

Dr. Wendy L. Widder, Daniel, Session 7, Daniel 4, A Humbled King and God's Restored Power

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This is Dr. Wendy Witter and her teaching on the book of Daniel. This is session 7, Daniel 4, A Humbled King and God's Restored Power.

In this lecture, we are looking at Daniel four, and the title that I have for this lecture is A Humbled King and God's Restored Power.

That's going to create a contrast with the next chapter, which is also about a humbled king, but God does not restore his power in that chapter. So, when we get to chapter five, we'll come back and look at chapter four again. Daniel four, anarchy-asm, I really should just leave this on the board.

This is the statue dream; we've got four earthly kingdoms, and this is the vision of four beasts. Chapter three, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Chapter six, Daniel and the lions.

Chapter four, where we're at right now, is Nebuchadnezzar has a second dream, it's about a tree. Chapter five is going to be its counterpoint. This is his second dream in the book and it's his third, will be his third miraculous encounter with the God of Israel.

It has, in many ways, a similar plot to his earlier dream. In the earlier dream, he had a troubling dream, and he wanted to know what it meant, so he called in his experts. they weren't able to help, so he sentenced them to death, and then Daniel came in and gave him the dream and the interpretation. So that's how that plotline went.

Chapter four is similar but its focus is not this drama between the king and his experts. In chapter four he reports to us about when he had a troubling dream and oh by the way his experts couldn't help so then he called Daniel. So it's a different focus but in some ways it's the same basic storyline.

It's also considered a court story, particularly a court contest in which you have the king's experts unable to help and then the foreign captive who is able to help and rises above them in his ability. I'm going to read this chapter in sections and there are five different sections. Something that you will notice if I alert you to it or maybe if I don't you would have noticed it.

This chapter is unique because it actually alternates in its narrative voice. So, the first two sections are in first person and it's the first person voice of Nebuchadnezzar. I, Nebuchadnezzar.

So, Nebuchadnezzar is speaking. He is addressing the audience. That's in the first two sections, or actually, I count that as one, and it's also in the last, so the book begins and ends with this first-person narrative, and then tucked in the middle is the third person.

We don't know who's telling it. It's this omniscient narrator. We have Nebuchadnezzar speaking and then it shifts really almost seamlessly.

You have to be listening to notice it. So, he said or he did it. He, she, it and then goes back to I at the end.

So, listen for that as we go, and we'll discuss the significance of that literary choice. All right. So, chapter four verses one through three and then we'll add on to Nebuchadnezzar's words after we quickly discuss one through three.

King Nebuchadnezzar, to all peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied to you. It seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. How great are his signs!

How mighty his wonders. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation. That's quite an opening from Nebuchadnezzar, who, in the last chapter, was ready to tear people limb from limb.

This is a really amazing doxology by the king but it's set as a letter. It's set as an epistle. The first verse, King Nebuchadnezzar, to all peoples, nations, and languages.

So, this identifies the speaker and his audience. It's a standard format for royal letters or actually for any Aramaic letters of this period. You have the author, you have the audience, and then you get this greeting.

Peace be multiplied to you. Very common in Aramaic letters. He talks about these signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for him.

Now, if you are an Old Testament Jew and you're reading along here or listening and you hear signs and wonders, that pair of words is very significant. Signs and wonders is a word pair that is almost always in the Old Testament used in connection with plagues, the plagues of the Exodus event. So, the ten plagues.

When God was bringing his people out of Egypt, he displayed his power to the Pharaoh and the Egyptians through signs and wonders. So, this language of

Nebuchadnezzar calls to mind, at least for his Jewish audience, the Exodus and the fact that God who had done those stunning things before Pharaoh to reveal himself has apparently now done some stunning things before Nebuchadnezzar to reveal himself. Nebuchadnezzar has seen his own signs and wonders from God.

The God of Israel is still in the business of making himself known to people through signs and wonders in this chapter. This doxology that I just read, how great are his signs, how mighty his wonders, his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, his dominion endures from generation to generation, that actually will be expanded on at the end. So we hear this kind of twice.

