

**Daniel 4:1-33**  
***A Warning Ignored***

NKJ Daniel 4:1 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.

4 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."

19 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."

28 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.

I don't tend to watch a lot of TV as it is, but there are a few shows that I can only watch a few moments of at a time because the entire premise drives me crazy. Let me give you an example, "The Dog Whisperer" which is a show about a "Dog Behaviorist" who helps dog owners who can't control their pets. Now inevitably, the owners can't control their pets because they want to be their pets friend and seem to never have realized the owner is in charge of the dog. Now there was once a time when that kind of understanding was common to human beings, but now we need a highly paid *expert* to come in and painstakingly teach people to become their dogs "pack leader." The same results could once have been had, by simply taking the newspaper along the seam edge and rolling it up tightly. But now it's the owners and not the dogs who apparently need to be trained.

Unfortunately in the same TV show genre, is Nanny 911. If any of you are ever down in the dumps about the behavior of your children, watch 10 minutes of that show. It's the same premise only worse, now this time its parents who can't control their children, and the Nanny comes in to teach the children how to be children and the parents how to be parents. In every episode I've seen the basic problem has been that the most basic premise in biblical parenting, that parents are the God given authority over their children is missing.

But worse than dogs not having been trained to obey, or children not acknowledging the authority of their parents, is when Men will not acknowledge the authority of God, and act as though there is no power greater than themselves.

Ultimately all the other rebellions stem from that great rebellion of creature against creator, but what brought it on? What caused the Devil, who was once a great angel, to rebel against God, what caused our first parents Adam and Eve to rebel in the garden and disobey the express command of the Lord?

It is ***Pride***, which C.S. Lewis rightly called “**The Great Sin**” “You shall be like God”, the devil says, and the woman thinks “*yes, that’s what I want, that’s what I deserve*”

I daresay that if we sat down and analyzed the root of our discontentments, our quarrels, our grudges, everything ugly that we do or say, we would find that the root of them all is pride, and that 99% of them could have been cured by a dose of humility.

Now the odd thing is you probably know that. “***Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.***” (Prov. 16:18) Show of hands, how many of you have never heard that verse before? We know it, but yet we still end up ignoring that warning, don’t we?

I point that out because our natural instinct is to read what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, and think that it was incredible that after being so clearly warned by God he didn’t heed that warning and repent, but allowed pride to very nearly destroy him.

Nebuchadnezzar of course, had received two prior strong warnings from God, first the dream of the statue, and then the events of the fiery furnace, in both of them Nebuchadnezzar was clearly shown that there is a God in heaven who ruled over him and every king and before whom he was powerless. He himself had acknowledged that, but yet his pride went on unabated.

But that sovereign God, whom Nebuchadnezzar knows but will not surrender to, is determined to have Him and so as Stuart Olyott puts it, he has knocked twice, and now he is going to take the door right off its hinges. So first he sends another dream. Nebuchadnezzar probably knows it is a dream like his first dream, something sent by the God of Daniel to tell Him something important, but he assembles the wise men again, instead of calling immediately for Daniel. Now why does he do that?

We can’t know for sure, so this is speculation on my part, but I believe it is because Nebuchadnezzar doesn’t really want to hear what Daniel’s God has to say. It has been my experience that often an unbeliever will ask the advice of their Christian friends, dead last, even though they have only ever gotten good if difficult advice from them. Because they would rather try all the world’s methods to fix the problem first. That is especially the case when its something like marriage. The only give in when it has become a case of necessity. And in this case it does become a case of necessity, so he asks Daniel and Daniel tells Him.

Daniel of course doesn’t want to give him the bad news, he wishes it were meant for an enemy, but he tells him the truth. You O king have been exalted in your power by God, you have become like a tree that stretches its limbs to heaven. Your kingdom is huge, your power is immense, but a time is going to come when your glory will be stripped away, and you will become like a wild animal. Madness will take you, you will live in the field like a beast, your hair will become matted till it looks like bird feathers, your fingernails will grow till they are like the talons of a bird.

This is so that he and we, may learn that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.”

