

# THE MERCY OF GOD

(How God Can Humble And Restore The Proud)  
Daniel 4:1-37



## WHAT A DREAM

- ◆ It's Message
- ◆ It's Mercy
- ◆ It's Ministry

*“Those that walk in pride, God is able to abase” (Daniel 4:37)*

Bill Kirk

# “MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUSTICE”

**Text:** Daniel 4:1-37

**Subject:** “How Mercy Triumphs Over Justice”

## Introduction

(The theme of Daniel Chapters 1-6 is summed up in 2 verses:)

- ◆ Daniel 5:12, “Forasmuch as an **excellent spirit** was found in Daniel”, (and)
- ◆ Daniel 6:3, “Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes because an **excellent spirit** was in him”.

**Question:** What is an excellent spirit?

**Answer:** It is the spirit of Daniel revealed in Daniel chapters 1-6.

- ◆ The first 6 chapters of Daniel are historical (and reveal his personal integrity).
- ◆ The last 6 chapters of Daniel are prophetic (and reveal end time events).

**Question:** What are the characteristics of an excellent spirit (that bring blessings and great reward?)

- ◆ In chapter 1 – A willingness to choose right when the environment is all wrong. (an **integrity spirit**)
- ◆ In chapter 2 – A willingness to thank God when blessings come your way. (a **grateful spirit**)
- ◆ In chapter 3 – A willingness to choose companions who fear the Lord above every other opinion. (a **courageous spirit**)
- ◆ In chapter 4 – A willingness to speak the truth in love even when it hurts. (a **secure spirit**)
- ◆ In chapter 5 – A willingness to not use God for personal gain. (a **servanthood spirit**)
- ◆ In chapter 6 – A willingness to pray and seek God in the midst of a crisis or a calm. (a **devotional spirit**)

**Question:** How many of you want an **excellent spirit** instead of a mediocre spirit?

**In chapter 1** – Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself with wine and meat offered to pagan gods.

**In chapter 2** – Daniel deflected all praise to God for answers to prayer in a life and death crisis.

**In chapter 3** – Daniel’s 3 friends refused to compromise their convictions and met Jesus in the burning fiery furnace.

**In chapter 4** – Daniel speaks the truth (in love) even though it’s painful and risky.

- ◆ Discover with me the **rise**, the **ruin** and the **restoration** of Nebuchadnezzar.

## (Grasp The Setting Of Daniel Chapter 4)

1. It is the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar himself.
2. It takes place about 10 years after the building of the golden image in chapter 3.
3. Nebuchadnezzar has swept the world in his conquests.
4. Successful in designing and building in Babylon (and around it).
5. (V. 4) declares that the king is enjoying 2 things:
  - #1. “Rest in his house” (and)
  - #2. “Flourishing in his palace.

## (But There Is Just One Problem)

**Question:** What’s missing in Nebuchadnezzar?

**Answer:** He is not at peace, he’s discontent, he’s self-made, and he thinks he can make it without the Lord.

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- ◆ Money on the outside, (empty on the inside).
- ◆ Boastful on the outside, (prideful on the inside).
- ◆ Busy making buildings, (but too busy to make a life).
- ◆ Eyes on the temporary, (but no sight of eternity and the world to come).

**(And Then One Day The Bubble Bursts)**

**I. The Message Of the Dream (Vs. 4-25)**

(In an instant, Nebuchadnezzar's world turns upside down) (Verse 5 records it)

"I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me".

**Question:** How does God trouble Nebuchadnezzar?

**Answer:** He paints a picture in the dream:

- ◆ In V. 10, the king sees a tree in his dream.
- ◆ In V. 11, the tree grows and reaches heaven.
- ◆ In V. 12, the tree has food and shade for all.
- ◆ In v. 13, the heavenly being comes down from heaven, (he's called "a watcher").
- ◆ In v. 14, the heavenly messenger cries "cut down the tree, cut off the branches, shake off the leaves and scatter the fruit".

**Question:** Why did God give the dream?

**Answer:** Because Nebuchadnezzar was set on a collision course (and God wanted to save him).

◆ The dream has 2 purposes:

- #1. God is holy, so He has to judge the pride of Nebuchadnezzar, (and)
- #2. God loves Nebuchadnezzar and wants to extend mercy at the same time.

**(In Other Words)**

- ◆ Man is sinful and we deserve judgment, (yet)
- ◆ God is merciful and wants to save us.

**Question:** How many of you know that all have sinned and come short of God's glory?

**Question:** How many of you know that God (in Christ) can forgive every sin and save anybody?

**(Now The Dreams Interpretation)**

- ◆ In v. 7, none of the kings men could interpret the dream.
- ◆ In v. 18, the king calls Daniel in because he is full of the Spirit of God.

