

Daniel 4 – Turn from pride and acknowledge God rules

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Main point – God rules over and through authorities, so turn from pride and respect authorities.

How do you feel about those in authority over you?-----

I think we're ok if they make decisions we agree with.-----

It's hard to submit to or respect leaders we don't think are worthy of respect.-----

I don't know what you thought about Donald **Trump**?**(SLIDE)**

He wasn't even our president but everyone seemed to have an opinion.

And many people in the US, and here, were happy to tear him down online and to their friends.-----

Some called him a 'Screaming carrot demon', or worse.-----

And in Victoria, the lockdowns Daniel **Andrews****(SLIDE)** and his government brought in last year, led to much disrespectful language, on facebook, twitter, everywhere.

Now I haven't agreed with lots of his decisions, which have hurt and harmed many.

But 'Dictator Dan is trying to build a Covid Gulag', or #DanLiedPeopleDied, or the explicit language people use about him, all oozes disrespect.-----

So when the Bible tells us that God puts people in their positions of authority, maybe it should make us pause before we speak.-----

For maybe we first need to turn from our pride, and acknowledge God rules.-----

Daniel 4**(SLIDE)** is the last chapter that features Nebuchadnezzar.

And right from ch1 God has graciously been seeking to educate Nebuchadnezzar, Neb, about who God is.

In ch2 Neb learnt that it is the God of Daniel, the God of heaven, who is all wise, and who reveals mysteries.

In ch3 Nebuchadnezzar was meant to learn that the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, was able to rescue them from his power. -----

And Nebuchadnezzar then praised this Most High God, at least with his words.

Yet he still hadn't accepted that God really is sovereign, he rules over Neb.-----

So his education continues here.-----

Neb was trying to educate the youth in ch1, now he completes his education, and gets out of school. 😊 (maybe you're in Yr12 and trying to do that too 😊)-----

The first verse reveals that the whole chapter is a confession or testimony by Nebuchadnezzar, in the form of an open letter, addressed to all people everywhere.

He writes to tell all humanity, of his humbling experience before the Most High God, who reigns, who is mighty, whose kingdom is eternal.-----

And we'll come back to that at the end.

But how does he get to that point?-----

My sermon today has 4 points, the **first being about the Dream**.**(SLIDE)**.-----

When Neb was at ease and flourishing, **v4**, just when all was going well, he has this dream which makes him afraid.

From ch2 we know who's given him the dream don't we?----- The Lord.-----

So who knows why he goes first to the wise men of Babylon, and not Daniel who helped him in ch2.-----

And either because God's kept them from knowing the truth, or they're too scared to tell the King bad news, the wise men say they don't know what it means.

So Neb calls for Daniel, and tells him the dream.-----

And like in **Ezek 31** an empire or kingdom is compared to a great tree.-----[cf. Mt13.32]

The top of this huge strong tree, **v11**, reaches to the sky.

Sky is also the word for heaven in the original language, and this may hint that Neb's pride also reaches up to heaven?----- Reminiscent of the Tower of Babel.-----

The tree gives great protection and provision for animals and birds, that is people.----

All seems well, until a messenger from heaven announces the tree is to be cut down, leaving only a stump (**v15**) which is bound in iron.

That's an image of being demolished, and restrained.
 And yet the stump remaining suggests there is hope, hope of regeneration.----
 Still, he will be soaked from the rain, outside with the plants n' animals.
 But worse than that, his mind will become that of an animal, a beast.
 And the punchline is in **v17**,
 This is so that the living will know that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms.
 He gives them to anyone he wants, and sets the lowliest of people over them.-----

