***Daniel 4:19-37 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies! 20“The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, 21whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home- 22it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth. 23“And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him’; 24this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: 25They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most- High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses. 26“And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules. 27Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.” 28All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” 31While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven]times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” 3That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws. 34And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding 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 is from generation to generation. 35All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, “What have You done?” 36At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. 37Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.***

 So, a few week ago we left Nebuchadnezzar as he related his latest dream to Daniel, expressing confidence that Daniel could interpret the dream, because Daniel had the Spirit of the Living God in him. We talked about Nebuchadnezzar’s pride, believing that God was to serve him, even though he acknowledged God as the Everlasting God, whose Kingdom lasted from generation to generation.

Tonight, we pick up Chapter 4 at the moment when Daniel has heard the dream. Verse 19 says *Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!* There was a pregnant pause, a period of silence. Daniel is astonished. The original language was a Chaldee word, meaning taken aback and feeling greatly sorry – in this case for the king. The KJV says Daniel was astonished and greatly troubled for one hour. His face must betray his feelings because the king intercedes and says – give me the interpretation whether it is good news or bad. We know that the news was not good for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel starts by saying basically, “It would be better for this to come upon your enemies O king.

Daniel then begins the interpretation of the first part of the dream, knowing that this is the statement of God and it will come to pass whether he says it or not! Verses 20-22 say *“The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, 21whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home- 22it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.* The tree represents Nebuchadnezzar and his earthly kingdom. Babylon had grown and become strong, conquering the Assyrians, overrunning Judah. God had used Nebuchadnezzar as a tool. Now Babylon was regarded as the center of the known world and the king was the ruler. Babylon abounded in wealth and riches, greed flowed in the population, beauty was everywhere, and food was abundant, unlike any time before. She offered security and demonstrated military might! To this day, and in the end times, Babylon is associated with excess and wickedness. Nebuchadnezzar was the ungodly ruler over the ungodly place. Daniel confirms – it is you O king that this dream refers to. Of course, we know that Nebuchadnezzar had an anger management problem. Daniel, once again, showed courage drawn directly from his relationship with God to give the king this bad news.

We now move to the interpretation of the second part of the dream in verses 23-27 *“And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him’; 24this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: 25They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most- High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses. 26“And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules. 27Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.”* An angel has spoken the *decree of the Most High*. This decree came straight from God – cut the tree down. Just as the tree is to be cut down, so Nebuchadnezzar will be cut down and driven like a beast, no longer like a man, but to dwell in the fields with the beasts of the field and even eat the grass as an ox. Dew will fall on the king, just as dew falls on a cow standing in the field at night. *Seven times shall pass over* and last week we learned that the Chaldee word iddan is in view here. Seven years will pass with Nebuchadnezzar acting in this bizarre way. *Till you know -* O king, you will remain in this condition until you acknowledge that God rules the kingdoms, He raises up and tears down whom He will. But the angel is to *Leave the stump of the tree.* God is a merciful God. We see this time and again in His interaction with man. The king’s position will be preserved until he acknowledges that God is over all. The band of iron and brass on the tree stump helps preserve the stump and keeps it from splitting, so the kingdom would be preserved for Nebuchadnezzar to rule once again. This is unheard of in ancient times by the way. When a king showed any weakness, those who wanted to rule swooped in. Only God could make this decree and it stick.

Daniel now tries to council the king. *let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous –* Notice that Daniel does not ask, he tells the king. He reproves the king for his sinful actions and calls for repentance. In this repentance, the king may find mercy. Like Nineveh was spared, Nebuchadnezzar could find forgiveness, through repentance and obedience.

Interestingly, secular Babylonian writings indicate that Nebuchadnezzar did go through a period of deep depression, when he gave an order and then gave a contradictory order, did not love his family, found no joy in the kingdom, built no buildings. The king himself wrote - ***For seven seasons, my kingdom in the city gave me no joy. During this time, not one building of any importance did I issue to be built; the precious treasures of my kingdom I did not lay out. I did not sing praises to Merodach, my god, nor did I provide his sacrificial table with offerings, nor did I clean any of the waterways.*** Of course, archaeologists say that this is not proof of insanity, but it’s compelling.

Verses 28-33 *All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” 31While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven]times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” 3That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.* We learn that 12 months later, the king was bragging as he walked around the royal palace. He gave all glory to himself. *While the word was still in his mouth,* God’s hammer fell. That very hour the judgement was carried out. Nebuchadnezzar became like the beast of the field. By Nebuchadnezzars own writing, 7 seasons passed.

Daniel 4:34-37 *And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding 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 is from generation to generation. 35All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, “What have You done?” 36At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. 37Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.* At the end of the time, seven seasons, Nebuchadnezzar’s understanding returned. He blessed, praised, and honored God, Who’s kingdom and dominion are everlasting. He sees that men are dust, nothing compared to God. Nebuchadnezzar was fully restored to his position, knowing that God restored him, because he had humbled himself. The king sees that God’s works are truth.

Was Nebuchadnezzar converted? In an artifact in the British Museum of London, Nebuchadnezzar himself writes about raising his hands in supplication to the Lord of lords. Regardless, we see the lengths God will go to bring about belief and return in relationship. We see that Daniel was Focused, Faithful, and Fearless in interpreting the dream and pulling no punches. May we be as obedient in spreading the gospel to a lost world. God is God and we are dust. Our only meaning in this life is found in our service to Him.