We have this—I'll just call it a doxology—this praise offered by Nebuchadnezzar to the God of Israel. That's how the book, the chapter, opens. And the chapter closes with a similar doxology by Nebuchadnezzar. He restates it, and he expands it a little bit.

So, this entire chapter is enveloped, we call this an inclusio, and it's enveloped with this theme of God's greatness, God's eternal kingdom, his eternal dominion, and that helps us focus really on what Nebuchadnezzar's point is. What's the point of the chapter? Nebuchadnezzar is going to underscore how God's kingdom is eternal. So, then Nebuchadnezzar keeps speaking, and in this section, he's going to recount the dream that he had, the experience, and the signs and wonders that God did for him.

This is verses 4 through 15, no sorry, 4 through 18.

4^b I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. **5** I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. **6** So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. **7** Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation. **8** At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods^c—and I told him the dream, saying, **9**“O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation. **10** The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. **11** The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. **12** Its leaves were 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 heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

13 “I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. **14** He proclaimed aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. **15** But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. **16** Let his mind be changed from a man’s, and let a beast’s mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him.

Oh, I think I went far.

No, I didn't. Wait, make sure I don't go too far. Okay, I'm all right.

17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.’ **18** This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.”

All right, so that's the end of Nebuchadnezzar's report of his dream. It's also going to be the end of this first-person portion. So, the backdrop for what the king experiences is that he's flourishing.

He's at what appears to be the peak of his reign, right? He is at ease, so he's not at war, at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. We might say that he's arrived at being the head of gold. So, in chapter two, Daniel had told this young king that it was only his second year, that he was the head of gold, that he was going to be great and have dominion and all these things.

In chapter four, it seems like he may have arrived. He's got no threat. He is the head of gold.

And then this dream changes all that, this troubling dream. Now remember that dreams in the ancient Near East, especially if you're a king, could be a cause to be disturbed. You need to know what message the gods are sending you.

They worked through dreams often. He's got to figure this out. This is important.

So again, he calls in his court officials. They can't help him. So Daniel comes.

There's no contest because he knows that Daniel can answer it. Notice that Nebuchadnezzar seems to recognize that Daniel's ability to interpret his dream is not because of his professional skill but the reason he's able to interpret it is because the

spirit of the holy gods is in him. Nebuchadnezzar may not exactly know Daniel's relationship with God, but he knows Daniel has something that his experts do not.

Daniel has some connection with the divine realm that his experts do not have. As we keep going in this chapter, we're going to hear Daniel repeat back to the king what he's seen, and then he's going to interpret it. It's very common.

You hear the dream report, and then the interpretation often echoes the report and the interpretation. So, Daniel's going to restate a lot of what the king has just said, but there's going to be a few differences. That's something very interesting about this chapter.

We have the king's report of his dream; then we have Daniel's rehearsal of what the king saw and Daniel's interpretation. And if you lay all those side by side, and I have, it's a lot of work, so I don't really recommend you do it unless you have a lot of time. If you lay all those side by side and you compare how the narrative or how the details change, sometimes you can find some sort of interesting things.

So, in what Nebuchadnezzar has reported, he says three things that Daniel is not going to say in quite the same way. And the way that Nebuchadnezzar says them might suggest what's important to him, things that he focused on. So, Nebuchadnezzar talks about the tree being in the middle of the earth.

It's like the center of everything, right? Daniel's not going to repeat that. We'll talk about it when we get to Daniel, but that's what the king says. He also talks about how the height of the tree was great.

And he also says that from this tree all flesh was being sustained, or everything was being fed from this tree. So, keep those in mind. We'll come back to them when we get to Daniel's report.

This idea of this cosmic tree that is benefiting all the inhabitants of the world is not unique to Daniel 4. So, in the ancient Near East, this is a fairly common motif of this cosmic tree, and it often represents a king. Kings were the ones who were to provide for the inhabitants of their kingdom. Knowing that and knowing what seems to be relatively clear in the king's dream, I mean, he sees this magnificent tree.

