A Personal Lesson in Humility
Daniel 4
November 8th, 2026

1. Opening testimony: God is _____ (4:1-3)

2. _____ (4:4-18)

3. _____ (4:19-27)

4. _____ (4:28-33)

5. Closing testimony: I've been _____ (4:34-37)

6. Applying the Word
    a. _____ yourself.
    b. _____ that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on Daniel 4

1. Why is pride easier to see in others than in ourselves?

2. Compare the opening and closing testimonies of the chapter in vv. 1-3 and 34-37. What is repeated? What is emphasized?

3. What specifically does Daniel advise the king to do in v. 27? What does that indicate about the expression of Nebuchadnezzar's pride?

4. What is the problem with Nebuchadnezzar's self-reflection in v. 30? How might we be guilty of similar self-reflection, even if we don't verbalize it to others?

5. How would you describe the experience that humbled Nebuchadnezzar? Why would that have led to his humility and recognition of God's sovereignty and rule?

6. Compare Nebuchadnezzar's response in this chapter to his response in 2:47 and 3:28. Do you think we can conclude there has been a clear conversion by the end of chapter 4? Why or why not?

7. How can we practically "humble ourselves" (James 4:10)? What steps should we take? What must we believe in order to be humble?

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Big idea: God rules over humanity and humbles the proud.

Intro

C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* observed, "A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you."

Pride is a problem for many reasons.

It damages relationships and leads to isolation as other find it difficult to be around a pride person.

It makes one unteachable, harming the proud person who would otherwise benefit from the instruction of others.

It limits our worship and enjoyment of God, because we fail to appreciate His greatness and goodness.

For three chapters, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar has been a key side character.

In chapter 1, he conquered Jerusalem and brought the Jewish exiles to Babylon.

In chapter 2, he had a dream about future kingdoms that Daniel interpreted.

In chapter 3, he set up an idol, demanded it's worship, and then changed course with the Lord rescued Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace.

In chapter 4, he steps into the spotlight with an autobiographical account of how the Lord humbled him.

It begins and ends in the first person, "I…" and switches to third person, "he…" in the middle.

It reminds us of the serious nature of pride and God's persistent kindness to humble us, even if by painful means.

1. Opening testimony: God is ***great*** (4:1-3)
    a. The formula for these opening verses was familiar in the ancient world – it names the sender (Neb.), the recipients (all peoples…), and includes a greeting (peace…)
    b. This is a public proclamation of the king about the greatness of the Most High God and what He has done for Nebuchadnezzar.
        i. He puts the conclusion in the introduction. He doesn't leave us wondering about where this is going.
    c. After being told in chapter 2 that his kingdom would be like the head of gold on the statue that would one day after him pass on to another kingdom of silver and then bronze, etc. he seemed to respond in chapter 3 by making a statue all of gold and demanding it's worship, as if to say, "No, my kingdom will endure from head to toe."
    d. He comes right out of the gate though in chapter 4 with, "God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generation to generation."
        i. Whatever rule I have is underneath and subject to His rule.
        ii. That's quite a turnaround for Neb.!
            1. What lead to this change?
            2. Vv. 4-33 tell us and then he returns to a closing testimony
        iii. The message is emphasized by repetition, just as we had lots of repetition in ch 3

1. That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of men. (vv. 17, 26, 32)

iv. God gets this truth across to Neb. with another dream/interpretation sequence but this time in culminates in a profoundly humbling experience.

2. ***Dream*** (4:4-18)

a. It was another dream that made him fearful (v. 5), just like in chapter 2.

b. He once again gathered his wise men to explain it, but he didn't make them tell him the dream this time (v. 7)

i. But they failed

c. Once again Daniel is brought it – I'm not sure why he didn't just start with Daniel.

i. Both names given because this account went out throughout the empire and many would know Daniel by his Babylonian name.

ii. A common question I got last Sunday was, "where was Daniel?"

1. Short answer, "we don't know." He just isn't included in chapter 3.

2. There's a tradition that says he had traveled to Jerusalem to help the exiles, but the text doesn't say.

d. Neb. gets some things right and some things wrong about Daniel –

i. "a spirit of the holy gods is in you" – well, there's one God and His Spirit is at work in and through Daniel.

ii. "chief of the magicians" = chief of the scholars

iii. "no mystery baffles you"

1. Ezekiel 28:3 says to the king of Tyre

a. **Ezek. 28:3** Behold, you are wiser than Daniel; There is no secret that is a match for you.

b. Compares him to Daniel the way someone might also to Solomon – "wiser than Solomon"

2. Places Daniel in the 6th century as a historical figure who is a contemporary of Ezekiel.

e. The dream –

i. a large tree that is strong and abundant

ii. but it is cut down, leaving a stump wrapped in iron

1. in the dream this is likely to preserve it or imply that there is a future for it – in real life, a band of iron wouldn't prevent rot – but things don't have to make sense in a dream.

iii. The stump is drenched with dew, and the imagery shifts to it being changed in his mind from that of a man to a beast for 7 periods of time.

f. The angelic watcher seems to reference an angel in this dream that is going to carry out this task on behalf of God.

