***Daniel 4:1-18 Nebuchadnezzar the king, To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. 2I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. 3How great are His signs, And how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation. 4I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. 5I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation. 8But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before him, saying: 9“Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation. 10“These were the visions of my head while on my bed: I was looking, and behold, A tree in the midst of the earth, And its height was great. 11The tree grew and became strong; Its height reached to the heavens, And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. 12Its leaves were lovely, Its fruit abundant, And in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, And all flesh was fed from it. 13“I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. 14He cried aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, And the birds from its branches. 15Nevertheless leave the 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 On the grass of the earth. 16Let his heart be changed from that of a man, Let him be given the heart of a beast,
And let seven timespass over him. 17‘This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.’ 18“This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since 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 God is in you.”***

 Last week, we left Nebuchadnezzar in a state of awe and astonishment. He’d thrown Meshach, Shadrach, and Abed-Nego into a fiery furnace that even the men that approached the door could not survive. He watched with glee as the three fell, bound, into the fire, waiting for them to burst into flames. But, as he watched, there was a fourth Man, and these four walked through the fire as though they were sauntering through a park on a bright spring day. The three were accompanied by the pre-incarnate Christ. Nebuchadnezzar had to call them forth and, as all the officials observed, they emerged, unburned, unsinged, unaffected, so much so that even their clothes held no smell of smoke.

 Now, we get a glimpse of the decree that Nebuchadnezzar made at the end of chapter 3. Starting in verses 1-3 - *Nebuchadnezzar the king, To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. 2I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. 3How great are His signs, And how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation.* Though we see what appears to be a conversion of sorts in Nebuchadnezzar, we also hear a lot pride. As Nebuchadnezzar is the ruler of what is then the known world, ruling many peoples, nations, and languages, this decree goes out to all people. But in verse 2, we read – I thought very prideful… and the Most High God has worked for me. The theologians I read were all over the place, but my sense is that Nebuchadnezzar still has not surrendered and placed God above himself. It’s as though he’s telling the people – God is so taken with me, here’s the signs and wonders He’s done. God does signs and wonders, no doubt, but not in work for anybody, but to lead us to a humble faith in Him. But the king surely gets one fact right - *His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.* He acknowledges God as the Alpha and Omega, Everlasting to Everlasting, Beginning and End.

 Verses 4-7 *I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. 5I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation.* This appears to be a different dream than chapter 2, though many of the events surrounding the dream are similar. The king has had a second dream, another effort on the part of God to draw Nebuchadnezzar to Him. God always does the convicting and the calling for His chosen – it is never we that find God, but God that finds us. The king recalls his decree to the wise men of Babylon, to give him the interpretation of the dream. This time, the king remembers his dream. He tells the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and the soothsayers his dream and, even with the dream details, they can’t interpret it. God again exposes them as fakes and false prophets, serving a false god.

 Verses 8-9 *But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before him, saying: 9“Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation.* It seems to me that the king should start with Daniel, but again Daniel comes before the king – ***at last***. Nebuchadnezzar remembers Daniel’s ability to interpret dreams and secret things. Notice the statement of two masters here - *his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god.* Nebuchadnezzar is not surrendered. We cannot serve two masters – we will love the one and hate the other. The king needs to choose this day whom he will serve, as Joshua instructed in Joshua 24:15. We too must choose – God or the world, Spirit or flesh. But the king does add *in him is the Spirit of the Holy God*, acknowledging God as Supreme. But we must have No other gods before God – God is not saying there are other gods… He is saying sin causes us to create other gods. There is only One God. The king then tells Daniel the dream.

 Verses 10-12 *“These were the visions of my head while on my bed: I was looking, and behold, A tree in the midst of the earth, And its height was great. 11 The tree grew and became strong; Its height reached to the heavens, And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. 12 Its leaves were lovely, Its fruit abundant, And in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, And all flesh was fed from it.* We now see the first part of the dream. *A tree* – the characteristics include – the tree was at the center of the earth, of great size, strong, reached the ends of the earth, had lovely leaves, abundant fruit, abounding in food, and birds and beasts dwelt in and around it. Our take-away is that the tree was healthy and vibrant and truly a sight to behold.

 Years ago, I went to the Redwoods in California. Talk about an awe-inspiring sight! It’s impossible to imagine how large these trees are and the heights they reach! One, which is supposed to be the tallest on earth, I could not see the top of when standing at the base. Think of the Redwoods and their magnificence… this tree was more magnificent.

 Verses 13-17 *“I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. 14He cried aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, And the birds from its branches. 15Nevertheless leave the 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 On the grass of the earth. 16Let his heart be changed from that of a man, Let him be given the heart of a beast, And let seven times pass over him. 17‘This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.’* Now, we get the second part of the dream. *I saw in the visions* a *watcher and a holy one* - He sees a watcher, a holy one, come down from heaven. In the original language, the word watcher referred to an angel. The angel is watching the events taking place. It is this angel that comes down from heaven. Angel, holy one, and watcher should be understood as the same being. Now this angel cries aloud – chop down the tree, limb it up, shake off the leaves, scatter the fruit – run off the beasts and birds. In other words, all but the stump was to be destroyed. But, leave the stump and roots, band it with brass and iron around it and leave it in the field. Leave it wet with the dew of heaven. And now we see a change - *And let him graze with the beasts On the grass of the earth –* from it to him. This tree represents a man. *Let his heart be changed* – His heart is to be changed from a mans to a beasts. *Seven times* – the word time is Chaldean ‘iddan’, which means a year. Seven years will pass over the stump, representing a man, who becomes a beast. This is the *Decree of the watchers, and the demand of the holy ones* – the word for watcher and holy one means angel in the original language. Then we are told why this decree is made - that the living may know that God sets up and pulls down the kingdoms of men and alone determines who will govern and rule.

 Verse 18 *“This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since 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 God is in you.”* The king now says- *Belteshazzar declare its interpretation*, *since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able –* The king again acknowledges the impotency of his wise men and expresses confidence in Daniel and Daniel’s God - *but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.* Nebuchadnezzar is a great example of what we see in our world today. People who know of God, but don’t know God. People who want to serve God, while serving all the other gods of their own making. People who want the benefit of God, but want to serve their own appetites and lusts. God reminded Nebuchadnezzar then, and He reminds us today, we cannot serve two masters, we can’t claim God and love the world, we must choose each day whom we will serve. This is not multiple choice, where all answers are right. It is one answer and we either get it right or wrong. So far, despite all the extra tutoring, we still see Nebuchadnezzar getting it wrong. God is about to change all that. Faithful, Fearless, and Focused – Daniel continues to witness for God to the king then… and to us today. May we joyfully receive his witness.