It gets cut down and destroyed, and he ends up as a beast. You'd think he might have a pretty good idea of what the dream meant. Maybe not.

It seems like the imagery is not that obscure. It kind of stretches the imagination to think that he didn't have any idea what this dream was telling him. Listen to a similar kind of tree experience in Ezekiel because I guarantee that when Daniel's original

audience heard the king's dream, this is probably something they thought of, this other reference to a great tree.

This is Ezekiel 31, 3 through 14. So, Ezekiel says, in the 11th year, in the third month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me. Son of man, say to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and to his multitude, whom are you like in your greatness? Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches and forest shade, and of towering height, its top among the clouds.

The waters nourished it, and the deep made it grow tall, making its rivers flow around the place of its planting, sending forth its streams to all the trees of the field. It towered high above all the trees of the field; its boughs grew large, its branches long, from abundant water in its shoots. All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs, and under its branches, all the beasts of the field gave birth to their young.

Under its shadow lived all great nations. It was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches, for its roots went down to abundant waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor the fir trees equal its boughs.

Neither were the plain trees like its branches. No tree in the garden of God was equal in beauty. I made it beautiful in the mass of its branches.

All the trees of Eden envied it, and they were in the garden of God. A magnificent tree, the image of Assyria. Well, good things do not happen to this tree.

So, the prophecy goes on. Therefore, thus says the Lord God, because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, its heart was proud, I will give it into the hand of a mighty one of nations. He shall surely deal with it as its wickedness deserves.

I have cast it out. Foreigners have cut it down and left it. And on it goes.

Very similar sound to Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Now, Nebuchadnezzar would not have known Ezekiel. He wouldn't have known this dream probably.

But I'm fairly confident that audiences of the Book of Daniel would have, oh wait, we know what happens to great trees. This is not a good thing. This does not bode well for the one who had this dream.

We have this messenger; this holy one talks about coming down. That is, a celestial being, a supernatural being, descends from heaven. We get several terms in the book of Daniel for heavenly beings.

And holy one is one of them. Watcher is another. This language became really common in Second Temple literature and apocalyptic literature.

We have the Book of the Watchers. When they call these creatures holy ones, that's not a moral statement. They're not saying they're spiritual in morality.

Rather, it's talking about that they're from the supernatural realm. They are distinct and different from human beings. All right, so that's the king's dream.

And then Daniel is going to interpret it. And this is verses 19 through 27. Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him.

The king answered and said, now, if you didn't notice, let me just alert you; we shifted from first person to third person. The king answered and said, not I answered and said. The king answered and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.

Belteshazzar answered and said, my lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies. The tree you saw, which grew and became strong so that its top reached heaven and it was visible to the end of the whole earth, whose leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and which was food for all, under which beasts of the field found shade and in whose branches the birds of the heavens lived, it's you, oh king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reached heaven and your dominion to the ends of the earth.

And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field till seven periods of time pass over him. This is the interpretation, oh king. It's a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, that you shall be driven from among men and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.

You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that heaven rules. Therefore, oh king, let my counsel be acceptable to you.

Break off your sins by practicing righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, and you may perhaps be able to lengthen your prosperity. So that's the end of Daniel's speaking and this gives us a second account of the king's dream,

Daniel's repetition of it, which really kind of invites us to compare and contrast the two. What it also does is give us a way to weigh the king's words, to weigh the validity of what he says.

I'll come back to that in a minute. It is interesting that in this chapter when Daniel hears the dream, he instantly knows what it means. In chapter two, that wasn't the case.

First of all, he didn't know the dream, but he prayed. He and his three friends prayed for the God of heaven to reveal the mystery to them, and he did. But here, he seems to immediately know what it means.

It disturbs him. He is visibly shaken because of the implications of this dream. It even talks about him being alarmed.

Some translations will say terrified. Some people have suggested that maybe he was terrified about the prospect of telling the king what this dream meant. Do you really want to deliver this message to the king? But I don't think that's likely because in the ancient Near East, a dream was only considered dangerous as long as you didn't know what it meant.

