****

**KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR**

**Known for:** The greatness of man battles the greatness of God

**Scriptures to study:** Daniel 1-4

Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon from around 605 BC to 562 BC. He was the most important ruler of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and a renowned builder. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, which he constructed for his wife, was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Under his rule, the Neo-Babylonian empire was one of the most powerful kingdoms in the world, and Babylon grew into a formidable city.

Nebuchadnezzar brought his whole army to siege Jerusalem. They broke through the wall and captured the Israelites (2 Kings 25:7–17). Solomon’s temple was arguably the most important symbol of Israel’s culture. Nebuchadnezzar burned it to the ground. The Old Testament paints Nebuchadnezzar as a violent, narcissistic king who was prone to anger and wickedness; a cautionary tale for those who don’t recognize God’s authority.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Daniel interprets a dream for King Nebuchadnezzar. Along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they reveal the greatness of God, which far surpasses powerful king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar rewards the followers of God by appointing them as leaders. Shortly after appointing Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to positions of authority, Nebuchadnezzar made a massive golden statue, and commanded people of all nations to bow down and worship it—or else be thrown into a furnace.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down, and Nebuchadnezzar’s other wisemen tattled on them. King Nebuchadnezzar gave them another chance to worship the statue, and he asked if he threw them into the furnace, “what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” Nebuchadnezzar responded by cranking up the heat on the furnace, binding Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and throwing them in. The furnace was so hot it killed the men who threw them in (Daniel 3:22).

The king famously remarked: “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods” (Daniel 3:25) and told Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to come out of the furnace. They were miraculously unscathed, and King Nebuchadnezzar decried that anyone who said anything against their God would be cut to pieces.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Key thoughts:**

* Nebuchadnezzar was a prominent villain in the Old Testament, the powerful king of a rival land.
* Nebuchadnezzar is placed in a position to either continue in sin or honor God. When he chooses to honor God, he is blessed.
* Later (Daniel 4) the king descends into madness as a result of a dream. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar he will go insane until he acknowledge the God of Israel. He does go insane, but acknowledges God later and his sanity is restored (Daniel 4:33-35).



* Are you self-reliant? What do you think it means to be a self-made man?
* Do you believe it’s important that a leader does not depend heavily on others? Why or why not?
* Who has impacted your life that has significantly changed the direction of your leadership? In what way did this occur?



* Read Daniel 3:1-7. Does Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image sound in any way like narcissistic leaders of today? How might this self-centered leadership look in today’s corporate environment?
* Read Daniel 3:13-16. Can you recall any situation, personal or public, where someone has taken a stand for God in this way? What would you do if taking a stand for God would cost you everything?
* Read Daniel 4:1-3. What is Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction to God following the miracle of the furnace? Is it unusual for a leader to change his attitude in this way?
* Read Daniel 4:28-33. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar because he did not acknowledge God?
* Read Daniel 4:34-36. How did Nebuchadnezzar’s relationship with God turn out? Why do you think this occurred?



* What is driving you crazy in your life or work at the moment? Is there a chance this is tied to a lack of a growing relationship with God?
* What can you do this week to take a stand for God in life or work, even if it costs you in a significant way?
* Is there an area of life or work where you need to do an about-face, and return to God? How might you start down that road this week?

1. https://www.gotquestions.org/Nebuchadnezzar.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://overviewbible.com/nebuchadnezzar/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)