

The Humbling of the High and Mighty, The Conversion of Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel Chapter 4

Daniel 4:1-3 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 2) I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 3) How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.

Daniel 4:34-37 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: 35) And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? 36) At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. 37) Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.

In his converted state, Nebuchadnezzar, the author of Daniel chapter four, reflects back on the events that led to a most humbling experience when he found himself out in a pasture grazing with the animals, an experience through which he finally discerned the merciful loving kindness of the Most High God and how He rules over the kingdoms of men. It was not always so.

Daniel 3:15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

What did he learn that eventually replaced such pride with humility? Though repeatedly enlightened by his encounters with his faithful Jewish captives, the power of pride turned him aside from the path of humility to follow the imaginations of his naturally proud heart.

We are told in Proverbs 14:34 that, "Righteousness exalteth a nation," therefore, Nebuchadnezzar must have ruled righteously at some time in his reign. Inspiration calls Nebuchadnezzar a "king of kings" in Ezekiel 26:7.

After Daniel's God-given interpretation of the vision of the great image of chapter two, For a time thereafter, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God as supreme. Then, falling back into idolatrous worship of the gods of Babylon, he was again, by the miraculous deliverance of the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace, led to acknowledge that God's "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation." But yet again, a third time, the king disregarded the warnings God had given him and, as we shall see, turned aside. Nebuchadnezzar was experiencing rest from warfare after conquering several nations and was flourishing in his palace, but because Nebuchadnezzar did not continue to walk in the light he had received from heaven, he lost the holy impressions that had been made upon his mind. God, in His mercy, gave the king another dream, to save him, if possible, from appropriating to himself the glory that belonged to the Supreme Ruler.

Job 33:14-18 For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, That He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

Daniel 4:5-7 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6) Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7) Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.

Notice that again we find him vainly seeking the interpretation from the "so called" wise men of his kingdom. As with Satan, his wisdom was corrupted by his pride.

Ezekiel 28:17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness:

Finally, Nebuchadnezzar, acknowledging Daniel's connection with the "holy gods," invites Daniel to interpret the dream.

Daniel 4:8 But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying, 9) O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.

The Dream:

Daniel 4:10 Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. 11) The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: 12) The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. 13) I saw in the visions

of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; 14) He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: 15) Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: 16) Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.

Then with foreboding but short-lived insight, Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel,

Daniel 4:17 This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

How can pride so corrupt a man's wisdom that he could openly acknowledge God's overseeing providence, then, as we'll see, spend the next twelve months ignoring the warning he declared at the outset was from God?

Its noteworthy that Nebuchadnezzar again acknowledges that Daniel has been honored with the ability to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dreams.

Dan 4:18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

We see that Daniel is reluctant to reveal the interpretation to the king knowing that it would be better news to the king's enemies than to the king.

Daniel 4:19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

Daniel interprets the dream:

Daniel 4:20-26 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; 21) Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: 22) It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. 23) And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from

heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be 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 is come upon my lord the king: 25) That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. 26) And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

If you had openly acknowledged that God had told you that your self-exalting kingdom would end and you'd eat grass as oxen for seven years, wouldn't you have humbled yourself, turned away from sin and laid your pride in the dust. The Ninevites did. Ahab did. Later they turned back from their repentance and lost their kingdoms. But in this warning God told Nebuchadnezzar that he would eventually repent, when God ceased to empower him with wise leadership, and realize that it was God, not he, who is worthy to be glorified and exalted. In mercy God would restore kingship to this converted and humble king, but not before he would discover the terrible curse of pride.

Pride has such mysterious power over an unconverted heart, is it any wonder it is called the "mystery of iniquity" that a creature would credit himself with his Creator's endowments to bless others? Yet all of us have been thus affected and just as stubbornly disregard the Holy One's efforts to save us from the results of our self-serving, self-exalting rebellion against His words of wisdom.

In Daniel chapter two God had revealed to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel that it was He who had given him his kingdom and glory.

Daniel 2:37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38) And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

On that occasion Nebuchadnezzar had acknowledged that God was in fact, the "God of gods."

Daniel 2:47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.

But in Daniel chapter three we find Nebuchadnezzar rebelling against the prediction that his kingdom would end and eventually God's everlasting kingdom would reign. After the deliverance of the three faithful Hebrews in the furnace, the king again acknowledges the sovereign power of the true God. By what self-deception does "mystery of iniquity" resurface over and over again, not only as it did in Nebuchadnezzar's life but in our own.

Daniel 3:28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29

Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

Daniel appeals to the king to cease from the sin that would produce the consequences that should come.

Daniel 4:27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

What were the sins of King Nebuchadnezzar?

Daniel 5:18-21 O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will.

Nebuchadnezzar's habit was to make his captive princes eunuchs and wise men in his government.

2 Kings 20:18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

2 Kings 25:7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

Jeremiah 29:22 And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;

Instead of being a protector of men, Babylon became a proud and cruel oppressor. The words of Inspiration picturing the cruelty and greed of rulers in Israel reveal the secret of Babylon's fall and of the fall of many another kingdom since the world began:

Ezekiel 34:3, 4 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

God in His mercy gave Nebuchadnezzar a whole year to repent of his sin and avert the judgment that would come upon him. But the king ignored and shunned the mercies of God and brought upon himself the consequences of his sin.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 Because 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.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Isaiah 13:11 And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

Psalms 9:16 The LORD is known by the judgment which He executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

Daniel 4:28-33 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. 29) At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 30) The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? 31) While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. 32) And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. 33) The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

There are many ways in which God can punish, and punishment will surely follow wherever pride is indulged. 'Pride goeth before destruction.' Let a man be lifted up by a sense of his own ability, and trust in his human strength, and he will surely be overcome by temptation. God will allow him to fall. He will teach him his utter weakness, that he may feel his need of divine aid. Let anyone glory in his wisdom or his talents, or in anything but Christ and Him crucified, and he will learn that the Lord alone is to be exalted.

This warning against self exaltation and force was not just for King Nebuchadnezzar, but for everyone of us. Self exaltation is the original sin of Lucifer and the principle by which he rules. This is the opposite of the character of God and the self lowering principle by which He rules.

Matthew 23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Unlike Lucifer, who exalted himself and shall be abased by the failure of his kingdom, Christ humbled Himself and shall be exalted above every name, forever.

Philippians 2:1-11 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2) Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3) Let

nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4) Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5) Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7) But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8) And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: 10) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time:

Jeremiah 9:23 Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 24) But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

Daniel 4:34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: 35) And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? 36) At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. 37) Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.

The lesson that the Lord would have all humanity learn from the history of the king of Babylon is that all those who walk in pride and self exaltation, He is able to abase, but not in order to exalt Himself. The chastening that came upon the king of Babylon, and upon all whom God allows to discover their dependence on the only wise God, wrought reformation in the heart of the king and transformed him in character. May our trials transform our characters to His glory!