# Daniel 4 – Salvation in Trials

The date was October 2, 1919. Edith Wilson walked into her bedroom to find her husband on the floor, incapacitated by what was later believed to be a major stroke. While the cause of the stroke is not known, many people attribute it to the stress he had working with his rivals at work. In fact, while on a work trip to Pueblo, CO about a week earlier, her husband had collapsed and had to rush back from the trip early to recover. The following week had been filled with headaches and disorientation. Thankfully, her husband did not pass away, but he was also not in good shape.

The political situation that Edith’s husband worked in was such that she didn’t even trust his second in command, a man by the name of Thomas Marshall. Knowing that her husband could lose his job and would probably be disgraced if others found out about his incapacity, she arranged for him to work from home and then did the majority of his work for the next year and a half, until he could comfortably leave his job. During this time, she would read all his important documents, dictate policies to his underlings and some believe even forged his official signature. She went so far in her coverup that she even arranged to have a reporter write a fake interview of her husband for a national publication. An interview that was so well received that it won a Pulitzer prize in 1921. By February of 1920 there was widespread gossip about her husband’s condition, but as she was able to prepare him to attend a few important business meetings, no one was ever sure what was happening. She “HELPED” him concentrate his efforts on a few select and important projects and fobbed the rest of his activities off on employees he had appointed.

When he left his job in March of 1921, the couple moved into a house a short distance away, where they lived together until his death on February 3rd, 1924. She then continued living in that house for another 37 years until her death on December 28th, 1961, the day she was to be the guest of honor of the opening of a bridge across the Potomac River, named in the honor of her late husband, President Woodrow Wilson.

In many ways, the story of Woodrow and Edith Wilson has parallels to the passage we are looking at today. Unlike President Wilson who never fully recovered, the subject of today’s passage not only fully recovered, but was able to write his own memoirs about what happened to him.

The letter starts out as follows:

“**1** ¶ Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound! **2** "It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me. **3** "How great are His signs And how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom And His dominion is from generation to generation.

As we read through the Old Testament, we don’t read anything else written by a Gentile. In the New Testament, there is debate on whether Luke was a Gentile, or if he was a Jew with a Greek name. I believe he was a, like most Jews of the time, a Jew with a Greek name (<https://www.levitt.com/essays/luke>), see my notes for further details. Occasionally we will read a quote by a Gentile, but it is usually a sentence or two. This passage holds the distinction of being the longest quotation of a Gentile in the Bible and the only passage written by a Gentile in the Old Testament.

From the rest of this passage we see that God prepares his people to be His representative at the proper time and place. We see that God has a plan, even for the most prideful of leaders. We see the way that pride tears apart our lives? We see that there are times that brokenness brings someone to God who would not be won by blessings. Finally, we see in this passage that it is never too late for God to bring salvation.

## God prepares His representative – Daniel 4:4-9

**4** ¶ "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. **5** "I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. **6** "So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. **7** "Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me. **8** "But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying, **9** ‘O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

As with his previous dream the king did not understand what was happening. Daniel had been in charge of the wise men long enough that the king was not worried about them misleading him, and they were comfortable enough to tell the king that they don’t know the answer. Even so, the king is getting anxious as he says, “But Finally Daniel came before me.” It is interesting that the king knows Daniel by his Hebrew name (which means God is my judge) and not by the Chaldean name that the king had given him. The King did not respect Daniel because of his position, rather Daniel was the chief of the magicians because the King could trust him. Even though the king was not a believer, he recognized that God was working in Daniel’s life. He called it “***the*** ***spirit*** of the holy gods,” but he also recognizes that God has used Daniel in the past to reveal the meaning of mysteries and visions. As we will see later in the passage, the message that God gave was not something anyone would want to tell a king, and especially not one who was known for torturing his enemies, but God had also prepared him to be able to convey this message with tact and confidence.

How is God preparing you to be His representative?

## We see that God has a plan…even for the most prideful of leaders Daniel 4:10-27

Because this passage is so long, let me just pull some highlights as the king conveys his vision:

