



LESSON 35

God humbles Nebuchadnezzar

DANIEL 4:1-37



God alone deserves glory.



"I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'" (Dan 4:34b–35).

Supporting Truths

1. Proud people glorify themselves instead of God.
2. God humbles the proud.
3. To be humble, repent from pride.
4. God's greatness is to be praised.
5. God rules over all rulers of earth.

Objectives

1. Discover who Nebuchadnezzar praised for his great kingdom.
2. Explain what Nebuchadnezzar's dream meant.
3. Describe Nebuchadnezzar's repentance.
4. List several things worth praising about God.
5. Identify three current rulers God is ruling over.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God humbles Nebuchadnezzar • Daniel 4:1–37



Lesson Summary

Over the course of his life, Nebuchadnezzar had seen God's supreme wisdom and power. Yet in spite of these experiences, he praised himself instead of God. Nebuchadnezzar would have to learn the hard way that God opposes the proud. After seven years of living like an animal, he finally submitted to the king of heaven, humbling himself and praising God. Nebuchadnezzar had finally learned that all the nations are nothing before God, who does as He pleases.

Spotlight on the Gospel

Everything God does is for His own glory, including salvation. That is why salvation belongs to the humble. There is no room for the proud in the presence of God. But those who recognize that they are nothing apart from God are welcome in His kingdom. God graciously saves them so that they may proclaim His glory and one day even share in God's glory with Christ.

LAST WEEK



God protects Daniel's friends
Daniel 3:1–30

THIS WEEK



God humbles Nebuchadnezzar
Daniel 4:1–37

NEXT WEEK



God judges Belshazzar for his pride
Daniel 5:1–31

EXILE

Lesson Commentary

God alone deserves glory.

Nebuchadnezzar stubbornly resisted God's greatness and foolishly clung to his own. His two previous confessions of God's majesty and power were short-lived (Dan 2:47; 3:28–29). The displays of God's wisdom and power should have humbled him and led him to glorify God as King of kings. But Nebuchadnezzar held tightly to his pride, so God gave Nebuchadnezzar a second dream and urged him to repent through his servant Daniel. Still, Nebuchadnezzar refused to glorify God, so God humbled him. Finally, after seven miserable years, the humbled king would proclaim God's *glory, His honor, praise, perfection, and splendor*.

God gave Nebuchadnezzar a terrifying dream (4:1–18)

Nebuchadnezzar begins and ends his story by praising God (4:1–3; 34b–37). In the middle he explains why he abandoned his pride to worship the true God. He did not keep this experience to himself, but joyfully shared with his entire kingdom the exceeding power and greatness of God (4:1–3). This same joy is shared by every believer, who rejoices to proclaim the marvelous works of grace God has accomplished in their life.



THINK ABOUT IT

It is good to be humbled by God!

Before his humbling, Nebuchadnezzar's empire was peaceful and prosperous (4:4). But that peace was interrupted by a terrifying dream. In ancient times

dreams were thought to communicate something from the gods. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar wanted an interpretation of his dream, but all his wise men failed to understand the dream's meaning (4:6–7). After human wisdom proved worthless (Jer 9:23), Daniel arrived. God would show once again that He alone knows all things, and that all knowledge is from Him (Dan 2:27–30). When we lack understanding, we should begin by fearing God (Prov 9:10), asking for wisdom (Jas 1:5), and investigating His word (Ps 119:99–100).

Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel his dream. It began with a vision of a tree (4:10–17), representing Nebuchadnezzar (4:20–22). This tree had grown so large and fruitful that every living creature rested under its branches (4:12). The creatures represent the people under Nebuchadnezzar's rule (4:22). The whole world was enjoying the abundance and splendor of Nebuchadnezzar's empire. But the peaceful vision was disrupted by a "holy one," shouting as he descended from heaven (4:13). This angel of God proclaimed the destruction of the tree; only the stump and its roots would be left, encircled by a band of iron and bronze for protection (4:15). The stump showed that Nebuchadnezzar's glorious reign would be almost entirely cut down, but the band showed that God would preserve Nebuchadnezzar's rule, for the stump would one day sprout again (4:26).

For seven years Nebuchadnezzar would behave like a wild animal, living outdoors and looking more like an animal than a man. He would be insane (4:15b–16; 23–25). What was the purpose of the king's humiliation? To demonstrate that God is *sovereign. He rules over all*, including over the kingdoms of man (Isa 40:22–24). He bestows these kingdoms on whomever He wishes (4:17). God crowns kings (1 Sam 2:8; Ps 144:10) and dethrones kings (Ps 136:17–22). Though we fear Him, we can also be comforted—no matter how wicked earthly rulers might be, God is still in control.