**(And Daniel Gives The Sobering News)**

- ◆ In vs. 20, 21, & 22 – "The tree you saw O King is you".
- ◆ In v. 22, "The dream is about you O King"
- ◆ In v. 23, "You're going to be with the beasts of the field for 7 years"
- ◆ In v. 24, "The Lord is going to chasten you and humble you till what?"

"Till you know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will".

**(In Other Words)**

- ◆ God can't stand your rebellion any longer.
- ◆ God can't leave you alone to self-destruct.
- ◆ God can't bear to watch you go down.
- ◆ God can't ignore your pride and arrogance.

**(In Other Words)**

- ◆ "There is good news O King, even for someone who is careless, negligent and going in the wrong direction".

**II. The Mercy Of The Dream (Vs. 26-29)**

**Question:** How does God reveal His mercy to the heathen king?

**Answer:** (In 3 ways I can see)

**#1. In V. 26, The "Stump" Reveals God's Mercy:**

"And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, for you'll recover after you discover that God in heaven still rules".

**Question:** How does the stump reveal God's mercy?

**Answer:** God is saying here, that though the tree was cut down, the stump was left to revive, restore and grow again.

**(In Other Words)**

- ◆ "You'll be humbled, but I'm not giving up on you Nebuchadnezzar".
- ◆ "You're a mess, and in need of a transformation, yet I can do it king".
- ◆ "Your pride will cost you 7 years of great pain, but I haven't forgotten you".
- ◆ "You'll suffer for your rebellion, but when you humble yourself, you'll recover and be restored".

**#2. In V. 27, The "Appeal" Reveals God's Mercy:**

"Wherefore O King, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee and break off thy sins by righteousness".

**(In Other Words)**

- ◆ Daniel stands before the king and pleads for him to repent and turn.
- ◆ Daniel cries out with a broken heart, "Receive God's Invitation O King".
- ◆ "Break off your sins and what...lengthen your tranquility". (or)
- ◆ Find the peace that only comes from a right relationship with God!

#1. The Stump, #2. The Appeal

**#3. In V. 29, The "Delay" Reveals God's Mercy:**

"At the end of twelve months" (means:)

- ◆ Nebuchadnezzar rejected the appeal for a year.
- ◆ He failed to turn to God after the dream, Daniels appeal, and 12 months of contemplation.
- ◆ And God's patience finally gives way to drastic measures to get his attention.

**III. The Ministry Of The Dream**

**Question:** What happens when we resist and harden our hearts in pride?

**Question:** What happens when we reject God's appeal and postpone His plan for us?

**Question:** What happens when we put off till tomorrow what we know to do today?

**Answer:** God is forced to be true to His Word, (and for our sakes) take action! (Pg. 3 of 4)

In verse 30, the king boasts “Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by my power from my majesty”?

- ◆ 7 miles around the city, surrounded by 3 walls – 85 feet thick – 335 feet high.
  - ◆ 100 gates of brass to keep the enemy out, 200 massive towers to defend the walls and gates.
  - ◆ Located on both sides of the Euphrates river, a reservoir 138 miles in diameter.
- (And the king collapses into the abyss of spiritual pride and darkness)

**Question:** What happens when pride comes between us and God?

**Answer:** It is punished by humiliating judgment. (Notice v. 31)

“While the word was his mouth...God says, the kingdom is departed from you”

(Verse 32)

“You’ll be driven out until you understand who is really in charge”

(Verse 33)

“The thing was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar and he was driven to the fields to eat with the oxen”

(In Other Words)

- ◆ The sudden collapse of pride takes place

(Why?)

- #1. Because Nebuchadnezzar pushed aside the dream,
- #2. Nebuchadnezzar forgot the prophets appeal,
- #3. Nebuchadnezzar suppressed his conscience,
- #4. Nebuchadnezzar persisted in sin until God’s patience was exhausted.

**Question:** Pastor, what is the message and ministry to my life from Daniel 4?

- #1. In v. 33, we always end in ruin when we do our own thing apart from God.
- #2. In v. 34, if we repent, God is waiting to respond with mercy:  
“I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up my eyes to heaven and I blessed the most Most High who lives forever and ever”.
- #3. In v. 35, “No one can fight against God and win”.
- #4. In V. 36, “At this time my reason returned unto me, and I was restored”.

(And What’s The Discovery?)

(Verse 37) “Those who walk in pride, God is able to abase”.

**Question:** Pastor, what is the lesson to me so that I can be spiritually healthy in this life?

- #1. Procrastination destroys our sensitivity and gives momentum to a downward spiral.
  - ◆ 12 months elapsed, yet the king resisted.
- #2. The purpose of God’s chastening is not vengeance but salvation.
  - ◆ God humbles the proud because He loves us and is out for our good.
- #3. God’s mercy is always greater than our sin when we repent, return and run to Jesus.
  - ◆ The king was changed when he said in (v. 34) “I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eye unto heaven”.

Altar Call  
Bill Kirk, Pastor