

• LESSON 4 (January 28) •

The God Who Rules the Kingdom of Men

BACKGROUND:

- This “confession” made in the form of an “open letter” of sorts most likely documents a season near the end of Nebuchadnezzar’s life if we take his words in Daniel 4:30 to mean that the bulk of his building program had already been completed.
- “The Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men” is a truth found throughout Scripture (1 Sam 2:8; Psa 33:10-11; 113:7-8; 115:3; 145:13; Prov 19:21; 21:1; Isa 14:27; 40:17; 43:13; Luke 1:52; Rom 13:1).
- Kings and nations were often depicted as mighty trees in Old Testament poetry (Psa 37:35; Isa 2:13; 10:33-34; Ezek 17:22-24; 31:3; Hos 14:5-7; Amos 2:9; Zech 11:1-2).
- Nebuchadnezzar’s condition as described in Daniel 4:31-33 is often conjectured to have been a form of lycanthropy, a mental disorder in which the sufferer believes and acts as if he is an animal. Lycanthropy has afflicted such notables as England’s King George III and Bavaria’s King Otto (Lucas, *Daniel*, 111). In 1946, R.K. Harrison personally witnessed a case of lycanthropy in Britain. The man was in his 20s and spent his time outdoors in the winter with no coat of any kind. “The only physical abnormality noted consisted of a lengthening of the hair and a coarse, thickened condition of the finger-nails. Without institutional care the patient would have manifested precisely the same physical conditions as those mentioned in Daniel 4:33” (Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1116).

QUESTIONS WORTH THINKING ABOUT:

1. Using Daniel 4:8, what did Nebuchadnezzar still not clearly and accurately grasp about God and “gods”?
2. Is Nebuchadnezzar the only one who has ever repeatedly failed to learn the most fundamental truths of life? If not, how would we illustrate the same folly in modern terms?
3. How would you summarize the truth of Daniel 4:17 in your own words?
4. What does Daniel 4:19 tell us about Daniel?
5. What was Daniel calling Nebuchadnezzar to do in Daniel 4:27?
6. How do we fall into the same Daniel 4:29-30 trap of a mindset?

CLOSING THOUGHT: “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Rom 2:4)