THINK ABOUT IT

He is to be feared by all people, even by kings (Ps 76:11–12).



God warned Nebuchadnezzar about his pride (4:19–27)

The dream dismayed Daniel. He was so upset that Nebuchadnezzar had to encourage him to continue (4:19). Daniel was concerned because the dream foretold a difficult future for Nebuchadnezzar. So Daniel pleaded with the king to receive the dream and its interpretation. He boldly advised the king to repent, turning away from his sin, and to show his repentance by extending mercy to the needy (4:27). Daniel understood that God gives many warnings because He desires the salvation of all people (1 Tim 2:4). Therefore, he expressed genuine concern for

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God humbles Nebuchadnezzar • Daniel 4:1–37



THINK ABOUT IT

True faith manifests itself in selfless acts of kindness (Jas 1:27).

creation when they proudly sought wisdom apart from God (Gen 3:6). The people at Babel were scattered and confused when they proudly sought a name for themselves (11:4). Pharaoh's kingdom was crushed and his son was killed when he proudly resisted God (Exod 12:29–30). Korah was swallowed up by the earth when he proudly challenged Moses (Num 16). Samson lost his sight when he proudly trusted in his own strength (Judg 16). Goliath suffered a shocking defeat when he proudly mocked God's people (1 Sam 17). Saul lost his kingdom, the Spirit, and his life by proudly pursuing his own will instead of obeying God's word (1 Sam 13:14). Herod was eaten by worms when he proudly took the glory for himself (Acts 12:23). Be warned: pride leads to destruction (Prov 16:18).

God humbled Nebuchadnezzar through His judgment (4:28–37)

Sadly, Nebuchadnezzar did not repent. One year later, while surveying his vast empire, he foolishly boasted about his own power and glory (Dan 4:30). Nebuchadnezzar was known for his massive building projects, such as a 400 foot high mountain terraced with flowing water and suspended plants. These famous “hanging gardens,” one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, were built for his wife as a place for cool refreshment.

However, Nebuchadnezzar failed to give God the glory for these accomplishments. He took for himself the glory that belonged to God and God alone. While exalting himself, Nebuchadnezzar heard a voice from heaven (4:31). God's judgment was about to fall on Nebuchadnezzar. That very hour, Nebuchadnezzar's mind became like that of an animal. No longer able to live among men, he traded his palace for a field, his

Nebuchadnezzar's spiritual well-being.

We also have been warned against pride through many examples. Adam and Eve brought a curse on all

officials for cattle, his banquets for grass, his rich robes for hair matted like eagles' feathers, and his elegance for nails overgrown and blackened like birds' claws (4:33). Nebuchadnezzar's proud head hung in disgrace.

But after seven years, Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes towards heaven, and the Lord graciously restored his understanding. The humbled Nebuchadnezzar “blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever” (4:34). Nebuchadnezzar realized that when God humbled him, it was an act of mercy. Though God scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted (Prov 3:34). Repentance is a gift (2 Tim 2:25). Nebuchadnezzar proved his repentance by praising God, not himself (4:35).

Just as God had promised, the stump was not destroyed. God made Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom even greater than before (Dan 4:36). Even better, God had changed Nebuchadnezzar's heart (4:37). God's grace enabled Nebuchadnezzar to raise his eyes to heaven and declare the praises of the King of heaven (4:34, 37). He was thankful, not bitter, over the discipline he suffered, because he had taken to heart the warning—God humbles the proud, whether they are rich or poor, young or old, exalted or lowly (4:37). He opposes the proud, the boastful and arrogant, and calls all men to humble themselves before Him (Jas 4:6, 10). Why? Because everything exists for God's glory (Ps 19:1; Isa 43:7). Christ lived and died for the glory of God (John 17:1–5), and He saves sinners so that they also may forever declare God's glory (1 Pet 2:9).

THINK ABOUT IT

The king finally learned that all the nations are nothing before God (Isa 40:17), for He sits in heaven and does as He pleases (Ps 115:3).



THINK ABOUT IT

One day, we will rejoice to glorify God, free from all human pride (Rev 22:3).



