniel and John <sup>Daniel 7:25, 12:7, Revelation 12:14</sup>.

Time, times & half a time is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, also defined as 42 months <sup>Rev. 11:2, 13:5</sup> and 1260 days <sup>Rev. 11:3, 12:6</sup>.

**27** Daniel made a plea to King Nebuchadnezzar to humble himself <sup>1 Kings 21:29</sup>, repent of his "wickedness" <sup>Isaiah 55:6-7</sup> and change his ways in the hope that God would restore <sup>Psalms 41:3</sup> him to his position as king (i.e., that his "prosperity will continue" <sup>Jeremiah 29:7</sup>).

Even though Daniel knew the king would be restored, Daniel still encouraged him to repent <sup>see Daniel 9</sup>.

### The Dream's Fulfillment: The King was Brought Low (Verses 28-33)

**28** This verse is a simple statement indicating that everything happened just as the dream had specified (i.e., God said it, and because He was/is sovereign, it happened <sup>Numbers 23:19</sup>).

**29-30** A year(!) after the dream and the interpretation (long enough for the king's memory of the dream and its interpretation to begin to fade), Nebuchadnezzar was enjoying a walk on his palace roof (a common place to spend an evening, especially at the end of a warm day). In his kingly pride, Nebuchadnezzar was admiring *his* "glory" <sup>Isaiah 10:13, 13:19, 37:24-25</sup> exhibited by the phrases "royal residence", his "mighty power", and his "majesty".

*The LORD detests all the proud of heart.* <sup>Proverbs 16:5a</sup>

Inscriptions have been found for about fifty significantly-sized buildings in Babylon. One of the architectural wonders that King Nebuchadnezzar had created and was proudly admiring that evening must have been the Gardens of Semiramis (on a roof of one of the buildings in Babylon), better known as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World).

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**31-32** The king had barely spoken the prideful statements when “a voice came from heaven” announcing the king’s loss of his “royal authority” <sup>2 Samuel 22:28, Daniel 5:20</sup>. The Heavenly voice continued by telling the king he would go from living with people to living with wild animals. The voice finished with the statement that once “seven times” (years) passed, he would proclaim the sovereignty of “the Most High” who gives “to anyone he wishes” <sup>Jeremiah 27:5</sup>.

**33** It was reemphasized that the dream became reality: the king turned into a wild animal. Lycanthropy is a known mental disorder in which the patient believes he is a wolf (or other animal). According to the Babylonian Talmud, Daniel provided the care for Nebuchadnezzar during this time.

### The Restoration of King Nebuchadnezzar (Verses 34-37)

**34-35** The king admitted that at the end of the seven years, he humbled himself before God. As a result, God honored His promise to return Nebuchadnezzar’s humanness (sanity), and so he praised, honored and glorified God: “who lives forever” <sup>Daniel 12:7</sup>, whose kingdom is eternal <sup>Psalms 145:13, Isaiah 37:16, Luke 1:31-33</sup> & who “does as he pleases” <sup>Psalms 115:3, 135:6, Jonah 1:14</sup>. He continued by recognizing that man’s prideful power is insignificant (“nothing” <sup>Isaiah 40:17</sup>) compared to God’s unlimited power (“sovereignty” <sup>Deuteronomy 3:24, Psalm 68:20, Isaiah 40:10</sup>). Nebuchadnezzar even stated “no one can hold back [God’s] hand” <sup>Deuteronomy 32:39, Isaiah 14:27</sup> or even question Him <sup>Job 9:12, 38:1-4, 40:6-9, 42:1-6</sup>.

**36-37** God immediately returned Nebuchadnezzar’s earthly “glory of [his] kingdom” <sup>Daniel 5:18</sup>. In response, Nebuchadnezzar proudly praised, exalted and glorified God <sup>Exodus 15:2, Psalm 34:3</sup> as the “King of heaven”. In addition, he fully admitted God is “just” <sup>Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalm 33:4-5</sup> and “He is able to humble” any prideful man <sup>Job 40:11-12, Psalm 18:27, 119:21, Isaiah 13:11</sup>.

God supernaturally imposed <sup>v.33</sup> and relieved <sup>v.36</sup> Nebuchadnezzar’s malady (sanity).

Point to ponder: The previously prideful pagan king sent this proclamation to all parts of his kingdom.

This is the last account of the specifics of the life of King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel.

The 3 steps in the maturing of Nebuchadnezzar’s faith: (1) he learned of God’s omniscience <sup>Daniel 2</sup>, (2) he learned of God’s omnipotence <sup>Daniel 3</sup> and (3) he learned of the active sovereignty of God <sup>Daniel 4</sup>.

This story illustrates the primary aspects of the salvation process:

1. Man’s pride makes himself the center of his universe.
2. God reveals himself to man.
3. God brings the proud man low.
4. Man recognizes God for who He is.
5. Man yields himself to God’s sovereignty.

Remember: Salvation can be defined as *a faith that leads to obedience*.

***Do you believe Nebuchadnezzar was and is saved?***