

We’ve all heard the phrase, “Pride goes before a fall.” In fact, that comes from:

Proverbs 16:18

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

I think we all understand that, because as sure as you say something like, “I’m not going to fall on this slick sidewalk...I’m too agile for that.”



Guess, what’s probably going to happen...like this lady...down you go! And so, it goes with pride!

In his classic book, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis called pride: “Man’s great sin.” He said of “pride:” **“There is no fault which makes a man more unpopular, and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves.”** C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Church, God has a Top 7 when it comes to things that he hates... It’s found in Proverbs 6. At the top of that list: are: “haughty eyes,” (proud look). The half-brother of Jesus said it this way in the N.T.:

James 4:6b

⁶ “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

It’s true: When you’re proud, God fights against you; when you’re humble, God gives you grace. Pride is quite simply, an exaggerated and dishonest view of self. And King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was just such a man. A man who thought he was the source of his power and success as the ruling monarch of the world. And yet, if you’ve been with us, you know Daniel has told him, by way of an interpretation of one of the King’s dreams...that His kingdom would be destroyed. Here’s a depiction we’ve been using to describe that fact.



A stone, coming from heaven...representing the Lord Jesus Himself, will take down all of the Gentile powers, including Nebuchadnezzar's, leaving him as nothing more than dust that would blow away in a summer wind. And it did.

Last week we saw Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to thwart God's plan to take him down, by building a 90-foot-tall golden statue of himself...



demanding everyone bow down and worship it. And when three men didn't, they were thrown into a fiery furnace. **Now, I need to correct something I said in at least one service**, and I think intimidated in all three services. I told you that scholars were in consensus that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, along with Daniel were very likely teenagers when they were hauled off to Babylon. Thus, they would have declined eating the King's meat, as teenagers. However, many scholars believe around 20 years passed between the time of the "meat instance" and the time of the fiery furnace. I was **WRONG** in stating that they were teenagers when they were thrown into the furnace and I had a couple of good brothers point that out to me and I said, "You know what...you're exactly right. I blew that. I missed the math on it. I AM SORRY!" So, I wanted to correct that and apologize for stating that incorrectly last week. And I am grateful that you are Bereans and study the Scriptures and listen so well, to correct me and help me. And I didn't want to be prideful and not admit my fault. ☺

Which goes to our discussion of pride today. For Nebuchadnezzar, he's going to get his due today. The title of our message this morning is: "How the Proud Falls." Let's watch this play out...

[Daniel 4:1-3](#)

¹ King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! ² It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. ³ How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Now, does that strike anyone as strange, as I read that. It did me, because he's praising God. More on that in a moment. Understand this...the King is likely around 45-50 years of age when these events in chapter 4 occur and that would have been about 25-30 years after the fiery furnace event. (See how I'm getting my math right this week! 😊) You should also know...Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon were experiencing a season of great peace and prosperity.

Now, scholars call chapter 4, as Nebuchadnezzar's personal spiritual biography. This is literally a letter that he sent out to the entire Babylonian Empire...we would call it today: a PRESS RELEASE FROM THE KING. But I've got to tell you, it's like he begins at the end of the story with praise to God. So, spoiler alert: He's giving praise to the "Most High God" in what He "has done for me." He starts out his letter saying how thankful He is to God...but, before he can get to that point, he's going to hit rock bottom, and it's another dream that reveals his tumultuous fall to the bottom.

Daniel 4:4-7

⁴ [b] I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. ⁵ I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. ⁶ So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. ⁷ Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation.

Once again, Nebuchadnezzar has had a dream and it's panicked him, like chapter 2. His peace and security have been obliterated by his dream. He's scared to death. So, inexplicably, he calls in the same group of losers he has kept around for decades...the magicians, enchanter and astrologers, but they couldn't tell him anything. Once again, enter Daniel!

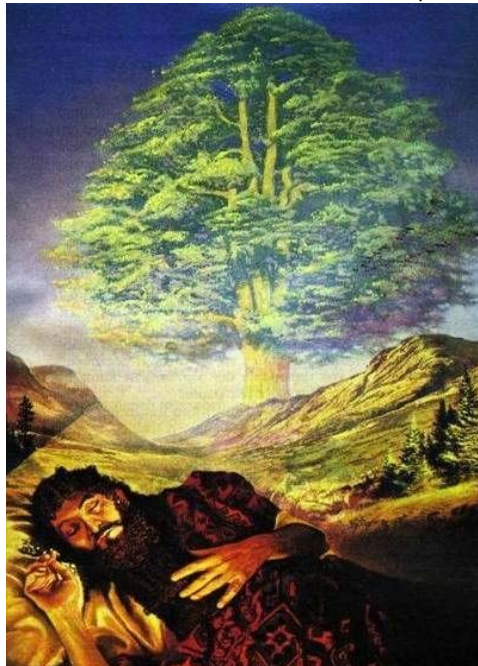
Daniel 4:8-12

⁸ At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods^[c]—and I told him the dream, saying, ⁹ “O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation. ¹⁰ The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. ¹¹ The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. ¹² Its leaves were 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 heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

Trees, even to this day, trees are majestic and powerful, like the giant sequoia trees in California.



