

Life in the Lion's Den
“The Prideful are put out to Pasture”
(Daniel Chapter 4)
Lesson #5

Scripture: Proverbs 16:18 *“Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.”*

Introduction:

Ronald Reagan, recalling an occasion when he was governor of California and made a speech in Mexico City: "After I had finished speaking, I sat down to rather unenthusiastic applause, and I was a little embarrassed. The speaker who followed me spoke in Spanish -- which I didn't understand -- and he was being applauded about every paragraph. To hide my embarrassment, I started clapping before everyone else and longer than anyone else until our ambassador leaned over and said, 'I wouldn't do that if I were you. He's interpreting your speech.'"

Quoted by Gerald Gardner in All the Presidents' Wits (Morrow), in *Reader's Digest*.

Transitional Statement:

There is probably not a single person today that hasn't wrestled with pride in some form or fashion. Pride is one of Satan's greatest advantages. Pride has destroyed many people, nations, churches and yes Christians.

I. King Nebuchadnezzar's declaration

Daniel 4:1-3

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound! 2 "It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for 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.

A. At the end of chapter 3 we remember Nebuchadnezzar lifting up the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Ordering that if anyone speaks anything offensive against this God that they will be torn limb from limb and their house reduces to rubbish.

B. Here in this text the stench of this King's true character comes to light.

C. The audience of his declaration stands as a vast pillar of pride.

1. To: All the peoples, Nation, Every languages, and in general All the people of planet earth.

2. Neb had warred with all his surrounding neighbors and fairly well conquered the whole region, and now has come to the idea that truly he was the ruler of the whole earth.

a. Very prideful

D. While the term “Most High God” sounds great it also stands as a reminder that Nebuchadnezzar is a polytheist (believed in many gods).

1. The tragedy is that Israel also believed in many gods...it’s what landed them in captivity.

a. Israel had prostituted themselves on ever waking hill with these false gods. Jer 3:6

b. Jeremiah 1:16 says that Israel had worshipped the work of their of their own hands.

1) If you clumped all the false gods that Israel had worshipped into one basket....Baal, Ashtoreth, Molech and so on the real product of their worship was themselves,... just like old King Nebuchadnezzar.

c. Jesus proclaims the similar current danger today by telling his disciples of the first century that needed to deny self and take up their crosses and follow Him....Matthew 16:24

2. Church the truth is that there is only one God.

a. A fact that Nebuchadnezzar will own up to by the end of this chapter.

3. So maybe the question at the beginning of this study is, what will it take for Nebuchadnezzar to stop chasing all these false god’s and get right with the one and only God of heaven.

E. In a seemingly noble declaration, He acknowledges God’s sovereign dominion.

1. But it seems that his declaration of this fact stands as a promotion of himself as the channel of this great and mighty God...see following dream and 4:30

a. While he is acknowledging how powerful God is...he is saying that God is doing all this through him.

b. Perhaps with the implicit thought that you need to submit, because I have divine connections.

II. Well, Nebuchadnezzar has another dream and summons his wise men to interpret the Dream.

Daniel 4:4-9

I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. 5 "I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. 6 "So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 "Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me. 8 "But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying, 9 'O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

A. Nebuchadnezzar was lounging around in the lap of luxury,... but with all his comforts he found himself afflicted.

1. He had another disturbing dream that scared him and was keeping him awake

B. Now I can't exactly figure this out, but he called the same magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners who couldn't help him last time.

1. He tells them the dream, unlike before, but they couldn't interpret it for him

a. Basically they were to afraid to take a shot in the dark and loose their heads if they guessed wrong.

C. But then Daniel shows up.

1. And Nebuchadnezzar says of Daniel basically that he has divine connections.

2. And asks Daniel to help him interpret the dream.

III. So Nebuchadnezzar tells his dream to Daniel

Daniel 4:10-18

The Vision of the Great Tree: 10-12

10 'Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great.

*11 'The tree grew large and became strong
And its height reached to the sky,*

And it was visible to the end of the whole earth.

*12 'Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant,
And in it was food for all.*

The beasts of the field found shade under it,

And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches,

And all living creatures fed themselves from it.

The Angelic Watcher Shout: 13-14

13 *I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.*

14 *He shouted out and spoke as follows:*

" Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,

Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit;

Let the beasts flee from under it

And the birds from its branches.

Stump: 15a

15 *"Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground,*

But with a band of iron and bronze around it

In the new grass of the field;

Stump / Personal pronoun added 15b-17a

And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,

And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.

16 *"Let his mind be changed from that of a man*

And let a beast's mind be given to him,

And let seven periods of time pass over him.

17 *"This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers*

And the decision is a command of the holy ones,

The Purpose assigned by the Angelic Watcher: 17b

In order that the living may know

That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind,

And bestows it on whom He wishes

And sets over it the lowliest of men."

IV. Hearing the dreamDaniel is appalled.

Daniel 4:19

"Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.' Belteshazzar replied, ' My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!

A. Daniel is appalled....alarmed by his thoughts.

1. "Appalled" is an Aramaic verb meaning to be astonished, taken by surprise, dumbfounded or amazed.
 - a. Some might think that Daniel is afraid of giving the king this unfavorable interpretation....so that he might lose his head.
2. My take is that Daniel has already shown enough faith that he simply is appalled at the thought of a mighty king, or anybody else for that matter, reduced to an animal of the field.

- B. You know the truth is that the condition of sin is very appalling , Israel, like many today, had simply grown used to sin, even become tolerant of it, or even made excuses for it....but not Daniel, in his response we see the very heart of God!

V. God's interpretation through Daniel his servant.

Daniel 4:20-27

The dream is about you: 20-23

20 *'The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth 21 and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged — 22 it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth. 23 'In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, " Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,"*

The interpretation: 24-25

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 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.*

But.... Restoration will come with submission: 26

26 *'And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.*

Daniel's Plea for change 27

27 *'Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.'*

VI. Then 12 months pass by and pride takes over Nebuchadnezzar

Nebuchadnezzar becomes very prideful 29-30

"All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. 29 " Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. 30 "The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'

- A. Maybe Nebuchadnezzar did break away from his sins for a while.
- B. But after 12 months he was found fully consumed with pride.
1. Pride is really nothing more than a rejection of God.

VII. So God makes a declaration to the king. 31-32

31 "While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, 32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'

Immediate fulfillment 33

33 "Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

A. For 7 periods of time

1. This truly appalling atrocity happened for the whole world to see.

B. This is a good reminder of Proverbs 16:18 *"Pride goes before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before stumbling."*

VII. At the end of 7 periods of time

Reason returned to Nebuchadnezzar and he humbled himself before God. 34

34 "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;

And he says of God: 34b-35

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,

And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

35 " All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,

But He does according to His will in the host of heaven

And among the inhabitants of earth;

And no one can ward off His hand

Or say to Him, ' What have You done?'

Nebuchadnezzar is restored. 36

36 "At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.

Then Nebuchadnezzar makes a new and proper declaration: 37

37 "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."

---There is but one king and that king humbles the prideful

Conclusion:

Israel had forgotten that it is “Heaven that rules”. The pride of their hearts had caused them to be chopped down and put into captivity. But their stump will remain until their humbling which will be 7 periods of time (70 years).

Maybe today you are a tired old stump....ready to submit to God.

Maybe your ready to come in from the pastures of sin.

God stands like a father waiting to run to you...Luke 15