Lesson Outline

God alone deserves glory.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a scary dream (4:1–18).
2. God warned Nebuchadnezzar about his pride (4:19–27).
3. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar (4:28–33).
4. Nebuchadnezzar praised God (4:34–37).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a terrifying dream (4:1–18).
 - Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed his story for all to hear (4:1–3).
 - Nebuchadnezzar had a troubling dream but none could interpret it (4:4–9).
 - Daniel came to interpret the dream (4:10–18).
2. God warned Nebuchadnezzar about his pride (4:19–27).
 - Daniel was troubled because the dream was about Nebuchadnezzar (4:19).
 - Daniel explained that God would crush Nebuchadnezzar's pride (4:20–26).
 - Daniel called Nebuchadnezzar to repent and show mercy to the needy (4:27).
3. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar through His judgment (4:28–37).
 - Nebuchadnezzar did not glorify God (4:28–30).
 - Nebuchadnezzar became like a wild animal for seven years (4:31–33).
 - Nebuchadnezzar glorified God (4:34–37).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God humbles Nebuchadnezzar • Daniel 4:1–37



Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. What did Nebuchadnezzar see in his dream?**
Nebuchadnezzar saw a huge tree that gave food and protection for all the animals.
- 2. What happened to the tree in his dream?**
An angel came and said that it was to be chopped down and stripped of its branches, but the tree would not die.
- 3. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar?**
Nebuchadnezzar lived like an animal for seven years.
- 4. What lesson did Nebuchadnezzar learn?**
God alone has the glory, so be humble and praise Him.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. Who could interpret the dream?**
Only Daniel, not the wise men. This shows that God alone knows all things and reveals knowledge to those He wishes.
- 2. What did the tree represent?**
It represented Nebuchadnezzar's reign, which was glorious but would soon be brought down.
- 3. Was the tree going to die?**
No. Its stump would be protected.
- 4. Why was all this going to happen to Nebuchadnezzar?**
This would happen so that everyone would know that the Most High rules over mankind.
- 5. What did Daniel tell the king to do?**
He told him to repent, to give God the glory, and to be kind to the needy.
- 6. Did the king listen to Daniel's warning and humble himself before God?**
No. Instead, he boasted about all that he had done.
- 7. What happened to the king?**
Nebuchadnezzar's mind became like an animal's, and his hair became matted like eagles' feathers. His nails became overgrown, and he ate grass like a cow.
- 8. Did he stay that way?**
No. Just as God had promised, after seven years, he lifted his eyes humbly toward heaven. His senses came back to him, and he praised God.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

WHO'S IN CONTROL?

King Nebuchadnezzar forgot his position under God. To illustrate this, bring to class a puppet, and have the puppet introduce himself to the children and then begin telling them how wonderful he is and what great things he has done. Remind the puppet that he could do nothing without you. Pretend to argue with the puppet about what he is able to do without you. Then pull your hand out of the puppet and let the puppet hang limply. Read 1 Corinthians 4:7 and remind the children that we can do nothing without God. In today's lesson, we will learn about a king who forgot this and will see how God reminded him.

IN THE HAND OF THE KING

Read Proverbs 21:1 to the children. Demonstrate God's power over the kings of earth by directing the beam of light all over the room, wherever you wish.



ILLUSTRATE

BIG PRIDE AND LITTLE HUMILITY

Bring to class some objects that are the same except for their size. Show the children the pairs of items, and ask them what the difference is between them. Explain that when we are proud, we make ourselves out to be bigger than we really are. Humility, on the other hand, makes God out to be big. It focuses attention on Him and not on self. In today's lesson we will learn about a proud man who thought he was powerful and important but in reality was weak and unimportant.

VISUAL AIDS

Use the following objects to illustrate the lesson during teaching time:

- A letter (4:1–3);
- A pillow (4:4–5);
- A picture of a tree (4:10);
- Leaves and fruit (4:12a);
- Stuffed animals and bird nest (4:12b);
- A bull horn (4:13–14);
- A tree stump (4:15);
- A crown (4:17).



APPLY

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S WARNING

See *Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2*.

Materials: Craft sheet, yellow construction scissors, glue, and crayons.

Directions: Pre-fold a sheet of yellow construction paper into a tri-fold and tape the ends together. Pre-cut circles and rectangle from the craft sheet. Have the children color the circles red, yellow, and green (as shown below). Then have them glue the circles on the appropriate locations to create a stoplight. Color and glue the rectangle to the top of the stop light.



Nebuchadnezzar's Warning
See *Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2*

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God humbles Nebuchadnezzar • Daniel 4:1–37



AGES 6–8



SMALLER THAN WE APPEAR

Bring in a magnifying glass. Allow the children look at some tiny objects (ants, pill bugs, small rock, etc.) and note how much larger they appear under a magnifying glass. But they only appear to be big. Explain that when we are proud, we make ourselves out to be bigger than we really are. But when the “magnifying glass” is removed, our tininess and unimportance is revealed. Tell the class that in today’s lesson we will learn about a proud king and how God revealed his insignificance.