3. ***Interpretation*** (4:19-27)

a. Daniel is alarmed, not because he is confused but because he knows what it means and he probably knows the king won't like it.
    i. But he may also genuinely be concerned for the king.
    ii. Just like Moses spoke truth to Pharoah, Elijah to Ahab, John the Baptist to Herod, Jesus to Pilate – Daniel tells the king what is true, what he needs to hear, not just what he wants to hear.
b. The tree is you
    i. You have become great and grown strong
    ii. Your dominion is to the end of the earth – Babylonian empire was massive and stretched across the modern nations of the middle east
c. Chopping down the tree = you being driven away from mankind and living as an animal in the field
    i. For seven periods of time – likely seven years but it could be seven other units of time
    ii. This would be until he recognizes the Most high is ruler and bestows it…(v. 25)
    iii. But the stump imagery confirms that you will get your kingdom back after you recognize that heaven rules
        1. He is not losing his kingdom – that is preserved as the vision in ch 2 showed
        2. First time that "heaven" is used as a substitute for God in the OT – like in NT where 'kingdom of heaven' is "kingdom of God'
d. Daniel urges the king to break away from his sins
    i. Do what's righteous
    ii. Show mercy to the poor
        1. Davis – what Daniel sketches is not some personal plan of salvation for Neb but a sample of vocational repentance.
        2. God gave him revelation (the dream and interpretation), admonition (27), and opportunity (29).
    iii. The king didn't listen – but he had an opportunity.
        1. Had he listened to the dream, humbled himself, recognized that the Most High God rules over the realms of mankind – not him – and that he is in this position because God placed him there – maybe he wouldn't be humbled.

4. ***Fulfillment*** (4:28-33)
a. Nothing happened for a year.
    i. Maybe Neb. thought it wasn't going to happen. Maybe he forgot. He definitely wasn't humbled.
b. Is this not Babylon the great which I have built?
    i. Babylon was a beautiful city.
    ii. 49 building inscriptions have been found that credit Neb. with building them.
        1. The old palace then two more
        2. 17 temples, two great walls

iii. Hanging Gardens of Babylon one of the seven ancient wonders of the world

1. We don't have archeological evidence of them, but oral tradition described them by ancient travelers.
2. One of his wives missed the mountains of her homeland so he build a mountain in the city with trees and plants on the building watered by an ingenious system of lifts from the Euphrates river.

iv. The Ishtar Gate, uncovered just before WWI by a German archeologist who relocated part of the gate to a museum in Berlin.

1. *See pics*

v. The gates include an inscription by Nebuchadnezzar that describes the building of the gates – notice the emphasis that it was Neb. who did this:

1. I pulled down these gates and laid their foundations at the water table with asphalt and bricks and had them made of bricks with blue stone on which wonderful bulls and dragons were depicted. I covered their roofs by laying majestic cedars lengthwise over them. I fixed doors of cedar wood adorned with bronze at all the gate openings. I placed wild bulls and ferocious dragons in the gateways and thus adorned them with luxurious splendor so that Mankind might gaze on them in wonder.

vi. The whole city was surrounded by a massive double walled system, with each wall almost 25 feet wide, prominent central roads, beautiful buildings.

c. Immediately he was struck with essentially a form of mental illness

i. When he recovers he says his reason returned to him (v. 34), so it was his reason that had left him.

ii. There are observed behavioral disorders where one imagines themselves to be an animal and acts like it.

1. Raymond Harrison recounts seeing a case like that in a British mental institution in 1946.
2. This insanity for Nebuchadnezzar is supernaturally imposed to humble him.

iii. As he lived in the field and was drenched with the dew that settled on the grass, overtime he hair grew long and matted and his nails uncut.

iv. 300 years later a Greek writer named Megasthenes wrote down a story that had been passed on orally by the Chaldeans that after one his military conquests, Nebuchadnezzar "was possessed by some god or other" while on the roof of his palace and ended up wandering through the dessert.

1. It differs in some details from the account in Daniel, but seems to reflect the same incident.

d. When otherwise strong and successful people are crippled by a debilitating experience of unshakeable depression or panic attacks, they are often forced to reckon with how little is within their control.

i. That's not a direct parallel to the account of Neb. since his experience was supernaturally orchestrated to humble him, but there are similarities.

5. Closing testimony: I've been ***humbled*** (4:34-37)

a. After a period that was likely seven years, his reason returned and he blessed the Most High.

b. Notice the change:

i. Ok, It's YOUR dominion that is everlasting

ii. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing – including me!

iii. Even after his sovereignty and majesty were restored to him, he still praised God as supreme.

c. "He is able to humble those who walk in pride"

i. Sounds like a great summary of God's dealings with Neb.

6. Applying the Word

a. ***Humble*** yourself.

i. **James 4:10** Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

ii. God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.

1. **James 4:6** But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

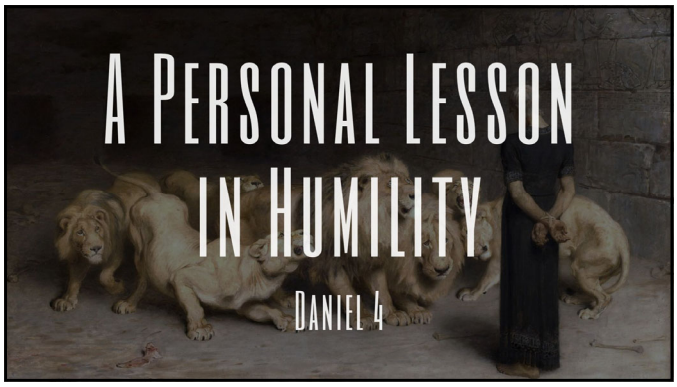
iii. God's grace flows downhill to the low places, not uphill to the pompous and put-together places. (Scott Sauls)

iv. It seems that we can humble ourselves or we will be humbled – either way, we are going to get humbled but one way is very painful.

b. ***Recognize*** that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind.

i. It's not President Trump, or Xi Jinping, or Vladimir Putin, or Prime Minister Andy Burnham, or the Shah of Iran, or any other world leader that rises or falls.

ii. They are each mortal, limited, and accountable to God.



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4. ***Fulfillment*** (4:28-33)





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