

"Until You Know"
Daniel 4:1–37
Wednesday, July 22, 2026
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The greatest ruler on earth has discovered a greater Ruler in heaven. He issues a decree exalting God. **Proverbs 9:10.**

Main Thought

"God humbles the proud until they know His sovereign authority and gladly acknowledge His everlasting kingdom and rule."

Chapter Outline

- 1. Vv. 1–18: God Reveals His Sovereignty**
- 2. Vv. 19–33: God Demonstrates His Sovereignty**
- 3. Vv. 34–37: God Vindicates His Sovereignty**

1. Vv. 1–18: God Reveals His Sovereignty

Vs. 1: "Nebuchadnezzar the king..." He ruled Babylon, the most powerful empire, for 43 years, from 605 to 562 B.C. It is near the end of his reign. He is at ease, having expanded his kingdom.

"...to all the peoples, nations, and *men of every language*..." Daniel records the king's words as a worldwide Royal Proclamation. His empire stretched from the Persian Gulf to Egypt's border.

"May your peace abound!" Welfare and prosperity. Instead of issuing heavy-handed demands, he assures goodwill.

Vs. 2: "To declare": explain. **"Signs and wonders":** miraculous confirmation. Nebuchadnezzar seeks to explain recent events. He received a "comeuppance." He got what he deserved.

Vs. 3: Nebuchadnezzar publicly testifies to the "signs and wonders." God struck him with insanity. His bizarre behavior and recovery are God's miracles. God demonstrated His power and reality through the king's weakness.

"His kingdom... His dominion": Nebuchadnezzar praises the God of Israel for His greatness, power, and sovereignty. This king had ignored God's attempts to gain his attention. Now, after experiencing humiliation, he knows that God is sovereign.

The king's testimony should inspire us to make our own testimony known. Jesus Christ calls us to be witnesses of the Gospel, spreading our faith throughout the world. **Matthew 5:14-16; Acts 1:8.**

Vs. 4: "I, Nebuchadnezzar...". This pagan king seeks to explain the Lord's work in his life. Daniel records it for posterity. **"I was at ease..."**: content and carefree. **"Flourishing"**: lush leaves on a tree. God interrupted his comfort.

Vs. 5: "I saw a dream and it made me fearful." Once again, God speaks through a troubling dream, a visionary revelation. Upon waking, he felt a sense of dread. Before God judges, He warns.

Vv. 6-7: "...all the wise men of Babylon." The king summoned all his wise men to unravel its mystery. **"...they could not make its interpretation known to me."** Daniel was not among them. These counselors were charlatans.

Vs. 8: "But finally, Daniel came in...". Daniel is about 50. The king uses his Hebrew name: "Daniel," meaning "God is my Judge." The king publicly acknowledges Daniel's Jewishness and the God he worships.

Vs. 9: "...a spirit of the holy gods": may be translated "the Spirit of the Holy God." The wise men cannot interpret the dream, but Daniel can because God's Spirit is within him. No mystery baffles the God of heaven.

Vv. 10-11: Nebuchadnezzar sees a great tree in the midst of the earth. It stands at the center of the earth, symbolizing its supreme importance. It grows enormous and mighty in strength. The top of the tree touches the sky and is visible to all on earth.

Scripture uses trees symbolically. **Psalms 1**: a blessed person, planted by water, thrives as they delight in God's law. **Ezekiel 31**: an arrogant nation. A tree may symbolize a godly person or a proud kingdom.

Vs. 12: Its beauty, fruit, and shade picture greatness, prosperity, and worldwide influence. Jeremiah predicted this about Nebuchadnezzar, calling him God's servant. **Jeremiah 27:6-7, Romans 13:4**

Vs. 13: "Angelic watcher": sentinel. A holy angel who observes human affairs, executes God's will, announces judgments, and remains vigilant. **1 Peter 1:12**. Nebuchadnezzar is not measuring up to God's standard for a leader. Therefore, this messenger is sent with a warning.

Vs. 14: A holy watcher commands that the tree be chopped down, branches cut off, leaves stripped, fruit scattered, and animals flee. It is cut down but not destroyed.

