

God Humbles Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 4

PPT Title

God Humbles Nebuchadnezzar

Main Point: We will have peace when we understand that God is in control of everything.

Key Verse: *At the end of that time I, Nebuchadnezzar, **looked up toward heaven.** My mind became clear again.* - Daniel 4:34a

Props: A modern-day letter, signed at the bottom.

BACKGROUND/REVIEW

Say: Everyone open your Bibles to the book of Daniel. (You may want to say: It's about 2/3 from the front of your Bible.) Keep your Bibles open there.



For the last several weeks, we have studied the Israelites as they were kidnapped and taken to Babylon. The Babylonians did not worship the one true God. They worshipped many false gods and idols. Their King, Nebuchadnezzar (Neh-byoo-kuhd-NEHZ-er), was a very powerful man who also worshipped false gods and idols. However, God had a plan to reveal Himself to King Nebuchadnezzar. God saw to it that Nebuchadnezzar's path crossed with some of His few faithful followers, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Jeremiah 25:11, Daniel 1:2). By watching the relationship that these men had with the living God, King Nebuchadnezzar learned more and more about their God.



In Daniel 1, Daniel and his friends decided ahead of time not to disobey God by eating the King's food. Because they obeyed God and depended on Him, God gave them great wisdom. King Nebuchadnezzar found that these Israelites were ten times wiser than all of the His other wise men. So King Nebuchadnezzar honored God's men.



Then, in Daniel 2, the Lord gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream that only Daniel could interpret. Daniel made it very clear that the dream and the interpretation had come for the one true God. Through this dream, King Nebuchadnezzar learned that only God's Kingdom will last forever. The King learned that God is wise and He reveals truth. So King Nebuchadnezzar admitted that Daniel's God was the best of all the "gods."



Finally, last week we studied Daniel 3. In the fiery furnace, King Nebuchadnezzar saw that the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was faithful; He could do what none of his "gods" could do - God could rescue His people. Nebuchadnezzar saw that the Lord would step into a blazing furnace to be with those who trust in Him. So King Nebuchadnezzar made a law that no one could speak against the God of Israel.



All of these were steps toward knowing God, but Nebuchadnezzar did not yet understand that God was the ONLY God and that He was in control of EVERYTHING. Nebuchadnezzar thought that he, himself, was almost like a god. He had one more very important lesson to learn.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM (Daniel 4:1-18)

Say: Everyone turn to Daniel 4. This chapter is actually a letter. When we write a letter, we sign it at the bottom. **Teacher:** Show your modern-day letter, and where it is signed.



Back in Bible times, they did something interesting when they signed their letters. They signed them at the *beginning* of the letter. This actually makes a lot of sense. This way, when a person received a letter, he or she knew right away who sent it. So, look at the first couple words in Daniel 4. **Ask:** Who was this letter from? *King Nebuchadnezzar.* **Say:** And right after the letter writer's name, he tells us who the letter is written to. **Ask:** Who would like to read verse 1 aloud so we can see whom this letter is written to? *Choose a volunteer to read.* **Say:** This letter is written to everyone in the whole world! Wow. This must contain some really cool stuff. Let's see what this mighty King thought was so important that he should write a letter to the entire world. He begins:

I am pleased to tell you what has happened. The Most High God has done miraculous signs and wonders for me. His miraculous signs are great. His wonders are mighty. His kingdom will last forever. His rule will never end. - Daniel 4:2-3

Say: Now this is much higher praise than Nebuchadnezzar had ever spoken about God. Something big has happened in the King's life and he wants to tell everyone about it.

I was at home in my palace. I was content and very successful. But I had a dream that made me afraid. I was lying on my bed. Then dreams and visions passed through my mind. They terrified me. - Daniel 4:4-5

Say: Uh-oh. Another dream. Once again, King Nebuchadnezzar called on all of his wise men to explain the dream to him. And, of course, none of them could. Finally, he called on Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar called Daniel by a Babylonian name, Belteshazzar (bel-te-SHAZ-er). He told Daniel his dream:



"Here are the visions I saw while I was lying on my bed. I looked up and saw a tree standing in the middle of the land. It was very tall. It had grown to be large and strong. Its top touched the sky. It could be seen anywhere on earth. Its leaves were beautiful. It had a lot of fruit on it. It provided enough food for people and animals. Under the tree, the wild animals found shade. The birds of the air lived in its branches. Every creature was fed from that tree.



"While I was still lying on my bed, I looked up. In my visions, I saw a holy messenger. He was coming down from heaven. He called out in a loud voice. He said, 'Cut the tree down. Break off its branches. Strip its leaves off. Scatter its fruit. Let the animals that are under it run away. Let the birds that are in its branches fly off. But leave the stump with its roots in the ground. Let it stay in the field. Put a band of iron and bronze around it.

