

The Book of Daniel: Pride Goes Before a Fall

Daniel 4:1-37

August 25, 2019

In the book of Daniel, God uses prophecy and miraculous events to demonstrate to us that He is guiding the course of human history to ultimately consummate in the reign of Christ and no man or power can stand in His way. Throughout the book, God repeatedly reveals prophetic visions to pagan kings demonstrating that He is the ultimate source of truth and authority.

In Daniel 4 God once again sends a prophetic vision to King Nebuchadnezzar. This time it is a message of judgment and mercy. God warns this proud king of impending judgment to lead him to repentance. This is an Old Testament example of New Testament truth that the goodness of God leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4).

Nebuchadnezzar's conclusion is that "Those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (4:37). Today we'll learn that it is better to humble ourselves before God than to force Him to humble us (James 4:10).

1. God Terrifies Nebuchadnezzar (4:1-18).

- a. Nebuchadnezzar was enjoying the fruits of a successful monarchy – "I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace:" (4).
 - i. He had successfully subdued rival nations and put down a brief rebellion in Babylon.
 - ii. He had built many architectural wonders, such as a palace that dwarfed his father's, the hanging gardens (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world), a museum, a bridge over the river Euphrates, the Ishtar Gate, etc.
- b. Nebuchadnezzar had a terrifying dream that reminded him of his mortality – "I saw a dream which made me afraid..." (5).
- c. Nebuchadnezzar turned to his failed wise men (6-7).
- d. Nebuchadnezzar turned to Daniel as a last resort (8-18). Rather than use Daniel's Hebrew name, he uses the name "Belteshazzar," after the pagan god, "Bel."
 - i. The Tree – Nebuchadnezzar (10-12)
 - ii. The Watcher – An Angel (13-14)
 - iii. The Decree – Destruction (14-16)
 - iv. The Purpose – "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" (17).

2. God Warns Nebuchadnezzar (4:19-27).

- a. The decree would delight Nebuchadnezzar's enemies (19; cf. 25).
- b. The tree is the king reigning in his kingdom and pride (20-22).
- c. The watcher was a messenger from the Most High God (23-24).
- d. The decree is interpreted to predict judgment and restoration (25-26).
 - i. Psalm 103:8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."
- e. Daniel plead with Nebuchadnezzar to repent (27).
 - i. Joel 2:13 "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

3. God Humbles Nebuchadnezzar (4:28-33).

- a. God gave Nebuchadnezzar 12 months before humiliating him (28-29).
 - i. 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."
 - ii. 2 Peter 3:9 "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
- b. God judged Nebuchadnezzar for his pride and self-sufficiency (30-32).

- i. Proverbs 6:16-17 “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look...”
 - ii. Proverbs 11:2 “When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.”
 - iii. James 4:6 “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”
 - iv. Proverbs 3:34 “Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.”
 - c. God’s judgment came with a promise of grace, “seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and he giveth it to whomsoever he will” (32-33).
 - i. Nebuchadnezzar was likely driven out by his enemies, but God preserved his life.
 - ii. While Nebuchadnezzar lived like an ox, Daniel likely ruled on his behalf, protecting his monarchy and his empire.
4. God Restores Nebuchadnezzar (4:34-37; 1-3).
- a. Nebuchadnezzar praised and honored God (34-35).
 - i. He recognized that mankind was nothing before God.
 - ii. He recognized that God was in control of all.
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar published the tidings of God’s grace bestowed upon him throughout the world (1-3).
 - c. God restored Nebuchadnezzar and blessed him beyond his previous majesty (36).
 - i. Romans 5:20 “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:”
 - ii. Matthew 23:12 “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

Conclusion:

1. Is God using circumstances or faithful messengers to warn you of pride and its consequences?
2. What is your response to God’s longsuffering and mercy?
3. How do you respond to God’s chastening?
4. Can you praise God for His sovereign control in your life?
5. Are you proclaiming God’s abundant grace to those around you?