**10** ‘Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, **there was a tree** in the midst of the earth and its height was great. **11** ‘The **tree grew large and** became strong And its height **reached to the sky**, **And** it was visible to **the end of the whole earth**. **12** ‘**Its** foliage **was beautiful** **and** its fruit **abundant**, And in it was food for all. **The beasts** of the field **found** **shade under it, And the birds** of the sky **dwelt in its branches**, And all living creatures fed themselves from it. **13** ‘I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, **an angelic watcher**, a holy one, descended from heaven. **14** ‘He **shouted out and spoke as follows: "Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; Let the beasts flee from under it And the birds from its branches. 15 "Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, But with a band of iron and bronze around it In the new grass of the field; And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. 16 "Let his mind be changed from that of a man And let a beast’s mind be given to him, And let seven periods of time pass over him**. **17** "This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers And the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know 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." **18** ‘This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.’ **19** ¶ "**Then Daniel**, whose name is Belteshazzar, **was appalled** for a while **as his thoughts alarmed him**. **The king** responded and **said**, ‘Belteshazzar, **do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you**.’ **Belteshazzar replied**, ‘My lord, **if only the dream applied to those who hate you** and its interpretation to your adversaries! **20** ‘**The tree** that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth **21** and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged —  **22** it i**s you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong**, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth. **23** ‘**In that the king saw an angel**ic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and **saying**, "**Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground**, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him," **24** this is the interpretation, O king, and **this is the decree of the Most High**, which has come upon my lord the king: **25** **that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field**, and **you be given grass to eat like cattle** and be drenched with the dew of heaven; **and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler** over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes. **26** ‘And **in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules**. **27** ‘**Therefore**, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you**: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and** from your iniquities by **showing mercy** to the poor, **in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity**.’

God had a very specific plan for King Nebuchadnezzar, it specified that he would be destroyed and yet restored. That he would live like an animal and be separated from men. And even that he would eat like an animal. The king would act and be treated in the least royal way possible.

Daniel never implies that Nebuchadnezzar can avoid what God has decreed, but he does advise him of how to delay it happening as long as possible and to shorten his time in exile. Ironically, the very king that exiled the people of Judah would himself be exiled in his own country. If God has a plan for you, it will come to pass, for harm or for benefit. At times, He may even choose to use that harm FOR your benefit.

It didn’t matter how powerful Nebuchadnezzar was. It didn’t matter how many advisors, counselors, guards and warriors he had on his side. God has a plan and will carry it to pass. If God will carry His plan out in spite of the efforts of Nebuchadnezzar, who was the most powerful man on earth, how much more will His plan come to pass in our lives?

## Pride tears apart lives Daniel 4:28-33

 **28** ¶ "All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. **29** "Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. **30** "The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’ **31** "While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, **32** and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ **33** "Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

Pride goes before a fall and haughty spirit before stumbling – Proverbs 16:18. It appears at this point that King Nebuchadnezzar gives the pen back to Daniel. It is likely from what is described that the King did not know what happened during his time of insanity. But as he looked over the city he started to brag on his own abilities instead of acknowledging what God had done for him. Instantly he went insane and began to act like a wild animal. Everything he valued, his strength, his appearance, his wisdom, his wealth, everything was gone in an instant. Rather than the respect of men, he was chased to live in the wilderness.

Amazingly, in all this he still survived as King. It is my belief that Daniel took care of him during this time and so Daniel uniquely knew what the King had gone through. In addition, like Edith Wilson, Daniel took care of running the kingdom in the kings inability. Unlike the American situation, the king was king by right of his birth, not because of his ability, so he was king for life. In addition, unlike Edith Wilson, Daniel, as the one in charge of all Babylon had the legal responsibility to rule on the kings behalf.

## Brokenness brings some to God who would not be won by blessings Daniel 4:34-36

**34** ¶ "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. **35** "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’ **36** "At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.

Once again, the narrative returns to Nebuchadnezzar. His reason returned AFTER he raised his eyes toward heaven. He did not look to heaven because he regained his reason, he regained his reason because He looked to heaven. This is not meaning that he looked at the sky, but that he placed his trust in God. It was only when he hit bottom that he was able to look up to God. He had to be humbled and broken before he could be redeemed.

I think that Nebuchadnezzar was truly converted at this point. He no longer mentions the wisdom of the gods, but instead refers to the MOST HIGH, who lives FOREVER, His everlasting DOMINION, ALL the earth and heaven being subject to him.

When a loved one goes through trials, especially if they are not saved, we tend to ask God to rescue them from the situation. Perhaps we should change our prayer that God would save them through the situation. Some people need to be broken before they can be saved.

## It is never too late for salvation Daniel 4:37

**37** "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."” (Da 4:1-37 NAS95)

If pride were a disqualifier, Nebuchadnezzar would have been disqualified, but God had to remove his pride to bring him to salvation. When God judged him, it could have been final. Ephesians 2:4-5 says “4 ¶ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),” even though Nebuchadnezzar lived 600 years before Christ, his salvation was the same, looking to God’s promise and trusting in it. If we are prideful, God may have to break that. But the moment we are willing, His salvation is waiting for us.

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This is the only passage written by a Gentile in the Old Testament. – Daniel 4:1-3

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God has a plan and will carry it to pass.

How will His plan come to pass in our lives?

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