So magnificent and beautiful! Trees were often used in ancient times to symbolize great rulers. The tree Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was Nebuchadnezzar, himself. See the depiction:



It was a massive, strong, growing, fruitful tree that provided shade for all the animals and a nesting place for all the birds...and this tree fed the world. But the dream had a second part, and this was the shocker.

Daniel 4:13-16

¹³“I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. ¹⁴He proclaimed aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the

beasts in the grass of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him.

What a dream! No wonder he's frightened! Now again, the "holy one," the angel, cuts down the tree to a stump...but the stump is protected by a band of iron and bronze, meaning: it's got a chance to come back and grow again. But for Nebuchadnezzar...he's going to be relegated to the life of ox or a cow eating grass. His cognitive reasoning abilities are going to leave him and his mind is going to become like that of an animal's. I thought about that...we've got people today, who inexplicably claim to identify as cats, dogs and birds... No, they would never want to be in this condition. This is horrific!

Now you may ask, "What's that phrase, 'seven periods of time pass over him.'" Well, that's seven years. Can you imagine? For a period of seven years, he'll literally going to live like an animal! Nebuchadnezzar continues...

Daniel 4:17-18

¹⁷ The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.¹⁸ This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because 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 gods is in you."

You know, angels are watching us from heaven right now. They are the "watchers" of heaven, and they do the bidding of the Lord. Never forget that we can entertain angels unaware. Nebuchadnezzar, writing this letter, after the fact, sees how God rules the kingdoms of men and gives those kingdoms to whomever He wills. That's a good reminder for us all...God is sovereign and in control of life, not a King, not a President, not a disease, not you...HIM!

Well, Daniel has been listening to all of this and now he's dismayed...

Daniel 4:19

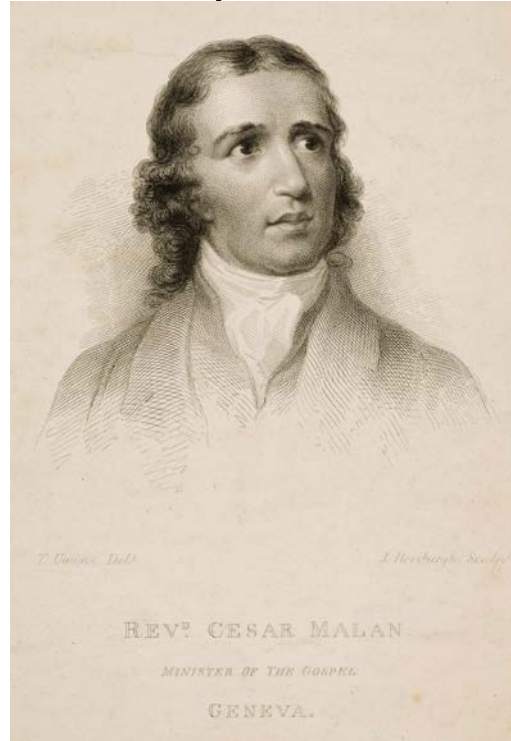
¹⁹ Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!"

Church family, Daniel knew the dream was really bad! It was so bad that he was afraid to tell Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had been working for the King for years by now and he cared for him. Thus, the message he was to deliver would be **delivered with a broken heart!** That's why he said, "May this dream be for your enemies and those who hate you!"

Can you see what Daniel was doing? He wasn't seeking to drop the hammer on Nebuchadnezzar. He's showing compassion. And this is also another great lesson for us. We're to give a reason for our hope in "gentleness and respect," as the Apostle Peter tells us. We know judgment and doom and hell await those who refuse Jesus, but we don't deliver that message in a mean or unkind way...we're not unloving...we show compassion as we deliver that griping message. Daniel was sad for what he had to do.

But at the end of the day, we still have to share the truth...just as Nathan did with David, when he said, "You're the man!" when David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband killed. We have to tell the truth just as John the Baptist did when he told King Herod he was living in adulterous sin with his brother's wife. We must tell the truth!

