

King Nebuchadnezzar was at the top of his game so to speak. By 568 BC he was the undisputed ruler of the world's greatest superpower. But simply having vast power doesn't bring true, lasting peace. Then the king tried his hand at building. He had three royal palaces built including one that contained the magnificent hanging gardens—one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. But even nice houses and buildings don't bring peace. Religious fervor was another way that Nebuchadnezzar tried to find peace. We see this in the 53 temples, 955 small sanctuaries, and 384 street alters the tallest shrine rose 300 feet over the site of the ancient tower of Babel¹. All the while God had been trying to get this proud king's attention. In Daniel 1 he saw that God's followers are wiser. In chapter 2 God revealed the future to him in a dream. Next, in Daniel 3 God had shown Himself to be able to save His followers from certain destruction. But still the king followed after week and temporary earthly things.

Daniel 4:4-9—In His love, God sent the king one more terrifying warning. He didn't set out to frighten him just for fun but to jar Nebuchadnezzar into a new path. You would think that he would have gone to Daniel right off to explain the dream but true to form he, just as we so often do, he tried every route other than God's way before finally realizing that the only reliable source of wisdom is God's Spirit.

Daniel 4:10-18—This frightening dream has a sudden shift from "it" to "him". The king rightly thought that this dream must have something to do with himself!

Daniel 4:19-22—Although it could cost him dearly to speak against this dictator in such a fashion Daniel faithfully told the truth. Nebuchadnezzar was the tree. He had become so great that the nations around him relied on him for their needs. In fact he had reached the place where he thought that he was sovereign over the kingdoms rather than God.

Daniel 4:23-26—This may seem like a cruel pronouncement but God uses an eternal lens rather than our earthly one when He works in our lives. God is concerned with our eternal destiny much more than our temporal comfort. If Nebuchadnezzar's wealth, wisdom, and fame were standing in the way of him getting real about his sin then God would take it away for a while and put him in a kind of heavenly time-out so that he could start thinking rationally again.

Daniel 4:27—Daniel's advice is solid. When God promises a punishment to us He's looking for repentance and conversion. If we humbly yield to God then He

will often show grace by forgiving us and commuting His sentence (as he did for the people of Nineveh in the book of Jonah).

2 Corinthians 6:1, 2—"One of the most thrilling and sobering truths of Scripture is that God respects our choices, for either good or evil. We should always be quick to discern the convictions of God's Spirit and hasten to obey Him. We never know when we are hearing our last invitation of mercy."²

Daniel 4:28-32—Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar had intended to repent to save his glory but he never quite got around to it. Most of the time, if asked, we too would have the right intentions but we never quite get around to it. Procrastination is one of the devil's best tools. If he can convince you that you can wait till "tomorrow", or "next week" to obey God he will eventually give you so many "tomorrows" that we suddenly realize that it's too late.

Daniel 4:33-35—What seemed to be a time of insanity actually brought the king to the most sane and wise belief he'd ever had—God is sovereign. He spent 7 years totally reliant on God just as the animals are and found out what the animals all know—God is their creator and sustainer. "Pride is the embryo of all sin. It says, 'I'm going to do it my way regardless of what my creator says.' As Nebuchadnezzar learned, sinful pride must be surrendered or we can never experience God's peace in our lives."³

Daniel 4:36-37—Once this lesson was learned God gave his kingdom back. This time he exulted and glorified God instead of Himself and God was able to make his kingdom greater than ever before.

What are the Bible's Four Steps to eternal life and peace?

John 3:16—We must believe in the loving gift of eternal life that Jesus gave by dying for our sins.

2 Corinthians 7:10—When we realize how much pain our sin caused Jesus, it should produce godly sorrow which leads us to repent and be saved.

1 John 1:9—Jesus promised to completely cleanse you from all pride and sin when you confess it to Him. He's anxious to do it, but it has to be your choice.

Revelation 3:20—Jesus stands ready to come into our lives and give us real peace and happiness. We don't have to learn the hard way, like Nebuchadnezzar did. We can simply invite Him in and let Him change our lives.

¹Statistics come from Gary Gibbs, *Prophecies of Hope: 03 Bible Secrets to Personal Peace*. p.1

² Ibid p. 2

³ Ibid p. 3