And what's the interpretation of the dream, **Point 2, What's it Mean?-----**
 Notice first in **v19** that Daniel is stunned and alarmed, when he thinks about what the dream means – for he knows what it means.
 And Daniel says he wishes the dream could be about Neb's enemies, not him.
 Isn't that amazing?-----
 Maybe this is safe protocol, and Daniel's being diplomatic, preparing him for bad news.
 Or it may be heartfelt – for he really cares about the King.
 But let's not fail to notice this.
 When Daniel has the chance to speak the truth to power, to the Kingdom of the Babylonian Empire, more than respect, there is care.-----
 Daniel isn't happy about the downfall, or wish for Neb's removal.
 He wishes him well and seeks his good.-----
 To the King who defeated Israel n' destroyed the Jerusalem temple,
 who carried Daniel, his friends n' thousands of Jews off as slaves to a foreign land;
 to the pagan king who worships false gods, who quickly loses his temper,
 who commanded people worship an idol, and sought to burn his 3 friends death;
 to this man, Daniel shows respect.
 And more than respect, care.-----
 A love for his enemy, shall we say.-----
 I wonder if that's true of us.-----
 I'm not saying its wrong to pray for an evil persecuting dictator to be removed, whether a Khamenei or Rouhani of Iran, or Kim Jong-un of North Korea.
 I'm not saying it's wrong to pray for a change of government in Australia or anywhere. But do you seek and pray for their good?-----
 We'll come back to this.

But what does the dream mean?
 In **v20-21** after a long sentence and build up, Daniel finally says... 'that tree is YOU your majesty'.
 And King, you will have no shelter n' live among the beasts of the earth, **v23**;
 eat grass like a cow(**SLIDE**), for 7 periods of time, **v25**.
 Whether that was 7 months or years, we don't know.-----
 So the fate of the one who wants to be a god, or be like God, is to become less than a man, less than a human being.-----
 Again the point is, this will happen, 'until you acknowledge that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms, and he gives them to anyone he wants'.-----

Daniel then boldly, speaks truth and a call to change to the King in **v27**.
 'Separate yourself from your sins by doing what is right, and from your injustices by showing mercy to the needy. Perhaps there will be an extension of your prosperity.'
 Just like you break a piece of **Kit Kat** Chocolate away from the rest, (**SLIDE**) Daniel is calling Neb to break-away from, repent of his sins.
 A ruler of government ought to do right, n' display mercy and kindness, not bring oppression and terror.-----
 So King Neb had a scary dream, and it's about Him, and his downfall and demise.
 But will he listen, will he learn?-----

Will he respond rightly, and be restored to his throne?-----

What Happens.(SLIDE)

What will Happen is, the God-given dream will be fulfilled.-----

A year later, **v29**, Neb's on the roof of his palace admiring what he thought were his achievements.

Being on the roof was a place of danger for Kings – David knew that.

Remember that's where David first saw Bathsheba, who he committed adultery with.---

And Neb boastfully says, "Is this not Babylon the Great that I have built, to be a royal residence by my vast power and for my majestic glory?"

And before he's finished speaking the voice from heaven booms, with God's judgement – you've lost your kingdom.

'You will feed on grass like cattle for seven periods of time, until you acknowledge that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms, and he gives them to anyone he wants'.

And it was fulfilled, **v33** - 'He was driven away from people. He ate grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with dew from the sky, until his hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.'-----

I remembered this week there is a mental illness called, **Boanthropy**, where a person believes they are a cow.(**SLIDE**)

I think the youth had fun drawing what King Nebuchadnezzar may have looked like.

Kids maybe you could try drawing him as a animal.

Here's another artist's attempt.(**SLIDE**)-----

If you lived out in the wild a long time your hair and nails would grow long.-----

But whether or not God gave him a severe case of boanthropy, the point is theological not medical.

Neb thought he was a god, so God made him become a beast, to learn he's only a man, only human.-----

The great and powerful Nebuchadnezzar, is now bowed low, weak and delusional.

The proud one is humbled, by the true God.-----

Our final and main point, is Learn(SLIDE)

What does Neb learn, what are we to learn?----

We read some wonderful words in **v34**,

'But at the end of those days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven, and my sanity returned to me. Then I praised the Most High'.

