

## Who Is In Charge?

### Daniel 4:18-27 (NIV)

<sup>18</sup> “This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you.”

<sup>19</sup> Then Daniel (also called Belshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, “Belshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you.”

Belshazzar answered, “My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries! <sup>20</sup> The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, <sup>21</sup> with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the wild animals, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds— <sup>22</sup> Your Majesty, you are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

<sup>23</sup> “Your Majesty saw a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live with the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.’

<sup>24</sup> “This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most-High has issued against my lord the king: <sup>25</sup> You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most-High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. <sup>26</sup> The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. <sup>27</sup> Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.”

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#### A. Introduction

1. Overview of the Book of Daniel: The book, named after its central figure, Daniel, recounts the life and visions of Daniel during the Babylonian exile.
2. Contextual Background:
  - *Daniel 1*: The fall of Jerusalem, the captivity in Babylon, and Daniel's resolve to remain pure.
  - *Daniel 2*: Nebuchadnezzar's first dream and Daniel's interpretation of the statue representing future kingdoms.
  - *Daniel 3*: The fiery furnace incident with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, leading to Nebuchadnezzar's recognition of God's power but not full commitment.
3. Transition to Daniel 4: Despite acknowledging God's power, Nebuchadnezzar remains prideful, thinking of himself as the supreme ruler.
4. Nebuchadnezzar's Partial Belief: Praises Daniel's God yet does not fully submit to Him, illustrating a common disparity between professed belief & actual obedience.

#### B. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (Daniel 4:1-18)

1. Dream Description: Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a majestic tree that reaches the heavens, providing sustenance and shelter to all.
2. Divine Communication: The dream symbolizes his power and prosperity but also foreshadows his downfall, decreed by a heavenly messenger.
3. Purpose of the Dream: Intended to humble the king and reveal God's sovereignty.
4. God's Methods of Revelation: God speaks through various means including direct speech, visions, prophets, His Son, dreams, scripture, and angelic visitations.
5. Failure of Human Wisdom: Nebuchadnezzar's wise men are unable to interpret the dream, underscoring human wisdom's limitations without divine insight.

#### C. Daniel's Interpretation (Daniel 4:19-27)

1. Search for Understanding: Nebuchadnezzar's wise men fail to interpret the dream, leading him to summon Daniel.
2. Daniel's Hesitation: Despite potential personal risk, Daniel, as a faithful servant of God, interprets the dream honestly.
3. Interpretation and Counsel:
  - The tree represents Nebuchadnezzar, and its felling symbolizes his impending downfall.
  - Daniel advises the king to repent and show mercy to the oppressed to perhaps mitigate the decree.
4. Key Warnings:
  - Ignoring and marginalizing God leads to downfall.
  - The importance of humility and recognizing God's ultimate authority.

#### **D. Fulfillment of the Dream (Daniel 4:28-33)**

1. **Prideful Proclamation:** Despite the warning, Nebuchadnezzar boasts about his achievements.
2. **Immediate Fulfillment:** The prophecy comes true; Nebuchadnezzar loses his sanity and lives like an animal.
3. **Lesson in Humility:** Nebuchadnezzar's experience underscores the divine order that exaltation follows humility.

#### **E. Nebuchadnezzar's Restoration and Praise (Daniel 4:34-37)**

1. **Sanity Restored:** After the appointed time, Nebuchadnezzar's sanity is restored, and he acknowledges God's sovereignty.
2. **Transformation:** His experience leads to genuine repentance and recognition of God's eternal dominion.
3. **Testimony of God's Power:** Nebuchadnezzar's story is a powerful testimony of God's ability to humble the proud and elevate the humble.

#### **F. Lessons for Us Today**

1. **Dangers of Pride:** Pride blinds us to God's authority; humility opens our hearts to His grace.
2. **Recognizing God's Sovereignty:** It is crucial to acknowledge God's rule in every aspect of our lives.
3. **Transformative Power of Repentance:** Genuine repentance and humility can lead to restoration and divine favour.
4. **Self-Sufficiency and Dependence on God:** Remembering that all good things come from God and maintaining a humble dependence on Him.

#### **G. Conclusion**

1. **Journey from Pride to Humility:** Nebuchadnezzar's transformation is a reminder that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).
2. **Call to Humility:** We are encouraged to live humbly, recognizing our ultimate citizenship in God's eternal kingdom.