

**graceWORKS ! GOING DEEPER<sup>1</sup> 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)**

<sup>27</sup>To 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

**graceWORKS! GOING DEEPER**

**Daniel 4 Part 1<sup>2</sup>**

I found myself “rushing” through this chapter yesterday, and feel a bit convicted because of that. I want to savor every inch of God’s word, and learn more from it each year, each season of my life, each day.

Today I want to focus on all the fascinating parts of this story, in particular, Nebuchadnezzar’s “breakdown.” Again, I think in some venue, in our true and in our false selves, we’re all the characters in the Bible at some time or another in our lives. And again, the most fascinating thing to me is that God loves “all the characters” in the Bible---the good, that bad, and the ugly. Let’s frolic through this field of truth, and see what we can learn about God and ourselves. Enjoy!

<sup>1</sup> NOT TO BE REPRODUCED OR UPLOADED TO WEB WITHOUT EXPRESS PERMISSION OF AUTHOR.

<sup>2</sup> 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)

**Note: I'm backing up and starting over simply because I want to. I don't want to miss anything, and again, we're supposed to live "by every word that comes out of the mouth of God," as Jesus taught us, so I'm going to attempt to do so here.**

<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4

## 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!

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

<sup>3</sup>How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

<sup>4</sup>I, 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"** - a primitive root; to be tranquil, i.e. secure or successful.

**2. "Prosperous"** - green, i.e. (figuratively) prosperous.

**I think that is cool---that being "green," like a plant that is verdant and growing, is what is considered prosperous. Am I "green"? Are you? God wants us to be, even in our old age.**

Their version of evangelism was interesting. In this case, "step 1" would be to get this pagan king to acknowledge the greatness of the God of Israel, even if he doesn't completely forsake his own gods.

I like the way he praises God here, and his "ecumenical" approach. Without compromising, I wonder what we can learn from him in that area, and Daniel's approach as well.

### Psalm 1:3

**[The person]**. . . whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like **tree** planted by streams of water, which yields its **fruit** in **season** and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.

<sup>5</sup>I 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.**

**I wonder also if he had what we would call some type of “bi-polar” disorder--manic sometimes, sluggish others.**

**See the sidebar for other key visions<sup>3</sup>/dreams in Scriptures.**

As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me. <sup>6</sup>So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. <sup>7</sup>When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers<sup>[b]</sup> and diviners came, I told them the

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<sup>3</sup> 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](#)): Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams

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

dream, but they could not interpret it for me. <sup>8</sup>Finally, 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.)

**This is interesting. He still worshipped "his god" and talked about "his" god as if it were his "personal" god. He still was polytheistic (many gods). But he was coming to see the true God in relation to his "gods"---and he was going to see that very plainly. God had a plan and purpose. God always makes good happen in the midst of the evil we let into this system called the universe.**

<sup>9</sup>I said, "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians,

**He still saw Daniel as a "magician."**

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

**Daniel didn't correct him. And God was willing to work with him where He was. Here is a new insight. At least he didn't call the inarguable "good" that was coming out of Daniel evil, like the Pharisees did to Jesus. He did not "blaspheme" the Holy Spirit.**

<sup>22</sup>And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."  
Mark 3



Here is my dream; interpret it for me. <sup>10</sup>These 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. <sup>11</sup>The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. <sup>12</sup>Its 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.

**Again, a ruler is responsible even for his environment----birds, creatures, etc.**

<sup>13</sup>“In the visions I saw while lying in bed, I looked, and there before me was a holy one, a messenger,<sup>[c]</sup> coming down from heaven.

**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.**

<b>H5894</b> `iyr eer (Aramaic) from a root corresponding to <b>H5782</b> ; a watcher, i.e. an angel (as guardian).	<b>H5782</b> `uwr oor a primitive root (rather identical with <b>H5783</b> through the idea of opening the eyes); to wake (literally or figuratively).	<b>H5783</b> `uwr oor a primitive root; to (be) bare.
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**Interesting that our angels “watch” us through the night!**

<sup>14</sup>He 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. <sup>15</sup>But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field.

**I wonder why “iron and bronze.” I remember that in the previous dream he had, that referred to the Roman empire and the empire of Alexander the great. Wonder if there was any connection intended.**

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

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

**I remember now that there is an organization out in the west called “Animus” which is about restoring a person to his original wholeness. Interestingly, it seems to advocate a return to your “primal” animal (flesh/body) nature to help unravel who you’ve become and find out who you are designed by the Universe (God) to be. Apparently Nebuchadnezzar was going to go through a “reset”--- be shown by God who and what he really was by enabling him to**

experience both his “animal” fleshly nature and his God-endowed “image of God” human nature.