" 'Let King Nebuchadnezzar become wet with the dew of heaven. Let him live like the animals among the plants of the earth. Let him no longer have the mind of a man. Instead, let him be given the mind of an animal. Let him stay that way until seven periods of time pass by.

" 'The decision is announced by holy messengers. So all who are alive will know that the Most High God is King. He rules over all of the kingdoms of men. He gives them to anyone He wants. Sometimes He puts the least important men in charge of them.' "
- Daniel 4:10-17

DANIEL EXPLAINS THE DREAM (Daniel 4:1-18)



Say: Daniel knew that this dream was all about King Nebuchadnezzar, and it was not all good news. He told Nebuchadnezzar that he wished the dream were about the King's enemies instead of the King. He explained:

"My King, you are that tree! You have become great and strong. Your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky. Your rule has spread to all parts of the earth." - Daniel 4:22

That was the good news. But there was plenty of bad news too:

"My King and master, here is what your dream means. The Most High God has given an order against you. You will be driven away from people. You will live like the wild animals. You will eat grass just as cattle do. You will become wet with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass by for you. Then you will recognize that the Most High God rules over all of the kingdoms of men. He gives them to anyone he wants.



"But he gave a command to leave the stump of the tree along with its roots. That means your kingdom will be given back to you. It will happen when you recognize that the God of heaven rules.

"So, my king, I hope you will accept my advice. Stop being sinful. Do what is right. Give up your evil practices. Show kindness to those who are being treated badly. Then perhaps things will continue to go well with you." - Daniel 4:24-27

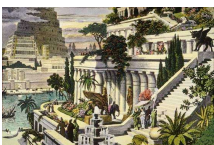
God sent a clear warning to Nebuchadnezzar. Through Daniel, the Lord encouraged Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his sin before it was too late. However, the King did not take this warning to heart.

Note to Teacher: Nebuchadnezzar's sins were very much like those of Pharaoh in Egypt and the Pharisees in Jesus' day. All of these men were puffed up with pride, and they mistreated the lowly (Exodus 1:11, 5:2; Matthew 23). Pride was the very sin of Satan (Ezekiel 28:15-17). C.S. Lewis writes, "The essential vice, the utmost evil, is pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind." It is no wonder that God detests pride and opposes the proud (James 4:6, Proverbs 6:16-17). It is pride that leads men to believe we can live without Him.

Application: God wants us to stay close to Him and far from sin. When we are in sin, or close to things that tempt us, God gives us correction in several ways. He instructs us in His word (2 Timothy 3:16), through Bible teaching, and preaching (Matthew 12:41). He speaks to us through prayer (Daniel 9:20-22). Often, He also uses those close to us - our parents, teachers, and friends - to let us know when we are making wrong decisions (Proverbs 13:1, 2 Samuel 12:9). It is so important for us to pay attention to God's correction. God is patient, but when we choose to ignore His loving warnings, we will face the consequences of our sin (Proverbs 1:24-33).

THE DREAM COMES TRUE (Daniel 4:28-33)

Say: Patiently, God gave Nebuchadnezzar an entire year in which to turn from his evil ways. Remember, this is the King's own letter we are reading. He said:



All of that happened to me. It took place twelve months later. I was walking on the roof of my palace in Babylon. I said, "Isn't this the great Babylon I have built as a place for my royal palace? I used my mighty power to build it. It shows how glorious my majesty is." - Daniel 4:28-30

Say: Let's take a closer look at Nebuchadnezzar's attitude as he looked out over the kingdom.

*I said, "Isn't this the great Babylon **I have built** as a place for **my** royal palace? **I used my mighty power** to build it. It shows how glorious **my majesty** is."*

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Say: There is a word that comes to mind. It is P-R-I-D-E. Pride is thinking too highly of oneself. Nebuchadnezzar thought that **he** had built the kingdom. In truth, God was the one who handed all of his prisoners over to him (Daniel 1:2). When Daniel interpreted

his first dream, he said, "**The God of heaven has given** you authority and power. **He has given** you might and glory." (Daniel 2:37) Pride makes us think that we do not need God. Pride separates us from God. Nebuchadnezzar did not give credit to his Creator, and His Creator had had enough. Listen to what happened next (in Nebuchadnezzar's own words).



I was still speaking when a voice was heard from heaven. It said, "King Nebuchadnezzar, here is what has been ordered concerning you. Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people. You will live like the wild animals. You will eat grass just as cattle do. Seven periods of time will pass by for you. Then you will recognize that the Most High God rules over all of the kingdoms of men. He gives them to anyone He wants."

