

Daniel 4:1-9 - Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream

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COURSE COMMENTARY



4:1-3 - Introduction

- Biblical Significance of Babel/Babylon**

Within Scripture, Babylon represents the **the kingdom of man**.

God's judgment of the **pride of man** : first the king, then the kingdom (which falls to Medo-Persia in chapter 5).

These events foreshadow the prideful activity and ultimate judgment of the final ruler during the Times of the Gentiles: **the Antichrist**.

Scriptural tension: man created in God's image, but behaves like the beasts which do not have God's image. See [Image of God or Beast?](#)

- Date**

Chapter lacks precise date indicator.

Clues: (1) description of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar; (2) length of Nebuchadnezzar's malady.

No later than 8 years before end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (ca. **569 B.C.**).

- Close of Chapter 3 or Start of Chapter 4?**

Do verses 1-3 in our English translation open chapter 4 or should they be considered the close of chapter 3?

It seems likely that after recovering from the lengthy and serious affliction related in this chapter, the king would introduce his report with such statements of praise.

- Unique Composition**

1st-person : Portion of chapter is written in first-person by Pagan king.

3rd-person : Portions of the chapter where Nebuchadnezzar is identified using third-person pronouns are probably told from the perspective of Daniel or reflect his editing of the king's account when compiling the chapter.

4:1-3 - Similar Historical Writings

[Prayer of Nabonidus](#)

[Account of Berosus](#)

[Account of Abydenus](#)

The Prayer of Nabonidus is an Aramaic composition found among the DSS that relates an illness experienced by the last king of Babylon, Nabonidus (who was coregent with Belshazzar).

Berosus was a Chaldean priest residing in Babylon at the time of Alexander the Great. Berosus wrote three books relative to the history of the Chaldeans, of which only some fragments are preserved in Josephus and Eusebius.

Abydenus was a Greek who lived circa 268 B.C. who was a student of Berosus. He wrote an historical account of the Chaldeans, Babylonians, and Assyrians, only a few fragments of which have been preserved by Eusebius, Cyrill, and Syncellus.

See [Date](#), [Authorship](#) and [Similar Historical Writings](#).

4:4-6 - Peace Disrupted

- [At Rest, Flourishing](#)

Military goals accomplished.

Great building programs largely complete.

Supposing himself to be self-sufficient and independent (but Luke [12:19-21](#)).

- [A Disturbing Dream](#)

The dream scared Nebuchadnezzar: “[made me afraid](#)” is from a root meaning *to cause terror*.

The same Aramaic word described the “[awesome](#)” form of the image Nebuchadnezzar saw in the previous dream (Dan. [2:31](#)).

- [A Favor by God](#)

Peace and prosperity are not always good--especially when we don't realize the danger of our complacency.

Scripture records numerous situations where God warned individuals (often Gentiles) for their own good (Gen. [20:3](#); Gen. [31:34](#); [41:1](#); Dan. [2:28](#); [4:5](#); Mat. [27:19](#)).

- [Issued a Decree](#)

It has now been several decades since the troubling dream of chapter 2.

Similar reaction: calls on the resources of the court for help.

4:7-9 - Calling All Wise Men

- [The Dream Told](#)

Unlike the previous dream in Daniel [2](#), Nebuchadnezzar reveals the dream itself.

Has his trust in the wise men has improved during the lengthy period during which Daniel has been acting chief of the wise men?

Is his fear greater this time, especially in contrast with the relatively peaceful period in his realm?

- **Why Daniel Last?**

Preferred Magi over Daniel?

No longer remembered Daniel's previous performance?

Reluctant to hear Daniel's interpretation?

Daniel not called until lesser wise men failed?

Daniel purposefully positioned himself last?

- **King Describes Daniel**

Belteshazzar - Chaldean name used for official public declaration.

"Name of my god" - may reflect Nebuchadnezzar's pagan beliefs at that point in the events recorded (prior to recovery from malady).

"Spirit of the Holy God" (NKJV, LXX) or "spirit of the Holy gods" (ESV, HCSB, KJV, NASU, NET, NIV, TNK)?

Aramaic: plural noun (אֱלֵינִין [ʿēlayin]) with plural adjective (קְדִישִׁין [qāddīšîn]) argues for plural.

However, passage in Joshua (Jos. 24:19) has similar noun-adjective construction as here:

אֱלֹהִים קְדוֹשִׁים [ʿēlōyīm qəḏōšîm] and should be rendered "holy God" (singular).

Regardless of Nebuchadnezzar's meaning at this point in his understanding, like Joseph, Daniel was clearly illuminated by the Spirit of the One True God (Gen. 41:38 cf. Eze. 28:3).