

# Daniel 4 – Nebuchadnezzar Humbled by God

## Introduction

Daniel 4 is unique because it records **King Nebuchadnezzar’s personal testimony** of God’s sovereignty. After God humbles him through a period of insanity, the king **acknowledges the supremacy of the Most High God**. This chapter highlights:

### Key Themes:

- God’s sovereignty over rulers and kingdoms
- Divine discipline and correction
- Repentance and acknowledgment of God
- The contrast between human pride and divine authority

### Historical Background:

- Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon at the height of its power (605–562 BC).
- The events of Daniel 4 likely occurred later in his reign, after the conquest of Jerusalem.
- The humbling serves as a divine demonstration that **all earthly power is under God’s authority**.

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## Daniel 4:1–18 – The King’s Proclamation and Dream

### Scripture (CSB):

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all peoples, nations, and languages who live in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you!

2 It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.

3 How great are his signs, and how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house, and prosperous in my palace.

5 I saw a dream that made me afraid. While on my bed, the visions of my head alarmed me.

6 So I gave orders that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me, that they might tell me the interpretation of the dream.

7 When the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers came, I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation.

8 Finally, Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God, and I told him the dream:

9 “Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation.

10 The visions of my head while on my bed were these: I saw a tree in the middle of the earth, and its height was great.

11 The tree grew strong, and its height reached the heavens, and it was visible to the ends of the earth.

12 Its foliage was beautiful, and its fruit abundant, and it provided food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and in its branches the birds of the sky lived.

13 “While I was looking, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. He shouted and said, ‘Chop down the tree, and cut off its branches; strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from

under it, and the birds from its branches.

14 But leave the stump with its roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the grass of the field, while the heart of a man is changed from a man, and let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven periods pass over him.

15 This sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision is by the word of the holy ones, in order that all the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals, gives it to anyone he wishes, and sets over it the lowliest of people.'

16 This dream I, Nebuchadnezzar, saw. Then you, Belteshazzar, told me its interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom were unable to make known to me the interpretation; but you were able, because the Spirit of the Holy God is in you."

17 Therefore, Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered him: "Belteshazzar, do not be astonished. The dream is for those who hate their own good, and its interpretation is for your enemies.

18 The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached the heavens and was visible to the ends of the earth, whose foliage was beautiful and whose fruit abundant, under which beasts of the field lived and in whose branches the birds of the sky lived—

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## Word Study & Notes

- **Watcher, holy one** – Hebrew: *iyv*, angelic messenger sent from God; emphasizes divine authority over kings.
- **Seven periods** – Seven years of Nebuchadnezzar's humbling (Daniel 4:25).
- **Stump bound with iron and bronze** – God's mercy preserves him even in judgment.

## Historical/Cultural Insight

- Babylonian kings often associated themselves with divinity; Nebuchadnezzar's dream shows that even **the most powerful king is subordinate to God**.
- Public acknowledgment of God's sovereignty was rare for Babylonian rulers.

## Theological Insight

- God humbles the proud to reveal **His supreme authority**.
- God's judgment is both **corrective and redemptive**, leaving room for repentance.
- The dream demonstrates **God's control over history and human affairs**.

## Cross-References

- Proverbs 16:18 – Pride leads to downfall.
- 1 Samuel 2:7 – God raises up and brings down rulers.
- Isaiah 14:13–15 – Human arrogance is ultimately humbled.

## How/Why Questions

1. Why did God use a dream to communicate with Nebuchadnezzar?
2. How does the tree symbolize Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom and pride?
3. Why is it significant that God leaves the stump intact?

## Application

- Recognize God’s authority over rulers and circumstances.
  - Be humble and responsive to God’s discipline.
  - Trust God’s redemptive purpose even in correction.
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## Daniel 4:19–27 – Daniel Interprets the Dream

### Scripture (CSB):

19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was alarmed for a while and his thoughts troubled him. The king spoke to him: “Belteshazzar, do not be alarmed. The interpretation is for your enemies and the decree for your adversaries.