What had been said about me came true at once. I was driven away from people. I ate grass just as cattle do. My body became wet with the dew of heaven. I stayed that way until my hair grew like the feathers of an eagle. My nails became like the claws of a bird. - Daniel 4:31-33

Say: God had warned Nebuchadnezzar and had been very patient with him. But finally, the prediction came true. All of the things that he was so proud of were taken away. Remember the fine food at the King's table that we read about in Daniel 1? That was taken from Nebuchadnezzar; he had to eat grass just like the goats and cows! He was used to living in a grand palace, but now he had no shelter over his head. For 7 years, the great King Nebuchadnezzar lived out in the wilderness like an animal. He lost his mind; he became crazy (Daniel 4:34). Without God, he was helpless.



Application: God's word tells us that God stands against those who are proud (James 4:6). If we are proud of our own talents or abilities, looks or possessions, God may take those things away so we will see what is true - God is the One who gives every good thing that we have (James 1:17). Without God we are helpless. We should never brag about what we have accomplished (1 Corinthians 5:6). The only thing we should ever brag about is that we know the Lord! (Jeremiah 9:24)

Note to Teacher: King Nebuchadnezzar reigned from 605 BC–562 BC. There is a notable absence of any record of acts or decrees by King Nebuchadnezzar during 582 to 575 BC. - Gleason L. Archer, Vol 7 Expositor's Bible Commentary.

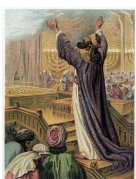
NEBUCHADNEZZAR IS RESTORED (Daniel 4:34-37)

Say: Our story has a very happy ending though. Remember at the beginning of his letter, Nebuchadnezzar was bragging about the goodness of God. Here is why:

PPT Key Verse

*At the end of that time I, Nebuchadnezzar, **looked up toward heaven**. My mind became clear again. Then I praised the Most High God. I gave honor and glory to the One who lives forever. His rule will last forever. His kingdom will never end. He considers all of the nations on earth to be nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven. He does what He wants with the nations of the earth. No one can hold His hand back. No one can say to Him, "What have you done?"*

My honor and glory were returned to me when my mind became clear again. The glory of my kingdom was given back to me. My advisers and nobles came to me. And I was put back on my throne. I became even greater than I had been before.



Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, give praise and honor and glory to the King of heaven. Everything he does is right. All of his ways are fair. He is able to bring down those who live proudly. - Daniel 4:34-37

Say: After seven years of living like an animal, Nebuchadnezzar finally looked to God. Nebuchadnezzar changed his focus from himself to the one true God who deserved to

be worshipped and praised. He turned from his pride and became humble. Right away, his mind was made right. God forgave Nebuchadnezzar and returned all that he had lost, plus a lot more.

Proud people want to hide their mistakes so other people won't know that they have faults. Humble people admit when they make mistakes. Nebuchadnezzar showed that he became humble when he admitted his sin of pride in this letter that he wrote for the entire world to read. He also used the letter to praise God and declare that God was in control of everything.

We should notice that God brought Nebuchadnezzar low for his GOOD, not for his destruction. It was far more important for Nebuchadnezzar to know the one true God, and enter into God's eternal Kingdom, than for him to live a carefree life on earth and die without knowing God.

PRIDE

We will have peace when we understand that God is in control of everything.

Application: Today, we can struggle with pride just as much as Nebuchadnezzar did. Our pride makes us focus on ourselves instead of on God. Notice that "I" is in the center of PRIDE. If you are focused on yourself, and you think that you can control the things in your life, your mind will be filled with fear and worry - just like Nebuchadnezzar in the wilderness. But when you understand the truth that God is in control of everything, your mind will be healthy and clear, and you will feel God's peace (Galatians 5:22).

At times you will face difficult people or difficult situations in your life. When this happens, ask yourself this question: "Is God in control?" Of course, the answer is always YES! Knowing that God is in control, and that He always wants what's best for you, will give you true peace.

Note to Teacher: "Our sanity is directly linked to God's sovereignty." (*Pastor Buddy Hoffman, Grace Fellowship Church*) Legally speaking, insanity is when a person cannot distinguish reality from fantasy. In other words, a person who is insane cannot tell what is *true* and what is *not true*. It is not until a person recognizes that God is sovereign (supreme or highest in power or authority; controlling; preeminent; indisputable; being above all others in character, importance, excellence; greatest, utmost, paramount) that the person recognizes the ultimate truth. Without this knowledge, a person's thoughts are consumed with fear, worry, and stress. With this knowledge, a person's mind is transformed and at peace.

Key Verse: *At the end of that time I, Nebuchadnezzar, **looked up toward heaven.** My mind became clear again.* - Daniel 4:34a

Main Point: We will have peace when we understand that God is in control of everything.