Vs. 15: The stump is left with its roots. **"A band of iron and bronze around it."** It is shackled and restrained, but also protected by a fence to shield it from further harm. **Job 14:7**

"And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven." The text shifts to the man it symbolizes. He will be driven out and exposed to the elements. He is to eat grass like cattle living outdoors.

Vs. 16: "Mind": heart. The center of reasoning, thought, and understanding. His mind is to be changed. He is to believe himself to be an animal. **"Seven periods of time":** This period of his humility will last seven years.

Vs. 17: This command comes from God's counsel. The purpose of the decree: **"...that the living may know."** God is sovereign over the affairs of all mankind (**Psalm 75: 6-7**). God alone raises up rulers and puts them down.

God will install the "lowliest of men." Kings, presidents, or governors should not be prideful, for they reign by God's will, not by ability. For example, Jesus Christ appeared as the Servant of all and bore our sins to the cross.

Vs. 18: Nebuchadnezzar again turns to Daniel because God has enabled him to understand what the wise men cannot.

2. Vv. 19–33: God Demonstrates His Sovereignty

Vs. 19: Daniel was appalled because he understood the dream. Though troubled by its meaning, he spoke the truth faithfully.

Vv. 20–22: Daniel identifies the great tree: **"It is you, O king."** God had given Nebuchadnezzar greatness, dominion, and influence. Leadership is a stewardship for others' benefit, not a platform for self-exaltation. **Isaiah 2:12-13.** The king's heart was lifted in pride.

Vs. 23: The holy watcher commands the tree to be cut down, yet the stump is left intact. Nebuchadnezzar will be humbled, but hope remains for his restoration at the appointed time.

Vv. 24–25: Daniel declares, "This is the decree of the Most High." Nebuchadnezzar will live like the beasts of the field **"until he recognizes that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes."**

Vs. 26: **"...leave the stump with the roots."** The preserved stump assures the king that his kingdom will be restored once he recognizes that **"Heaven rules."**

Vs. 27: "Break away from your sins:" Repent. Daniel urges the king to stop oppressing the poor. **Psalm 41:1**

Vv. 28–29: “**All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.**” God gives Nebuchadnezzar twelve months to repent, but the warning goes unheeded. His pride continues to grow as he surveys Babylon from his royal palace.

Vv. 30–31: The king boasts, “**Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built...?**” As the words are still on his lips, a voice from heaven declares, “**Sovereignty has been removed from you.**”

Vs. 32: Nebuchadnezzar is driven from mankind and lives like the beasts of the field for seven years until he learns that the Most High rules.

Vs. 33: God's word was fulfilled immediately: “driven away, eating grass, drenched with dew, hair like eagle’s feathers, nails like claws.” He was insane, unwashed, and unkempt. What he refused to learn from God's warning, he learned through God's discipline.

3. Vv. 34–37: God Vindicates His Sovereignty

Vs. 34: Nebuchadnezzar **raised his eyes toward heaven**, and his reason returned. **Psalms 121:1-2.** His restoration began when he acknowledged the Most High. A sound mind is found only in a right relationship with God. **2 Timothy 1:7-8.**

Vs. 35: Nebuchadnezzar confesses God's absolute sovereignty: “**He does according to His will...**” No one can stay His hand or question His purposes. **Isaiah 40:15, 17**

Vs. 36: God immediately restores the king's reason, majesty, splendor, and kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar now understands that every blessing comes from the Most High.

Vs. 37: Nebuchadnezzar concludes his testimony by praising, exalting, and honoring **the King of Heaven**, declaring: “**All His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.**”

Summary

God first speaks, then disciplines if necessary, and ultimately receives glory when His truth is acknowledged. This is not merely the account of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation but of God's relentless purpose to bring a proud king to recognize His sovereign rule.

Application

- 1. God may warn us before He disciplines us.**
- 2. Success is a gift from God, not proof of our greatness.**
- 3. God opposes pride because He loves us.**
- 4. God is sovereign over every authority.**