GOD RULES

Sometimes we forget who is in charge. This is not something new. In fact, Adam and Eve’s first sin had to do with the same thing. They ignored God’s instructions and thought that their plans were better than His. They acted as if they were in charge, not God. We also often act as if God is not in control. Sometimes we try to do things outside of God’s timing. Other times we try to do it our way instead of God’s. Today we will learn about a king who thought he was in charge. However, God humbled him, demonstrating His perfect power and authority.



THE FOOLISH, WEAK, AND LOWLY

Goliath, the Philistine champion, ridiculed the army of Israel (1 Sam 17:8–10) and David (1 Sam 17:43–44), but this mighty warrior was brought down with a single stone. God chooses the weak (David) to shame the strong (Goliath), so that no man may boast in His presence (1 Cor 1:27, 29).

REMOTE CONTROL

Read Proverbs 21:1 to the children. Illustrate God’s control over earthly leaders with a remote controlled car. Ask the children if the car can drive itself on its own. Explain that the one holding the remote control directs the car wherever he wishes.



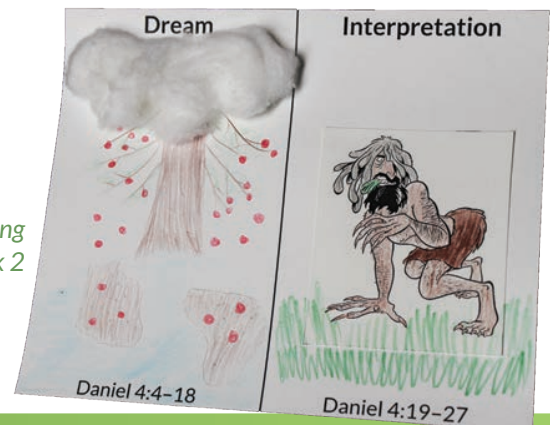
DREAM DRAWING

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheets, cotton balls, scissors, glue, and crayons.

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft page. Read Daniel 4:4–18, and have the class help you brainstorm for ideas of what to draw to represent Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (on the left side of the craft sheet). Encourage the students to be creative while drawing their own trees to match the description in the passage. Then read Daniel’s interpretation of the dream in Daniel 4:19–27. Have children color and glue picture of Nebuchadnezzar onto the right side of the craft sheet.

Dream Drawing
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

DIVINE HUMBLING

Over the course of his life, Nebuchadnezzar had seen multiple displays of God's power. He praised the true God for revealing the interpretation of his dream to Daniel (Dan 2:47) and for rescuing Daniel's friends from the fiery furnace (Dan 3:28–29). Yet in spite of these declarations of God great power, he stubbornly clung to his pride. In today's lesson, we will see how God humbled Nebuchadnezzar, resulting in genuine praise for the Creator of the heavens and earth.

WARNING SIGNS

After Daniel interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he warned him to repent of his sin (Dan 4:27). Nebuchadnezzar should have listened to Daniel's warning. To help the children think about correct responses to warnings, bring in some pictures or symbols or warnings—various street signs, "Beware of Dog," signs, medicine labels, poison stickers, etc. Show the children each sign and identify the correct response to each warning. Then ask them what the correct response is to a verse such as Daniel 4:27.



ILLUSTRATE

AN EMPTY BOAST

The Titanic was a British passenger liner operated by White Star Line that sank in the Atlantic Ocean on April 15th, 1912 after hitting an iceberg during her maiden voyage from Europe to the United States. The Titanic was the largest ship on the planet when it sank. It was widely believed that the ship, because of its incredible size, was unsinkable. However, its sinking resulted in the deaths of more than 1,500 passengers and crew, making it one of the deadliest disasters in modern maritime history. Her architect, Thomas Andrews, was among those lost in the sinking.

WARNING!

Proverbs 21:1 says, "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will." Illustrate God's power and control over the leaders of earth by filling a 9 by 13 inch pan with water and tipping it to direct the water to different corners of the pan. Use red food coloring to make the water easier to see.



APPLY

SLOW LEARNER

Over the course of his life, Nebuchadnezzar had seen multiple displays of God's power, yet he steadfastly clung to his own pride (Dan 2:47; 3:28–29). Only after seven years as an animal did he finally repent and submit to God. You could say he was a slow learner. Yet, how many of us are weekly confronted with the truth of God's power and stubbornly cling to our own pride? Ask the children to explain what it means to repent. Then ask them if it's possible to confess God's power with our lips while resisting God's power over our lives. How many of us, like Nebuchadnezzar, are slow learners when it comes to pride?