

# Daniel 4:1-37

## January 5, 2025



### CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

### MAIN POINT

Daniel 4 presents a colorful example of how our pride can go very wrong. It reminds us that God is always sovereign and offers us very sound and relevant advice: "Separate yourself from your sins by doing what is right" (v.27).

### INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

**Let's recap what happened in Daniel chapters 1–3. What have we seen happen in the book so far?**

**What takeaways have you had from our study of Daniel so far?**

**Let's shift gears to the chapter we will be reading today. Can you think of a time or times in Scripture where God used dreams to tell someone something important? What happened?**

We've seen God use dreams to communicate important things in Daniel chapters 1–3, and we'll see Him do it again in Daniel chapter 4. King Nebuchadnezzar has seen clear



evidence of God's sovereignty and power twice so far in the book of Daniel, and yet his pride stands in the way of accepting who is really in charge and worthy of praise. In chapter 4, we'll see how he ultimately learned this lesson the hard way.

This chapter is a cautionary tale to those of us who sit firmly in our pride and don't remember who is really on the throne and in charge.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

🌿 ASK MULTIPLE VOLUNTEERS TO READ DANIEL 4:1-18.

**How did Nebuchadnezzar praise God in verses 1-3? How does this compare to Nebuchadnezzar's previous acknowledgements of God's power?**

**What happened in Nebuchadnezzar's dream?**

**How is this like Nebuchadnezzar's dream from chapter 2?**

We don't know for sure, but scholars estimate that the events described in chapter 4 took place about ten years before the end of King Nebuchadnezzar's forty-three-year reign (605–560BC). This chapter is unique in Scripture because of its autobiographical presentation.

The chapter opens as a proclamation from Nebuchadnezzar, praising God for the "miracles and wonders" God had done for him (v.2), then we get an account of another disturbing dream Nebuchadnezzar had.

In the dream, he saw a tall, strong, and fruitful tree. The tree was beautiful and had enough fruit to feed and shelter many creatures. Then, an angel came down from heaven with a disturbing proclamation: the tree needed to be cut down and its leaves and fruit scattered, and a human would undergo a transformation that left him with the mind of an animal. This would be a divine punishment with a holy purpose: to recognize the matchless authority of God (v. 17). Despite his many encounters with the might of the living God, this was one lesson Nebuchadnezzar failed to learn.

As usual, Nebuchadnezzar assembled the Chaldean dream team, but they couldn't interpret the dream for him. So, he called in Daniel, acknowledging Daniel had "a spirit of the holy gods" in him (v.18).

🌿 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 4:19-27.

**What was the dream's interpretation?**



## **What advice did Daniel give Nebuchadnezzar?**

The dream's meaning was so disturbing that Scripture notes that Daniel was stunned and alarmed (v.19). The great, prosperous tree and the man destined to have the mind of an animal both represented Nebuchadnezzar himself.

Daniel delivered this news delicately (v.19) and gave Nebuchadnezzar wise advice: "separate yourself from your sins by doing what is right" (v.27).

## **Nebuchadnezzar's fate does not lie ahead of us, but our sin separates us from God and prevents us from living fully for the Lord. What sin exists in our lives that we need to separate ourselves from today?**

Unfortunately, Nebuchadnezzar did not heed Daniel's advice, and he reaped the difficult consequences.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 4:28-33.

## **What sin was Nebuchadnezzar guilty of here? Why is this so dangerous?**

### **How do we see this sin persist in 2024?**

### **What can we learn about God and His purposes in this passage?**

God allowed twelve full months for Nebuchadnezzar's repentance, but his pride remained firmly in place. Ancient Babylon was indeed majestic but not because of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar's ego was significant, but he's not the only person guilty of persistent sin. The sin of pride remains rampant in our culture today, and we still sometimes have a lack of understanding of who is truly in charge. God is the ruler over human kingdoms (v.17) and "he removes kings and establishes kings" (2:21). This is illustrated clearly in the fulfillment of the events of the dream when Nebuchadnezzar failed to repent.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 4:34-37.

## **What realization did Nebuchadnezzar come to?**

### **When have you had to learn the truth about God and the world the hard way?**

The meaning of the prescribed "seven periods of time" (v.16) isn't precisely known but is assumed by most scholars to mean seven years. At the end of this time, Nebuchadnezzar's sanity returned, and he acknowledged God's sovereignty and the glory He is due.



God restored Nebuchadnezzar and allowed him to live out the remainder of his life and rule once again.

## **APPLICATION**

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**Just like Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have forgotten the awe-inspiring wonders God did during his rule, it's easy for us to forget God's past faithfulness and His wonders in our lives. Reflect on God's past faithfulness in your life. Where and how has He shown up? How can this lead you to praise?**

**Nebuchadnezzar was humbled because of his pride. How can we help one another guard against this type of pride in our lives?**

**Who can you share about the reign of God by sharing the story of Nebuchadnezzar?**

## **PRAYER**

*Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.*

Thank God for the truth and relevancy of Scripture. Thank Him for using His Word to teach and speak to us today. Thank Him for being sovereign over human kingdoms like ours. Ask Him for help surrendering control and pride in our lives.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

*Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage as we continue our study of Daniel.*

**January 12, 2025 --- Daniel 5:1-31**



## COMMENTARY

### DANIEL 4

Dream of a Large Tree (4:1–37). This chapter begins and ends with Nebuchadnezzar praising the Lord (4:1–3, 34–37). In the intervening verses he related a personal experience through which he came to a greater realization of God’s sovereignty and learned the dangers of pride.

The King Reports His Dream to Daniel (4:1–18). While lying in his palace, the king had a terrifying dream. When his wise men and diviners were unable to interpret it, he summoned Daniel. In his dream Nebuchadnezzar saw a large fruit tree with beautiful leaves. Animals found shelter in its shade, and birds lodged in its branches. An angelic being then commanded that the tree be cut down and that the stump be bound with iron and bronze. The angel then announced that the man represented by the stump would be overtaken by insanity and would live outdoors like an animal for a specified period of time (“seven times” may refer to seven years; see 7:25).

Daniel Interprets the Dream (4:19–27). Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that the tree represented none other than the king himself. Though great and mighty, the king would be brought low. For a period of time he would be plagued by an extreme form of insanity (known as boanthropy or lycanthropy) and would actually behave like an animal. Once he was sufficiently humbled, Nebuchadnezzar would be restored to his throne.

The Dream Comes True (4:28–37). One year later, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was fulfilled. As he proudly looked about the great city of Babylon, a voice from heaven announced to him that he was about to be humbled. He began acting like an animal, and his hair and nails grew exceedingly long. Finally, God restored his sanity, causing Nebuchadnezzar to praise Him publicly and warn others of the consequences of pride.

