**DANIEL: Countering Culture**

**The Question of Authority, Daniel 4:1-37**

Sunday 11/3/24

**QUESTION: How much of what you’ve accomplished in life is you and how much of it is God?** Another way of saying it is, who gets the credit for your successes, failures, intelligence, physical abilities, skill set? Since God’s given us free will to make choices we should get the credit, right? That’s one of the big questions in life and what God answers for us in Daniel 4 with another reoccurring dream of Nebuchadnezzar‘s. Go ahead and turn to Daniel 4, pg. 886 and as you do let me remind you of the 2 THEMES we’re learning about as we go through Daniel.

**THEMES IN DANIEL**

1. **God is sovereign-** God’s given us free-will to choose what we want to do, but He’s able to work His eternal plan of saving people from their sin/hell and put everything under Jesus’ authority because He is infinitely wise and powerful. His saving us doesn’t mean everyone goes to heaven. It’s only given to those who make the free-will choice to believe Jesus died for them- took their eternal judgment for them which allows God to forgive their sins and adopt them into His family/go to heaven. It’s a gift He gives.
2. **How to live for God in a hostile culture-** How we accomplish the purpose God’s given us of knowing Him personally and making Him known to others especially when our culture is hostile to Him.

**The Question of Authority, Daniel 4:1-37**

1. **NEBUCHADNEZZAR PRAISES GOD, Daniel 4:1-3** Wow! Pretty impressive! Neb is praising God and wants his entire empire to know it. What’s gotten into Nebuchadnezzar?
2. **KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S DREAM, Daniel 4:4-17** According to Neb EVERYTHING in his life was going GREAT- growing empire, military victories, solid investments, growing retirement fund, but he had another REOCCURRING dream that bothered him. His Babylonian advisors couldn’t interpret it so he calls in Daniel. He knows Daniel’s God has given him the ability to interpret dreams. REMINDER on dreams/visions- Today God speaks through the Bible as we read/study it and God the Holy Spirit teaches us. Listen to Week 2. Neb says the dream was about a massive tree in the middle of the earth that everyone on the earth could see. It was in full bloom, the animals of the earth found shelter and shade in it. It was full of fruit/food that fed all the people/animals, but then Neb says an angel showed up and said this.
3. **THE INTERPRETATION, Daniel 4:18-27** God is telling Neb that for 7 years he will live away from people and live like cattle- roaming in a field/eating grass. God also promises it will end, and his kingdom will be restored once he recognizes it is God who rules over world rulers/events. In other words, ultimately it is God who gets the credit for allowing Neb to succeed. Daniel ends with some advice for the king- repent, turn your heart from your gods to THE God, recognize God as the ruler over all, and show it through your life. Daniel’s hoping by doing so God would keep Neb from this humiliation/pain.
4. **NEB’S DREAM COMES TRUE, Daniel 4:28-33** Sadly, the king fails to give God the CREDIT for his success and takes CREDIT for all he has. Immediately the dream comes true, and Neb spends the next 7 years away from people, eating grass like an animal, and was unrecognizable. Did this really happen? It is a rare condition, but it has happened.
5. Of course, secular historians, those who don’t believe in God, doubt most of Daniel.
6. Don’t believe in miracles/prophecy, it’s just a moralistic story to encourage the Jewish people.
7. Believe Daniel written during the Maccabean period 200-100 BC. 300- 400 years after Neb’s reign.
8. Believe Daniel’s referring to King Nabonidus who reigned 20 years after Neb, became “mad”.
9. Biblical historians believe it happened due to other details
10. Babylonians kept very detailed governmental records.
11. There is 7 years where there are no governmental records, 582-575 BC
12. Ancient historians Megathenes, 350-290 BC and Abydenus, 200’s BC also mention this period.
13. British Museum- tablet found by archeologists from Neb seeming to refer to this event.
14. **NEB RECOGNIZES GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY, IS RESTORED, Daniel 4:34-37** Neb turned his attention to God- blessed, praised and honored Him. He recognized God’s authority over heaven, earth, and his life. God restored Neb to his throne/made him greater than ever just as He promised. Neb also recognized that God’s works are true, His ways are just and is able to humble the proud. Neb personally experienced who God is as God REVEALED Himself through Neb’s life experiences.

**TAKEAWAYS**

1. **GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY**
2. **God Has Authority Over and Works in Our Lives**
3. Neb thought he was the one who accomplished everything in his life.
4. God told Neb that was not the case, Remember? Daniel 4:25-26b
5. It’s true God’s given us free will to choose, but He has ultimate authority.
6. Whether we choose to recognize it or not He’s always working His eternal plans in/through us.
7. **God Owns This World and Everything in It, Psalm 24:1**
8. Makes sense…He created everything/everyone, so everything is His.
9. This is what everyone in our culture is fighting against- they want to be god/not answer to God.
10. **God Gives/Maintains Our Physical Life, Isaiah 42:5**
11. He gives us our breath, our human spirit/nature.
12. He allows us to live out our lives however we want for however long it lasts.
13. Here’s a sobering thought…Only He knows when our last breath will be.
14. **God Created You/Me for His Glory, Isaiah 43:7**
15. God wants you to know Him personally.
16. Unbeliever/believer God is aware of what’s going on in your life.
17. He’s allowing it so like Neb we’ll turn to Him and know Him personally at work in our life.
18. **HOW TO LIVE FOR GOD IN A HOSTILE CULTURE**
19. **Unbelievers**
20. God is a God of justice- He will sentence those found guilty of disobeying Him/those who sin, which is everyone, to an eternity in hell. Romans 3:23, 6:23a.
21. Everyone ever born is born a sinner and then has sinned/disobeyed God.
22. Left to ourselves we are in a world of hurt- we’ll be sentenced to an eternity in hell when we die.
23. God is a God of love- He sent God the Son, Jesus, to take our sentence. Romans 6:23 ends.
24. Jesus died, not for His sins, He’s God/perfect, but for your sin.
25. He died to take your guilty verdict/death sentence so you don’t have to.
26. He loves you so He won’t force you.
27. He wants you to choose, of your own free will, to ask God for forgiveness and a restored relationship with Him.
28. How to choose forgiveness/relationship with God.
29. Admit you’re a sinner and need God’s forgiveness.
30. Believe/put your full weight of trust on what God says- Jesus took your judgment.
31. Confess- ask God to forgive and tell Him you believe.
32. **Believers**
33. You only have God to thank for your life.
34. God has your physical life/has given you spiritual life- everything you have is His including your very breath. He’s the One who allows you to breathe, to move, to accomplish anything you do.
35. As a believer, your life has been given to Jesus- live for Him, Galatians 2:21
36. Live so others know you have God’s answers for their lives.
37. Daniel lived his life for God- there was no doubt/NEB’S LIFE WAS DEBATABLE.
38. God showed Himself through Daniel’s obedience.
39. Neb knew Daniel would have God’s answer for him.

**BE THAT PERSON FOR OTHERS IN YOUR LIFE. Let’s stand and pray.**