In other words this going to happen, so that your pride will be broken, and you will finally humble yourself before the Lord God almighty. The end of this ordeal will be to make Nebuchadnezzar a believer. Because now he knows of this God – he has knowledge, and he has assented to the truth, but he still doesn’t trust in this God and that can never happen until his pride and rebellion and trust in Himself are broken.

And that happens, a year later, Nebuchadnezzar is on the roof – kings always seem to get up to no good on rooftops – looking out at his beautiful city with its hanging gardens and temples and palaces and he makes a statement that *He* has done all this for His own glory, And it is at that moment that his rule and his mind are broken.

Let me give you two applications here, both of them related and flowing from Nebuchadnezzar’s reason for writing this letter, to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth, and that includes you.

***The first is implicit: Nebuchadnezzar wrote his testimony as a warning against pride, therefore don’t just file the warning away like he did and then ignore it, heed it, act upon it!***

Nebuchadnezzar had an amazing dream warning him what would happen, but Brothers and Sisters, it was only a year before he had forgotten it so utterly that he spoke of Himself as if He was a God. Sometimes it doesn’t even take that long. At the last supper, Peter pridefully boasted he would never betray Jesus, and was told point blank by the Man to whom He Had Said “You are the Son of God” that he would deny him 3 times before the night was over and warned to watch and pray, which he did not do. *A Haughty Spirit went before a Fall.*

I have told people point blank, “the word of God tells you if you keep doing this it will be your undoing” and they have said “Thanks for telling me” to me, but then pride has whispered in their ears, “*you can handle it, weaker men, weaker women might fall, but not you – besides you deserve it*”

I was watching a show on discovery about the investigation into what the FAA calls “**a controlled flight into terrain accident**” which is a fancy way of saying the pilots flew a perfectly good airliner into the ground. The investigators were amazed to learn from the flight data recorder that the pilot and the copilot had been so sure they were somewhere else, that they had ignored the plane’s automated warning system which set off a voice saying “pull up, pull up”, again and again and then had actually gone to the trouble of overriding it and turning it off.

**I wasn’t because I’ve seen it happen. Worse, I’ve done it!**

Brothers and Sisters, when the sermon is being preached, or you are reading the word, and you suddenly that uncomfortable feeling – hey “he’s talking about me!” – LISTEN and ACT.

***The Second Application is Explicit:*** Nebuchadnezzar wrote to tell you about the mighty God who had humbled him, he wrote to turn you to Him, and I hope you already have. But I tell you this, just as was the case with Nebuchadnezzar, you never will do that until your pride is replaced by humility.

It has been my experience that men reject the gospel of Jesus Christ most often because they simply cannot believe that they have need of it. Their pride tells them, you aren't dead in your sins, you are a good man, you are certainly worthy of heaven, you can work your way in. Why do men reject grace? Because it is God's *unmerited* favor. You tell men that they can't earn their salvation, and they get hopping mad.

That is why Arminianism is so much more palatable than Calvinism, if they can't do everything to save themselves, they want to be told they at least did some critical something. The idea that Jesus died on the cross for their sins, and that they can only be saved by his righteousness imputed to them and received by faith alone, chokes our pride. The idea that we were poor, blind, wretches spiritually dead and incapable of doing anything to save ourselves assaults our pride, and until we are broken, we reject it. Jesus comes to you meek and humble and able to save you no matter what your sins, and yet men will not have him they'd rather consult the magicians first to see what they think. Often it isn't until we are thoroughly chopped down to size and left with nothing to plead like the prodigal Son or Nebuchadnezzar that we will come to him. Sometimes the greatest mercy the Lord can do is to do exactly what he did to Nebuchadnezzar break you down and kill your pride.

***For the avoiding of this vice (pride), God suffereth men to fall into other vices, which men abhor and punish, as theft and fornication, and drunkenness, to make them ashamed by these vices, which were not ashamed of pride. - HENRY SMITH***

I hope that you will come to Christ without that, but if that is the only way, then I hope it will happen to you sooner rather than later because you see, I want to see you all in heaven someday.