

graceWORKS ! GOING DEEPER¹ The Papou Study Bible is a daily study provided by me to



help folks explore the depth and joy of the “conneXion” life of God. It’s my personal study, and is not intended as a doctrinal statement or statement of any church or denomination or congregation. It’s also my belief that “grace” works, and the servant of God should always want to go deeper. Multi-tasking as usual, I’m also calling this the “Papou Study Bible.” I’m writing it as if I were speaking to my girls who love me and any descendant they have that love their Papou too. And to anyone who wants to consider me a spiritual Dad or “Papou.” I want them to be able to study the Bible with Papou (grandpa in Greek) after I’m gone---and if they don’t, I’ll haunt them. The Scriptures say it’s noble to “search the Scriptures daily” to verify truth like the ancient Bereans did (Acts 17:11). My folks came from Berea. My incredible Dad (and your grandfather and great grandfather, guys), Vasil Charles Valekis taught me to do this like he did---every day until I die. He taught me and everyone I know to go to church no matter what and to put God first. While Mama (Maria Pagona Stratakis Valekis) never really did this, she made sure we listened to Daddy on this one. She would have hit us with a spatula or frying pan or worse if we didn’t. This is a simple sharing my “daily search.” And I’d like to think it is a continuation of God’s life through my Dad through me. Both my “Dads” by the way. And a way to honor him, mama and our loving “Dad”---God. And for all of us to be together, in Spirit, even when we I join them in heaven. I like to use the Blue Letter literal, very “visual,” Greek translation a lot to help “visualize” these truths the beautiful way Greek enables you to view. And I like to share this with folks serving in an elder capacity, or any capacity, to grow them, challenge them, and stretch them. But especially share it with anyone I’ve ever brought to Christ and family members who truly love me. And when you study these, I’ll make sure to connect with you from heaven. *Ever an orthodox Greek, Jim Valekis*

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Christ IN You Series

Colossians 1:27 (King James Version)

²⁷To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory

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Daniel 4 Part 1²

This chapter focuses up close and personal on Nebuchadnezzar himself. In fact, the way it opens, he actually wrote it. Certain characteristics and “traits” have surfaced as we read the previous stories in this book. Among them were anger, volatility, and huge mood swings---just to name a few. Now this time, pride will surface. And yet the God of all the universe loves this human being enough to deal with him, even in the form of a trial. Don’t just read this as if this doesn’t apply to me and you. Read it as if you and I too need to be humbled occasionally and our pride gets in our way! We’ve all got a little of the despot in us. But we’ve all got all of God who loves us and even corrects us. Enjoy!

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² New International Version (NIV) Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. (Author’s note: This translation, and the source for many of the study notes that accompany it, are taken from The NIV Study Bible, Copyright 1985,1995, 2002, 2008, 2011 . These notes are referenced throughout and paraphrased frequently in the notes.)

Daniel 4 New International Version (NIV)

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Tree

4 King Nebuchadnezzar,

To the nations and peoples of every language, who live in all the earth:

May you prosper greatly!

²It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.

The NIV speculates that since this is written Aramaic, Daniel may have influenced the king in the telling of this story.

³How great are his signs,

how mighty his wonders!

His kingdom is an eternal kingdom;

his dominion endures from generation to generation.

⁴I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous.

Note: The phrase Nebuchadnezzar used "contented and prosperous" intrigued me. It's a goal I think all people have. What do the words mean?

1. "Contented"

H7951 shalah shaw-law'

or shalav (Job 3:26) {shaw-lav'};

a primitive root; to be tranquil, i.e. secure or successful.

2. "Prosperous"

H7487 ra`anan rah-aw-nan'

(Aramaic) corresponding to **H7488**;

green, i.e. (figuratively) prosperous.

⁵I had a dream that made me afraid.

This guy had a lot of sleep disturbances. He apparently had a very active mind. But in this case, God was speaking to him through dreams. This is a very consistent theme in this story, and in the Bible in general.

See the sidebar for other key visions³/dreams in Scriptures.

As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me. ⁶So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. ⁷When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers^[b] and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. ⁸Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)

³ Called a “waking dream” in this article. Source: [How did God use dreams and visions in the Bible?](#)

Abraham (Genesis 15:1) God restated the [Abrahamic Covenant](#), reminded Abram that he would have a son and be the father of many nations. *Abimelech (Genesis 20:1-7)*: God sent him a dream telling him not to touch Sarah because she was Abraham’s wife.

Jacob (Genesis 28:10-17): Jacob received God’s promise that Abraham’s blessing would be carried on through him.

Joseph (Genesis 37:1-11): Joseph’s family would one day bow to him in respect. *Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker (Genesis 40)*: The cupbearer would return to Pharaoh’s service, but the baker would be killed.

Pharaoh (Genesis 41): Warned of a horrible famine to come.

Samuel (1 Samuel 3): Judgment was coming upon the sons of Samuel’s mentor, *The Midianite and Amalekite armies (Judges 7:12-15)*: Gideon mentioned by name and Israel would win the battle.

Solomon (1 Kings 3:5): God gave Solomon the famous offer: “Ask what you wish Me to give you.”

Daniel (Daniel 2; 4): a foreign ruler’s dream.

New Testament Dreams and Visions

Zacharias (Luke 1:5-23): God used a vision to tell Zacharias, an old priest, that he would soon have an important son.