So, if the meaning remains a mystery, then it's dangerous. So, for Daniel to step in, even though the message might be bad, that's not his message. It's the message from the gods.

I think that his reaction to this dream is because he recognizes what it means for the king. You get the sense in this chapter that Nebuchadnezzar is a little bit different. In the previous two chapters, he's been a raving lunatic.

In this chapter, he actually seems to like Daniel. There seems to be this sort of affection between the two of them. I think Daniel is really bothered by the fact that this is going to happen to Nebuchadnezzar.

He says would that this was for your enemies, not you. I do wonder if, given how quickly Daniel understood the dream, I know he has the supernatural ability to do that, but I do wonder if the wise men understood the dream also. And you say, well, I know you said they didn't.

Well, I didn't say they didn't. The king said they didn't. The king is the one who reported that his wise men couldn't tell him the answer or didn't tell him the answer.

The text never really says the wise men couldn't do it. The king just says they didn't do it. And the king probably interpreted that as they couldn't do it, but maybe they did get it.

I don't know. As I said, it seems like not that difficult of a symbolic dream. Great tree.

We know trees represent kings. It gets chopped down. How hard can that be? So there are details that they maybe wouldn't have quite gotten, but I just wonder if they could not, or they would not interpret it.

Again, we hear Nebuchadnezzar's point of view. So, when Daniel is disturbed, Nebuchadnezzar encourages him. He says, go ahead.

Tell me. You're not responsible for this. Tell me what it means.

So Daniel does this back and forth. He gives the scene that the king saw and interprets each one. Let's talk for a couple of minutes about what Daniel omitted or changed from the king's report.

So the king had said that the tree was in the middle of the earth and it had a great height. What Daniel does is he does affirm the greatness of the tree, but he doesn't say it was in the middle of the earth. He doesn't talk about its great height, particularly.

It might just say the king has a little higher view of himself, possibly. The king also said that all flesh was sustained by the tree. Daniel just says there was food for all of them in the tree.

It doesn't say that it actually sustained them. Just a slight difference. But given what Daniel recommends to Nebuchadnezzar at the end of the interpretation, you get the idea that Nebuchadnezzar has not actually been providing for his people as he's able.

What were Daniel's words? Therefore, oh king, let my counsel be acceptable. Break off your sins by practicing righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed. So yes, there is food for all.

There's provision for all in Nebuchadnezzar's within his ability. But the fact that he wasn't really using it as he was accountable for is part of the judgment here. I also think that we are meant to hear chapter two.

Again, this interpretation of the dream in chapter two, where Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, the king of kings to whom God had given dominion and power and might and glory so he could rule over all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky. That's from chapter two. But you hear almost the same thing in chapter four as Daniel's telling him: you're the tree.

You are a towering, flourishing tree of life. You have dominion, and you have a responsibility to care for your subjects. You have become glorious, just as that dream predicted.

But Nebuchadnezzar had missed the point of that first dream that there was a more powerful kingdom, an eternal kingdom, and he was not indeed the greatest king. He had not recognized his derived authority and derived power. One other thing that Daniel leaves out.

Daniel talks about what's going to happen to this tree, and what he leaves out is the fact that this tree, which shifts to a beast at some point here, would become like a beast of the field, and it would have a beast's mind given to it. Daniel does not repeat that part. He simply says, chop down the tree, destroy it, let its portion be with the beasts of the field until seven times pass over it.

You, O king, shall be driven from men. Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You'll eat grass.

You'll be wet with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass over you. He does not repeat the part about the king basically losing his mind.

I don't know exactly why. I like to think that Daniel knew the king got the point, and perhaps by not repeating that to him or not clarifying what that meant, maybe he spared the king a little bit of his dignity. I'm sure the king understood what that meant when Daniel interpreted everything else.

Daniel doesn't repeat it. I'm speculating because the text doesn't say that, but again, when you compare how things are repeated, omitted, and changed, there is some value in noticing what's different. I think we might see the heart of Daniel here.

We know he cares about the king. He pleads with him to repent so that this punishment might not come on you. And then, verses 28 through 33, we're still in the third person section.

