

“THE HUMILIATION OF THE POMPOUS”

DANIEL 4:1-27

Theme: The Lord desires that all men yield to His authority.

I. The Humiliation Was Profitable – 4:1-3

A. *THE DESIRE OF THE HUMBLD* – vv. 1-2

1. It seems that this section was written by Nebuchadnezzar himself as a testimony of what was accomplished in his own life through the events to be recorded in the chapter.
2. It is in the form of an edict or proclamation with formal terminology.
3. *“Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: ‘May your peace abound! It has seemed good to me to declare the sign and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.’”*
4. This is a testimony by the humbled man Nebuchadnezzar concerning the work of grace done in his heart by the Lord.
5. In essence, he is providing an opportunity for all to see exactly why he had been absent from his throne for the past seven years – and to demonstrate that he’d learned his proper place in the universe.

B. *THE DELIGHT OF THE HUMBLD* – v. 3

1. *“How great are His signs and how mighty are His wonders!”* – a testimony to the unique power that the God of Heaven possesses.
2. In v. 2, he states *“it has seemed good to me ...”* – literally this reads “was beautiful before me.”
3. *“His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.”* – a contrasting statement to the frailty and temporary nature of the authority of men.
4. God’s rule is stable, unchanging, and eternal.

II. The Humiliation Was Prescribed – 4:4-18

A. *THE DESCRIPTION OF THE ARROGANT* – vv. 4-12

1. Nebuchadnezzar begins his testimony by describing himself as a highly successful ruler who knew nothing but prosperity, peace, and absolute power.
 - a) He describes his prosperity outright: he was *“flourishing in*

my palace ..."

b) The other features of his condition at the time are gleaned from the introduction to his dream:

(1) His Power: *"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."*

(2) His Peace: *"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 birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it."*

2. However, during his pomposity, God reached out of Heaven and gave him a dream that *"made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me."*

3. Nebuchadnezzar then demands an explanation from *"all the wise men of Babylon"* only to discover that *"they could not make its interpretation known."*

4. To highlight the inability of the natural man to perceive the things of God, Daniel waits to enter the king's presence until all those from Babylon had failed – then he enters – cp. v. 8.

5. Nebuchadnezzar immediately recognizes that this dream is of significant consequence and calls on Daniel to provide him an interpretation since *"I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you."*

B. THE DEGRADATION OF THE ARROGANT – vv. 13-18

1. Amid this the king recounts the description of his prosperity, power and peace recorded in the dream.

2. However, he adds that he *"was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, and angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven."*

3. This was a transitional point moving from a picture of an arrogant, self-dependent autocrat to one of a man of tremendous trauma.

4. Immediately the angel called for the degrading of the pompous tree with the command to *"cut 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."*

5. Then a description was provided concerning the state of the *"tree"* after its humiliation:

a) Hope of restoration is provided at the outset through the

statement: *“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”* (referring to a fence protecting it from destruction).

- b) Then a condition known as “lycanthropy” was described wherein a person thinks of himself as some kind of animal and lives accordingly.
 - (1) He will not seek shelter – *“let him be drenched with the dew of heaven.”*
 - (2) He will eat vegetables – *“let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.”*
 - (3) He will not be able to reason – *“Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let a beast’s mind be given to him.”*
- c) This condition would last while *“seven periods of time pass over him”* – referring to seven years.

III. The Humiliation Was Purposeful – 4:19-27

A. *THE ANTICIPATION OF HUMILIATION* – vv. 19-26

1. Daniel becomes astonished at being oriented to what God has in mind to humble the king and *“was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him.”*
2. It was revealed that the angels had announced this “sentence” so that Nebuchadnezzar could *“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.”*
3. Once again, as Daniel delivers the interpretation of the dream, he concludes by stating the *“the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.”*
4. God wanted all the arrogant, of whom Nebuchadnezzar serves as a personification (cp. the dream of Daniel 2), to learn a lesson that they are not independent of their accountabilities to the true Sovereign – cp. **Psalm 2:1-6**.
5. This lesson is not merely for kings, but for all of us who arrogantly kick against the will of God in our lives – choosing the live according to our own direction and control – cp. **Acts 26:13-19**.

B. *THE APPEAL FOR HUMILITY* – v. 27

1. In light of this, Daniel appeals to Nebuchadnezzar to humble

himself so that God would not have to do so.

2. He calls on the king to *“break away now from your sins”* – that is to repent, and *“by doing righteousness”* and to further repent *“from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor.”*
3. Daniel’s hope is that *“there may be a prolonging of your prosperity”* – that is, that God would not find it necessary to humiliate the king.
4. Once again, this same advice is provided us through the pen of James who admonishes men to humble themselves before the Lord – cp. **James 4:8-10**.

The Lord desires that all men yield to His authority.