Joseph (Matthew 1:20; 2:13): God sent an angel to him in a dream, convincing him that the pregnancy was of God. God sent two more dreams, one to tell Joseph to take his family to Egypt so Herod could not kill Jesus and another to tell him Herod was dead and that he could return home.

Pilate’s wife (Matthew 27:19): During Jesus’ trial, Pilate’s wife sent an urgent message to the governor encouraging him to free Jesus. Jesus was innocent and that Pilate should have nothing to do with His case.

Ananias (Acts 9:10): a vision from God to convince Ananias, a Christian in Damascus, to visit Paul, the persecutor of Christians.

Cornelius (Acts 10:1-6): In vision, Cornelius saw an angel who told him where to find Simon Peter and to send for him and listen to his message.

Peter (Acts 10:9-15): God gave him a vision of animals lowered in something like a sheet. The vision served to show that Christians are not bound by kosher law and that God had pronounced Gentiles “clean”; that is, heaven is open to all who follow Jesus.

Paul: Paul had several visions in his missionary career. One sent him to preach in Macedonia ([Acts 16:9-10](#)). Another encouraged him to keep preaching in Corinth ([Acts 18:9-11](#)). God also gave him a vision of heaven ([2 Corinthians 12:1-6](#)).

John (Revelation): Nearly the entire book of Revelation is a vision of John

This is interesting. He still worshipped "his god" and talked about "his" god as if it were his "personal" god that he had a right to believe as "he saw fit." And he obviously believed in "gods" (plural)--but he did recognize the "spirit of the holy gods is in him." Or at least what he called "gods." We have to learn how to deal with the different belief systems of others as we bring them to the One True God.

⁹I said, "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians,

So he still saw Daniel as a "magician." His belief system didn't really change other than he was tolerant of the worship of the Jews and saw the One True God at the very least as the "highest" of all the other deities. God allowed this, and allowed Daniel to continue to deal with him.

I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you.

The Holy Spirit has now fallen upon all flesh! We are so blessed! He is associated with true visions and true dreams.

¹⁷"In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

Acts 2



Here is my dream; interpret it for me. ¹⁰These are the visions I saw while lying in bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. ¹¹The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. ¹²Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

¹³"In the visions I saw while lying in bed, I looked, and there before me was a holy one, a messenger,^[c]

Here is the word used, and its root word. In the literal translation I use it translates it "rouser" in the sense of a watchman who stays awake to guard and watch.

<p>H5894 `iyr eer (Aramaic) from a root corresponding to H5782; a watcher, i.e. an angel (as guardian).</p>	<p>H5782 `uwr oor a primitive root (rather identical with H5783 through the idea of opening the eyes); to wake (literally or figuratively).</p>	<p>H5783 `uwr oor a primitive root; to (be) bare.</p>
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coming down from heaven.

Interesting that our angels "watch" us through the night!

¹⁴He called in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field.

"Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. ¹⁶Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times^[d] pass by for him.

Wow. To stop being human to become more like an animal. Wow.

¹⁷"The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.'

Wow. God is showing the world that Nebuchadnezzar is "the lowliest." What a come down!

¹⁸"This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

People can tell. Even despotic rulers who are about to lose their minds.

Daniel Interprets the Dream

¹⁹Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him.

Daniel was “stunned.” One translation says flustered. He knew the dream meant something bad for this king. And this king wasn’t exactly someone easy to talk to or give bad news to.

So the king said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you.”

Belteshazzar answered, “My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!

Daniel had such tact. I guess one of the things you’ve got to learn is how to give bad news to people. I’m amazed too at how even after this prophecy was articulated, Daniel will indicate Nebuchadnezzar still has a chance to change things by repentance.

I want to focus a bit on Nebuchadnezzar’s personality, and the markers of someone with megalomania. But also focus on how God works with all---even the “lowliest” of men made rulers of an empire!

²⁰The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, ²¹with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the wild animals, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds—

It’s interesting to me that the Scripture shows the ruler has authority over (and perhaps responsibility for) the environment in his empire. He gave “shelter” to the wild animals and provided “nesting places” even for the bird!

²²Your Majesty, you are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

At least the earth as they knew it.

²³“Your Majesty saw a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live with the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.’

Again, the word for messenger is “watcher.” These angels/agents of God do his bidding on the earth. They are given great authority and responsibility. It will be interesting to track with their activity in other parts of this book later.

²⁴“This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: ²⁵You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you

Seven is the number of completeness. It may be a symbolic number here (the perfect amount of time) or literal---or both. Times is also seen as “years.”

H5732 `iddan id-dawn'

(Aramaic) from a root corresponding to that of H5708;

a set time; technically, a year.

until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.

Look at this place that God wants this ruler to come to so his sanity can be restored. He must acknowledge:

- the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth
- and gives them to anyone he wishes.

²⁶The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.

Again look at that. “When you acknowledge that heaven rules.”

We all have to come to that. That is part of repentance.

²⁷Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.”

Here was Daniels advice to a man in this situation.

1. Renounce your sins by doing what is right (not just articulating a renouncing).

2. Renounce your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed.

Ok. This is too rich to speed through. I'll revisit this next time, and go deeper.

Footnotes:

- a. **Daniel 4:1** In Aramaic texts 4:1-3 is numbered 3:31-33, and 4:4-37 is numbered 4:1-34.
- b. **Daniel 4:7** Or *Chaldeans*
- c. **Daniel 4:13** Or *watchman*; also in verses 17 and 23
- d. **Daniel 4:16** Or *years*; also in verses 23, 25 and 32