This is the fulfillment of the dream. All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of 12 months, he was walking on the roof of the palace of Babylon.

The king answered and said, is this not great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty? While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven. Oh, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you, it is spoken. The kingdom has departed from you.

You shall be driven from among men. Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall

pass over you until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. Immediately, the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar.

He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox. His body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as an eagle's feathers, and his nails were like a bird's claws. So, there's the fulfillment.

Did you notice the lapse of time between the dream, the interpretation, and the fulfillment? At the end of 12 months, Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of the palace. The text doesn't tell us why there's a 12-month lapse. It could mean that he repented for a while or that he followed Daniel's advice.

It could just be a demonstration of God's patience, God's long-suffering, that he gave him 12 more months until this happened. The narrator clearly shows us that the trigger for the fulfillment of this dream is Nebuchadnezzar's pride. So, his boastful musings over this great city that he's built.

Mighty power, glory, majesty. Those are words he takes for himself. Those are words that are reserved for God.

God bestows them on human rulers as he will, but to claim them for oneself is not appropriate. This dream is immediately fulfilled once it begins. And then we have this description of what Nebuchadnezzar went through.

And there are medical terms that can describe this sort of mental illness, but the point really is not medical here. The point is theological. This is the transformation of the greatest king of the day into a lowly beast, a subhuman creature even, as a result of his pride and judgment for his pride.

There is a fair bit of debate, here's a side note, on the historicity of this chapter, whether these events actually happened to Nebuchadnezzar. There's not much in records that would tell us such a thing happened outside the book of Daniel. A couple of things we might say to that.

First of all, we have very limited information about Nebuchadnezzar's later years. There just isn't much there. Secondly, you might not expect him to want this included in the annals.

I don't know. It's pretty humiliating. Although he does come out declaring the glory of God, it suggests that maybe he doesn't think quite so much of himself.

So, I don't know, but it is humiliating. Also, a king's reign is not exhaustively documented, so this isn't necessarily the type of thing that he would have preserved. Another factor is that archaeology doesn't really have much to help us here.

We're not going to find evidence that Nebuchadnezzar was out in the field. We're not going to find evidence that he lost his mind in things we excavate. There is a little bit of evidence that near the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life, he may have had some kind of mental ailment.

There are some fragmentary inscriptions that suggest that might have been true, but we can't make any firm conclusions based on just that. All we really have is the text of Daniel telling us that. Some scholars think that what's described as happening to Nebuchadnezzar is actually kind of hijacked from something that happened to a different king, Nabonidus.

We will talk about Nabonidus when we get to Daniel 5. But Nabonidus comes sometime after Nebuchadnezzar, and there's fairly clear evidence that Nabonidus had something not quite right mentally with him. He was king, but he disappeared from the throne for a period of time. He was apparently unable to rule, and his son had to rule in his place.

Then, in the scrolls that were found, fragmentary scrolls that were found at the Dead Seas, and the Qumran scrolls, there is something called what's been labeled the Prayer of Nabonidus. This inscription is a prayer where Nabonidus, the king, speaks of this affliction in which he was made beast-like. He had a diviner, a Jewish diviner, give him the interpretation of a dream that he had, etc.

There are many similarities between the Prayer of Nabonidus, a document from Qumran, and this story in Daniel, but there are also significant differences. So, John Collins, who actually is a very critical scholar, and one might think he would just automatically say Nabonidus. This is Nabonidus' story hijacked for Nebuchadnezzar.

He actually says that some reconstructions of the Prayer of Nabonidus from Qumran enhance the relationship between that prayer and the Book of Daniel by filling in gaps in the scroll on the basis of Daniel. So, when we find these scrolls, these fragments, they're not complete. There are gaps.

And so, scholars have to use the context as best they can to fill in gaps. And when you read those translations, those kinds of things are usually put in brackets. You know that the scholars have tried to fill in broken words or sections.