The man who thinks he's a god must become a beast to learn he's only human.

And after being humbled to a beastly state, Neb now looks up to heaven.

Her recognizes his dependence on God, and turns to God.

His looking to God I believe is also and act of repentance and faith.-----

Neb was full of his own importance before, thinking the world revolved around him, now faith has led to the return of his reason.-----

We need to do this too – turn away from boasting and selfish pride, and look to God, humbly turn to him, in repentance and faith.-----

We and all people need to turn to the Lord, who's the source of our life and sanity.-----

Nebuchadnezzar has gained a fear of the Lord, an awe-filled submission to the Lord.---

He's experienced a change of heart.

The penny has dropped. He's graduated from school.-----

Will we see Neb in heaven?---- I think maybe.-----

And after his sanity returned what's his first response?-----

To praise the Most High God, **v34**, to honour and glorify the God who lives forever, who rules forever; and rules over every-one.-----

He rightly declares God can do what he wants, and decides what will happen.----
Then, **v36**, Neb's rule and position and glory is returned to him, but now he knows it has come from the Lord.

After his kingdom is returned to him **v37** he again wants to praise the King of heaven. Whom always does right, and 'is able to humble those who walk in pride'.-----
That was Neb's experience, and it is true.-----

So what should we learn(SLIDE) from Neb's experience and testimony?-----

4 things. **First, That God rules.----**

Do you agree that God will rule and have dominion forever, v34?---

That God can do as he wants, v35?---

That as we heard repeated over and over, God rules over human kingdoms and gives them to anyone He wants – v17, v25, v32?-----

As Christians we might agree theoretically, but that means the rulers of all nations have been appointed by God.

Even Khamenei and Rouhani over Iran, Kim Jong-un in North Korea,

the persecuting military over Myanmar; Trump, then Biden over the US.---

In Australia, previously, the elders of the indigenous peoples,

now Queen Elizabeth & Scott Morrison,

[Acts19.26-27]

Daniel Andrews over Victoria, and the local MP in your electorate;

as good or as horrible as that is.-----

And this is exactly what **Rom 13** says.

(SLIDE) Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God. ² So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves.

God institutes and puts in place all those in authority, and he can achieve his good purposes, even through those who choose to do evil.-----

Believe God rules over everyone n' everything.-----

2nd thing to learn is, to respect those authorities, n' those in authority.

Rom 13 v7 tells us,(**SLIDE**) 'Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor.'-----

We saw Daniel giving honour n' respect to the King over him.

And we are to give honour and respect to those in authority over us.-----

Now authorities ought to maintain peace and order, and punish wrongdoers.-----

Dan 4.**22**, they ought to do what is right, and care for the poor n' needy.-----

And this **covid pandemic** has led many to a love/ hate response to our government's decisions.

So many views in Victoria about the lockdowns, so much hostility from people, even online.--

I certainly haven't agreed with all Premier Andrew's decisions.

And the impact on people's well-being, finances, mental health has been devastating for many.-----

But even where we disagree and are convinced our ruler is wrong, Rom 13 still says submit and respect them.-----

Unless we are called to sin, as we saw last week, then we must obey.-----

How are you going at that and obeying the restrictions?-----

Are you willing to obey God in Rom 13 and submit, and show respect?-----

When you're convinced the government's not right Will you still control what you do n' say to others, say online?-----

Are your words spoken or written, to or about the government gracious and seasoned with salt?-----

Does humility or pride come through in what you say, even when you're asking for things to change?-----

And Will you pray for those ruling over you, as **1Tim 2** commands, for their good?---

Pray even that Daniel Andrews and others, will turn from pride & humbly turn to the Lord, and do what is right, or keep doing it.-----

3rd thing for us to learn is,(SLIDE) we also should turn from pride.-----

Nebuchadnezzar became like an animal, until he acknowledged that the Most High God rules, and gives positions of authority to anyone he wishes.