Tate Britain, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7736503>

<sup>17</sup>“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.’

**There is a lot in this verse. The “holy ones” (angels) seem to have an authority to act on God’s behalf among the sons of men. God wants us to all know that He is sovereign, in charge, and does what He wants to. He also wants us to know what we are without Him, so we won’t become arrogant and individualistic against Him.**

**We are fallen broken creatures! And we desperately need God. We would have been so much better off if we had simply taken the Tree of Life and skipped the Tree of Knowledge. I find it amazing that God**

**even bothered with us enough to create us and give us all that He is--to be a free "person" living in the Person of Jesus Christ in the Person of the Trinity!**

<sup>18</sup>"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

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

**Daniel was "stunned." One translation says he was "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!**

<sup>20</sup>The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, <sup>21</sup>with 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—

**Again, 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!**

<sup>22</sup>Your 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.**

**Now, let's get personal. God has created us all to "rule." Let them have dominion, He said at the outset of our creation. But how do we rule? Notice how we were intended to rule.<sup>4</sup>**

With the authority to rule comes the responsibility to rule well. There is an inherent accountability in the command to subdue the earth. Man has a duty to exercise his dominion under the authority of the One who delegated it. All authority is of God ([Romans 13:1-5](#)), and He delegates it to whomever He will ([Daniel 4:17](#)). The word *subdue* doesn't have to imply violence or mistreatment. It can mean "to bring under cultivation."

Genesis 2:15 says we were supposed to dress and keep the Garden. One literal translation I use say we are to "sway" creation. Revelation has an interesting verse about the destroying of the earth.

**Revelation 11:18**

The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small— and for **destroying** those who **destroy** the **earth**."

Man is to be the steward of the earth; he is to bring the material world and all of its varied elements into the service of God and the good of mankind. The command to subdue the earth is actually part of God's blessing on mankind.

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<sup>4</sup> [What does it mean that God gave humanity dominion over the animals? | GotQuestions.org](#)



Created in the image of God, Adam and Eve were to use the earth's vast resources in the service of both God and themselves. It would only make sense for God to decree this, since only humans were created in God's image.

When God gave humanity dominion over the animals, it was in order to care for, tend to, and use those animals to their fullest potential in a just manner.

<sup>23</sup>"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.'

<sup>24</sup>"This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: <sup>25</sup>You 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" but it could simply mean a set amount of time that may or may not be a year!**

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.**

**It's all about acknowledging God's Sovereignty. What is our Society built on? God's sovereignty, or our right to exercise our free will?**

**Are we truly "free" to not believe in God, to neglect Him, to ignore Him, to change what He was determined to be? Is our version of**

**freedom flawed? Is freedom not so much bi-lateral freedom as it is "unitlateral" freedom---the freedom to do and be what we were created to do and be?**

**Will we all have "mental issues," crazy dreams, sleep disturbances, until we truly, truly, truly become decapitated---become "beheaded" because of our belief about Jesus---give over our Sovereignty to God, and let Christ be our head?**

<sup>26</sup>The 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.**

**Now this sounds final, but note how that there is still a chance of God's mind being changed.**

<sup>27</sup>Therefore, 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.**

**So now let's look at the "rest" of the story.**

<sup>28</sup>All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>29</sup>Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, <sup>30</sup>he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

**Oops. Not a good thing to say. Just like Herod made the mistake of not giving God the glory for his good speech (Acts 12:23), he took credit for his accomplishment. And after the warning from God, look at what happened.**

<sup>31</sup>Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. <sup>32</sup>You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes."

<sup>33</sup>Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

<sup>34</sup>At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.

**Wow. How was his sanity restored? He raised His eyes toward heaven. Then He "honored" and "glorified" God. Sounds like a good "mental health" strategy to me. Look at what honoring and glorifying God looks like.**

His dominion is an eternal dominion;  
his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

<sup>35</sup>All the peoples of the earth  
are regarded as nothing.

He does as he pleases  
with the powers of heaven  
and the peoples of the earth.

No one can hold back his hand  
or say to him: "What have you done?"

**Paul had the same approach to God. Notice:**

### **Romans 9**

<sup>19</sup>One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" <sup>20</sup>But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" <sup>21</sup>Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

<sup>36</sup>At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom.

### **The word for sanity:**

H4486 manda` man-dah'

(Aramaic) corresponding to H4093;

wisdom or intelligence.

KJV: knowledge, reason, understanding.

My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before.

<sup>37</sup>Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

**Wow. Look at what he came to say.**

everything he does is right and all his ways are  
just

**Praise be to the God of Israel!**

#### **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