And so, Collins is suggesting that, yeah, there are a lot of connections between these two accounts, Daniel 4 and Nabonidus, but some of the filling in of the gaps has been done on the basis of Daniel 4 rather than just the context. So, it's not an airtight... What we do know is that they're similar stories, and the exact nature of the relationship between these two stories, we don't really know. The narrator has

included this story in Daniel because we are meant to see this proud human king being humbled by God and responding appropriately.

Listen to how Nebuchadnezzar responds after this happens. And here we shift back to first person, this last section. This is verses 34 through 37.

At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me. I blessed the Most High and praised and honored him, who lives forever. For his dominion is an everlasting dominion. His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

All the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing. He does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say to him, what have you done? At the same time, my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me.

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just, and those who walk in pride he is able to humble. This is the final word from Nebuchadnezzar. After this chapter, he's gone.

Now, chapter five will refer to this event, but he's long gone from the scene. So, Nebuchadnezzar has been, aside from God, I would argue perhaps the main character in the first part of Daniel. He is the one who, well, he would say defeated the God of Israel.

He brought those temple vessels. He besieged Jerusalem. It fell to him.

He is the one who had the statue dream. He's the head of gold. He's the one who challenged any God who could deliver his servants from his hand, and he's the one who has this dream.

He is the central character, and really in the book of Daniel, he is the most developed character, just in terms of literature. He's the one who shows emotion. We don't really see that.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego speak once. There's no description of their attitude. There's no description of their response to anything.

They just obey and follow and do what they're supposed to do. In chapter two, Daniel is just portrayed as this wise man who obeys God, who acts prudently. In some ways, he's kind of a flat character.

Nebuchadnezzar is colorful. Nebuchadnezzar, you feel like you almost know this king by the time you get to chapter four, and that's a really interesting thing about the book of Daniel. It's focused on this Gentile king.

Nebuchadnezzar, in many ways, is the quintessential Gentile king. He's like a paradigm of what the Gentile kings were. In the Old Testament, Nebuchadnezzar.

He is the one. He's the one to whom Jerusalem falls. He's that great king.

What's more than that, he's connected to Babylon. Babylon in the Bible is this metaphor, by the time you get to the New Testament, for opposition to God, pride and opposition to God. Here's Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

Look at the journey that the God of heaven has had Nebuchadnezzar on in the book of Daniel. For three chapters, we've watched this king encounter the God of Israel. First, he learned that this God had more knowledge than any God he knew.

This God has more power than any God he knows. In chapter four, this God is the one with the eternal kingdom. He is the God who bestows power on whom he will bestow it.

He gave some to me. Nebuchadnezzar, on one hand, is the paradigm of an evil Gentile king. On the other hand, he's transformed into the paradigm of what a Gentile king ought to be in the kingdom of God.

What should this king be? He's given great power. Yes. Who gave it to him? God did, he says.

Some people hear this last doxology, these last words of Nebuchadnezzar, and they're like, he hasn't changed. Listen to him. I was established in my kingdom and still more greatness was added to me, he says.

He still sounds like he's proud, but listen to what he says. I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the king of heaven. His works are right.

His ways are just. He humbles those who walk in pride. He's probably raising his hand at this point.

Nebuchadnezzar is great. He's a powerful king, but there's nothing wrong with that. That is his gift from God.

That is his responsibility, for which he's accountable for caring for his kingdom. His problem wasn't his greatness. His problem was his pride and his inability to acknowledge that his greatness was a gift from God.

Nebuchadnezzar is really a fascinating character. Where he lands at the end of the book of Daniel, some people say, well, is he converted? Is he a follower of God? I don't know. That's not the narrator's point.

The narrator's point is that this powerful Gentile king recognizes and acknowledges that he is only king because God has made him so. He is subject to a higher king. That's what the narrator cares about here.

When we get to chapter five, Nebuchadnezzar, this whole account of Nebuchadnezzar and his tree-dream is going to come back. It's going to be used as a point of comparison for Belshazzar. So, we'll keep that in mind as we move into chapter five in the next lecture.

This is Dr. Wendy Witter and her teaching on the book of Daniel. This is session 7, Daniel 4, A Humbled King and God's Restored Power.