And God is able to humble those who walk in pride, v37.-----

Neb came to know that.

Do you know that?-----

Or do you need God to teach you, and bring you low, to give you humility?-----

While none of us are ruling over an Empire, city or palace, Do you look over your home, your family, your achievements, your business, and say,

Is this not the great thing which I have built by my work, my skill, my strength?-----

Are you taking pride in something you've done, when you've forgotten the Lord gave that good thing to you, and the strength and skills, life and breath, to be able to?-----

In **John Calvin's words**, 'when God gives us a certain level of dignity, power and wealth, we forget ourselves to be men [and women], and we snatch away God's honour from him and desire to substitute ourselves for him.'-----

Are you proudly saying, "God I may not rule anything or anyone else, but I rule my life, and I don't want you telling me how to live it."-----

Maybe you're a child or teenager and thinking, "I don't want to submit to God and do what he says. I don't want to live with Jesus as Lord over my life & every part of it.

I want to live my life my way, thank you very much."-----

If that's you, then be warned.-----

God is able to humble those who walk in pride?-----

And pride comes before a fall.-----[Prov16.18]

So know that one day you will stand before the judgment seat of God, and the Lord **Jesus will judge you.**

In **John 5** Jesus says,(**SLIDE**) God 'has granted him[Jesus] the right to pass

judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not be amazed at this, because a time is

coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done good things, to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked things, to the resurrection of condemnation.

We're not saved by our good works.

But our good works flow from faith.

Our trust in Jesus will show itself in good things n' obedience to God.-----

What are you going to do when your time has come

And your life is done, and there's nothing you can stand on?

What will you have to say at the judgment throne?-----

I already know the only thing that I can say:

I Trust in Jesus

My great Deliverer My strong Defender

The Son of God.

I trust in Jesus Blessed Redeemer

My Lord forever

The Holy One.-----[Third Day]-----

For Jesus is not only the Lord and Judge but he is the Saviour.
 And if we trust in him, who died in our place, if we trust in him then, our sins get forgiven.
 Our pride is all forgiven.
 Jesus delivers us.-----
 So if you've not done that yet, I ask you to trust in Jesus.-----

4th n' final thing for us to learn is, to praise God in response.(SLIDE)

This chapter is the longest portion of writing by a non-Israelite in the OT.
 It contains Nebuchadnezzar's words, who was possibly a believer at the end of his life, and is sandwiched in praise.

He begins and ends with praise.-----

He's saying in **v2-3**, God is great, and he will rule forever, and Neb wants everyone, from every people, nation and language to know that.-----

Neb praises God for his total sovereignty over all things, all people, and even for humbling him, as he was brought as low as a beast.-----

Interestingly, in **ch7** human authorities are also pictured as beasts, and it is the Son of Man [7.14], Jesus, who's given all authority and everlasting dominion.-----

So ask yourself, if God does rule, and Jesus does rule, doesn't he deserve your praise and mine?(**SLIDE**)-----

If you know you were humbled under the weight of your sin, and turned to Jesus for life and forgiveness, and a place in God's eternal kingdom, then doesn't he deserve praise?-----

And does praise come out in your prayers, or do you only ask for things?-----

And do you praise God before others as Neb does, or are we too scared, too shy?---

God has saved us brothers and sisters that we would proclaim his praises.(1Pet 2.9)

Will you do that shortly in singing from your heart?-----

Will you praise God in front of your child, as you share what you can thank God for?-----

What could you praise God for when you speak to your work colleague tomorrow, talk to your friend on the phone, or chat with a neighbour next door?-----

Not in a pushy, bible-bashy way, but as you start to bring God into your everyday conversation, because he's so much a part of your life, and so great!-----

What have we learnt?

We should respect those God has placed to rule over us.

God rules and we don't.

So turn from your pride and praise him for who he is and what he has done.-----

Learn the lesson Nebuchadnezzar learnt, before it's too late for you.-----

Let's pray.