I was reminded of a story that occurred in London in the 1830's. There was a large gathering of people to hear the famous preacher of that day, César Malan. This man...



At the gathering, there was a young lady who played and sang beautifully. Everyone was mesmerized and charmed by this young lady. Malan asked who the young lady was. He was told she was a local star and was asked to sing, but she wasn't a believer. That surprised him, and so, after the meeting, the minister walked up to the young lady and very graciously, tactfully, yet boldly said: "I thought, as I listened to you tonight, young lady, how tremendously the cause of Christ would be benefited if your talents were dedicated to Him. You know, young lady, you are a sinner in the sight of God, but I'm glad to tell you the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, can cleanse you from all sin."

Well, the young lady was shocked that someone would have the audacity to call her a sinner to her face and she snapped at Cesar Malan, saying, "Who do you think you are?" To which he replied, "Young lady, I mean no offense. I pray God's Spirit will convict you." The young lady was Charlotte Elliott. This lady...



Well, as the story goes. Everyone went home. So did Charlotte, but she couldn't sleep. She would later say in a memoir: "All I could see was the face of the preacher, with his words ringing through

my mind.” At 2 am in the morning, she sprang from her bed. She grabbed a pencil and a piece of paper, and with tears running down her face, Charlotte Elliott, wrote these words:

**Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee
O Lamb of God I come, I come**

Anyone know that song? “Just As I Am.” That would become her testimony, as she devoted the rest of her life to Jesus. One other comment on this song...on Nov. 1, 1934, in Charlotte, NC a young man, just 6 days before his 16th birthday, was sitting under a tent after hearing the preaching of evangelist Mordecai Ham...was drawn to come forward as the choir sang: “Just As I Am.” Does anyone recognize that young man?



That would be Billy Graham...and that song would be sung at every revival he ever preached, as the greatest evangelist of our time. I'm so thankful for the kind courage of preacher, Cesar Malan...who was compassionate enough to confront Charlotte Elliott with the truth: you're a sinner, but Jesus loves you. I confront you with the same truth, we're all sinners in need of Christ!

Well, Daniel was showing great compassion and he speaks to the King:

Daniel 4:20-27

²⁰ The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth, ²¹ whose leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the heavens lived—²² it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth. ²³ And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven periods of time pass over him,' ²⁴ this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, ²⁵ that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. ²⁶ And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. ²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you:

break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

Wow! Daniel did the same thing that Cesar Malan did for Charlotte Elliott...he told the truth... REPENT! TURN FROM YOU SIN! But Nebuchadnezzar's initial reaction was like Charlotte's. He refused to repent. And Church, I really believe if he would have repented, he could have avoided all of this trouble. But he wouldn't listen!

Daniel 4:28-29

²⁸ All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.

Let me stop here...do you see how gracious and patient God is? He gave Nebuchadnezzar a full year to repent. It reminded me of Noah's day:



He preached for decades giving the people opportunity after opportunity to repent before the Flood. But they didn't. Church, God is patient and gracious and doesn't want anyone to perish. Just think how gracious the Lord is being to those of you her today who aren't saved!!

Daniel 4:30

³⁰ and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"

See the depiction...



Nebuchadnezzar looking over his kingdom from his palace, with the Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and streets so massive, (like 16-lane highways) scholars tells us chariots drawn by horses, 4-wide could pass on those streets, and the mighty Euphrates River ran right by his palace, and he thought: I'M THE MAN! LOOK AT ALL I'VE DONE! Well...

Daniel 4:31-33

³¹ While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, ³² and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will." ³³ Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws.

Take a look at this depiction...



So sad!!! There he is...the most powerful man in the world, eating grass like an ox. Nebuchadnezzar had contracted the DISEASE OF ME! He was a most pitiful sight for seven years. But remember the

interpretation...he would be restored. So, who do you think kept things going for 7 years? Well, we're not told, but if you ask me...that would have been Daniel. Nobody laid a hand on his throne because God protected it, so that it would be given back to him. Watch...

Daniel 4:34-37

³⁴ At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, 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, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay 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 majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

He finally got the message, didn't he? He was humbled and turned to God. Can I tell you something? I believe Nebuchadnezzar is in heaven today. I really do, and I believe we'll see him one day with Daniel and Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego. Oh, how the proud fall and one day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Because you see, this is the truth, event today, without Jesus, we're all groping around in this life like animals, destined for eternal punishment. So, the best thing anyone can do is come Just as I am, without one plea, just like Charlotte Elliott and Nebuchadnezzar.