

4. A confession of a prideful king

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If you call this psychiatric hotline, you will hear a calm and collective female's voice greeting you:

"Welcome to the Psychiatric Hotline!"

If you are obsessive-compulsive: Please press 1 repeatedly.

If you are codependent: Please ask someone to press 2.

If you have multiple personalities: Please press 3, 4, 5, and 6.

If you are paranoid-delusional: We know who you are and what you want.

Just stay on the line so we can trace the call.

If you are schizophrenic: Listen carefully. A little voice will tell you which number to press.

If you are manic-depressive: It doesn't matter which number you press. No one will answer.

There are many tens and thousands of people isolated in the psychiatric wards of the hospitals throughout the world. They cannot cope with the reality or their own mental world. We, too, can be there like them, if the Lord didn't keep sound minds in us.

Tonight, we are going to look at a prideful man who had a dream which was in insomnia stage. That dream came true, he went into the stage of insanity because of his pride. After seven years, his mind came back to sense, he received the insight from the Lord and gave glory to God with the genuine humility.

This chapter is one of the most interesting portions in the Bible. Because it is the only chapter in the Old Testaments written by a gentile king himself, but now a God fearing one.

It is not about God showing off who the boss is. It is about pride and humility of man and compassion of God. It is a personal testimony of the king who thought he conquered God of Israel when he conquered the land.

V1-3 and 37 are Nebuchadnezzar's public testimony of what God did to him and for him. We will look into those verses at the end of our study. Now for the account of the king's dream.

A. THE DREAM THAT STARTLED THE MIGHTY KING

Daniel 4:4-18 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6 Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation. 8 But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before him, saying: 9 "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation. 10 "These were the visions of my head while on my bed: "I was looking, and behold, A tree in the midst of the earth, And its height was great. 11 The tree grew and became strong;

Its height reached to the heavens, And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. 12 Its leaves were lovely, Its fruit abundant, And in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, And all flesh was fed from it. 13 "I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. 14 He cried aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, And the birds from its branches. 15 Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, Bound with a band of iron and bronze, In the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, And let him graze with the beasts On the grass of the earth. 16 Let his heart be changed from that of a man, Let him be given the heart of a beast, And let seven times pass over him. 17 'This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.' 18 "This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you."

It was at a time of peace and prosperity that God sent this dream to the king. This dream was really a divine warning to him that his sins were going to catch up with him at last. The king thought he was secure, but it was a false security, similar to the one Jesus pictured in the Parable of the Rich Farmer in Luke 12:15-21. It is when this wicked world is resting in "peace and safety" that God's judgment will fall. The only true safety and rest is in Jesus Christ.

So what the king does to find out what the dream meant? He called the same old sorry-excuse psychics again even though he knew they could not help him last time. We are creatures of habit, aren't we all?

Remember these so-called wisemen's boast in chapter 2: "Show us the dream and we will explain it." Well, the king did show them this dream but they could not explain it. The worldly wisdom make their boast of great intellect, but they cannot understand or explain the things of God

1 Corinthians 2:14-15 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one..

Why didn't king Nebuchadnezzar call Daniel from the beginning? This is a typical attitude of mankind. We don't run to God till all other refuges fail us. When we face any obstacles in our lives – big or small, the first thing we should do is prayer to God.

Nebuchadnezzar had power, riches and glory, but he was unable to unlock the future. The poorest Christian is far richer than the king, because we have the King of kings who knows and controls the future.

B. THE INTERPRETATION THAT SCARED THE MIGHTY KING, BUT NOT ENOUGH

Daniel 4:19-27 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said,

“Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.”
Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies! 20 The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, 21 whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home-- 22 it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth. 23 And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him’; 24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: 25 They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. 26 And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules. 27 Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

I don't believe for one moment that Daniel was afraid of what Nebuchadnezzar might do to him when he hears the interpretation of the dream. Daniel genuinely cared about this heathen king, the one who conquered his land, took him away from his family at young age, made him to be an eunuch.

Let's take a sharp eye on how Daniel approached the king:

- 1) He approached him with tact.
- 2) He was specific and honest.
- 3) He gave the king hope.

We need to do the same kind of thing when we confront other people. Never look down on them, be specific, no here-say or based on rumors, and also give them hope when they turn it around.

A true prophet is always in sympathy with his message. He feels the burden of it and delivers God's Word faithfully. Many people have the idea that spiritual wisdom and knowledge always lead to joy and witness, when sometimes they lead to sorrow and silence.

“The watcher and holy one” is an angel of God, appointed to work in the kingdom of Babylon.

C. THE DREAM CAME TRUE

Daniel 4:28-33 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” 31 While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King

Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” 33 That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

A young woman asked for an appointment with her pastor to talk with him about a sin of pride about which she was worried. When she saw him, she said, “Pastor, I have become aware of a sin in my life which I cannot control. Every time I am at church I begin to look around at the other women, and I realize that I am the most beautiful woman in the whole congregation. None of the others can compare with my beauty. What can I do about this sin?”

The pastor replied, “Miss, that’s not a sin of pride, you just have a delusion!”

Unlike that young lady, Nebuchadnezzar had not only the sin of pride, but also a delusion that he thought he was more powerful than God.

But God gave the king twelve long months to repent from his pride and wickedness. What did he do? He walked around the roof top like a peacock and boasting what he had. It was time for God to pull the royal rug out from under this haughty king. God didn’t have to hear the entire sentence to come out of his mouth. God took him out and the king’s mind snapped.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Much of church conflicts within the ranks of Christianity start from individual’s pride. They strongly believe that what they want in the church is more important than anything including the sound doctrines of the Word of God.

D. COMING TO KNOW WHO GOD IS

Daniel 4:34-37 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, (1) lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and (2) I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, “What have You done?” 36 At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar was converted. The first step was, “I lifted my eyes to heaven.” The king had learned his lesson: he was nothing and God was everything. How tragic that the proud rulers of this present world fail to see this!

E. WORSHIP AND ADORATION TO THE KING OF KINGS

Daniel 4:1-3 Nebuchadnezzar the king, To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. 2 I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. 3 How great are His signs, And how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation.

Nebuchadnezzar certainly was not known for his peaceful activities, because he was a cruel man of war. Verse 1 reads almost like a NT epistle from Peter or Paul. Note how in v2 and 3 he gives all the glory to God and tributes greatness to the Lord. This, again, is a confession of the once-heathen-mighty king.

Some find prophetic significance in this account. Since "Babylon" is used in the scriptures as a figure of the world system at large, we can say:

- Nebuchadnezzar's madness foreshadows the madness of Gentile nations in their rejection of God.
- Nebuchadnezzar's fall typifies Jesus' judgment of the nations.
- Nebuchadnezzar's restoration foreshadows the restoring of some of these nations in the millennial kingdom.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) God's judgement may be slow, but it is for sure coming.

We should not take His silence as His approval for our wickedness and sins. After the dream, God gave a year for Nebuchadnezzar to repent. God is geared toward our repentance more than punishment. But His patience does set limits.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

2) God will go to extremes to show us that He is Lord.

No matter what we try to do, at the end God gets His way. If we fight against God's way, we are the ones who are going to suffer, not Him. It is so much better and easier for us to be obedient to Him than try to do the things in our ways and mess up the situation, hurt ourselves and those around us.