20 The tree you saw, which grew and became strong and reached the heavens and was visible to the ends of the earth, whose foliage was beautiful and whose fruit abundant, and under which beasts of the field lived, and in whose branches birds of the sky nested,

21 it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; your greatness has grown and reached the heavens, and your dominion to the ends of the earth.

22 And you, O king, saw a watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, “Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump with its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, until seven periods pass over it,” and this is the interpretation, O king, and this decree is the most certain.

23 You shall be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and you shall be given the heart of a beast until seven periods pass over you, until you know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to anyone he wishes.

24 And you, O king, your sin has made it necessary for judgment to be executed upon you.

25 Therefore, O king, be admonished; remove your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, so that there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

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### Word Study & Notes

- **Seven periods** – Likely seven literal years, emphasizing **complete divine discipline**.
- **Heart of a beast** – Humbling and temporary loss of reason, will, and authority.

### Historical/Cultural Insight

- Daniel’s interpretation shows **courage and boldness**, warning the king honestly.
- Babylonian kings expected flattery; Daniel instead **reveals truth and consequence**.

### Theological Insight

- God disciplines leaders to **bring them to repentance**.
- True repentance involves **righteousness and mercy**, not mere acknowledgment.
- God demonstrates **His sovereignty and power to humble the proud**.

### Cross-References

- Proverbs 3:34 – God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

- Hebrews 12:5–11 – God disciplines those He loves.
- Psalm 75:6–7 – God lifts up and humbles leaders.

## How/Why Questions

1. Why does God allow pride to reach its peak before humbling a person?
2. How does Daniel’s counsel reflect wisdom and courage?
3. What does God’s method of correction teach about His character?

## Application

- Accept God’s discipline as corrective, not punitive.
- Repent by aligning with righteousness and showing mercy.
- Recognize God’s sovereignty over personal success and national power.

## Daniel 4:28–37 – Fulfillment of the Dream

### Scripture (CSB):

28 All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.

29 Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 he said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?”

31 While the words were still in his mouth, a voice came from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: the kingdom has departed from you!

32 You shall be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be given the heart of a beast, and seven periods shall pass over you, until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to anyone he wishes.”

33 Immediately the sentence was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven away from mankind and ate grass like cattle; his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew like eagle’s feathers and his nails like bird’s claws.

34 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

35 All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing; he does according to his will with the army of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”

36 At the same time my reason returned to me. My majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my advisers and nobles sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and my greatness grew even greater.

37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are true and his ways just; and he is able to humble the proud.

## Word Study & Notes

- **Dew of heaven** – symbol of divine provision, even during humiliation.
- **Hair like eagle’s feathers, nails like claws** – vivid imagery of complete humbling and transformation.

- **King of heaven** – Nebuchadnezzar now recognizes **God’s universal authority**.

## Historical/Cultural Insight

- Public acknowledgment of God’s supremacy by a pagan king was unprecedented.
- The king’s restoration shows God’s **mercy following repentance**.

## Theological Insight

- God’s discipline is **redemptive**, leading to humility and recognition of His sovereignty.
- Human pride is temporary; God’s authority is eternal.
- God’s glory is displayed when rulers acknowledge His power.

## Cross-References

- James 4:10 – Humble yourselves before God, and He will exalt you.
- Psalm 113:5–6 – God raises the lowly and humbles the proud.
- Proverbs 16:18–19 – Pride precedes destruction; humility precedes honor.

## How/Why Questions

1. Why did Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge God only after his humbling?
2. How does this story demonstrate both **justice and mercy** in God’s discipline?
3. What lessons can we take about pride, repentance, and God’s authority today?

## Application

- Accept God’s correction with humility.
- Praise and acknowledge God’s sovereignty over life, nations, and history.
- Use God’s mercy as motivation to live humbly and righteously.

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# Summary of Daniel 4

## Key Lessons:

- God is **sovereign over all rulers and kingdoms**.
- Pride leads to humiliation, but repentance leads to restoration.
- God disciplines to reveal His authority and mercy.
- Even pagan rulers can testify to God’s power through His discipline and grace.

## Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. How does God use trials to humble those in power?
2. Why is repentance necessary for restoration?
3. How does Nebuchadnezzar’s testimony inspire us to recognize God’s sovereignty in our lives?