

Daniel 4:28-37 - Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

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COURSE COMMENTARY



4:28-30 - Power of Pride

- **God's Word is Sure**

Nebuchadnezzar failed to appreciate that the dream and Daniel's interpretation were **inspired**.

At this verse, the narration switches from that of the king (in the **first-person**) to that of an objective observer relating the period of the king's madness (in the **third-person**).

- **A Full Year to Respond**

Nebuchadnezzar failed to respond after a full year.

God's eventual judgment is based on two factors: (1) judgment due for godless behavior; (2) the need for judgment is confirmed by a lack of repentance.

The temporary suspension of God's judgment rarely produces repentance. Generally, it is misinterpreted or abused, and even used as a reason to mock God (2Pe. 3:4).

"About the royal palace" is better translated as "upon the royal palace." Nebuchadnezzar may have been walking on the flat roof of his palace (cf. 2S. 11:2), from where he would be afforded an unobstructed view of the notable features of the city. He may have been walking amidst the famous hanging gardens he had built for his wife.

- **Prideful Words**

"Great Babylon, that I have built."

When Nebuchadnezzar spoke these words, Babylon was at the historical apex of its influence and wealth.

"By my mighty power" could be translated, "by the strength of my forceful rule (or wealth)."

Pride: misappropriates the glory due God (Ps 127:1; 1Cor. 1:21).

Nebuchadnezzar failed to recognize that his accomplishments and station in history had their origin in God's purpose (Jer. 20:4; 21:10; 22:25; 27:6; 28:14; 32:3, 28; 34:2, 21; 44:30; Eze. 29:19-20.)

Ultimately, pride is a form of *insanity* —a disconnection from reality. Consider the blinding pride of Satan (Eze. 28:12-15; Isa. 14:14; Rev. 16:13-14).

4:31-37 - From Pride to Humility

- **The Kingdom has Departed!**

At the apex of Nebuchadnezzar's career, God's judgment fell (cf. Luke 12:16-21)!

- **Seven Years of Madness**

As discussed in [Session 14](#), Nebuchadnezzar was afflicted with **boanthropy** and grazed like a domestic animal for seven years.

- **Heading: Lifted Eyes**

At the end of "seven times," probably about one year before his death: *ca.* 563 B.C.

Lifting the eyes is mentioned first, implying that it signified an awareness, even in his afflicted condition, of a dependence upon heaven.

This is when Abraham found the divinely-provided ram caught in a thicket by its horns (Gen. 22:13) and Jacob received divine revelation concerning how to multiply his flocks (Gen. 31:10).

The foundation of repentance: *acknowledging our sin, agreeing with God's evaluation of our condition* (Luke 15:16-17).

In recognizing God, Nebuchadnezzar no longer occupied the place of a beast (cf. Dan. 7:4).

- **God is Sovereign!**

Nebuchadnezzar's words indicate a radical transformation has taken place!

God, not Nebuchadnezzar, is sovereign: "the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing... no one can restrain His hand, or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"

All of us are tempted to question God, yet we must remember that God's will must not be challenged. We may not understand it, we may chafe under it, but the vast distance in glory, power, and intellect between the Creator and His fallen creatures calls for the utmost reverence and respect on our part. This is especially true as we attempt to understand human responsibility in light of God's sovereignty (Romans 9:19-20).

- **Nebuchadnezzar's Rule Restored**

"My counselors and nobles resorted to me" - how was the kingdom preserved during Nebuchadnezzar's madness? Perhaps: (1) his son, Amēl-Marduk, served as coregent; (2) the Queen stood in with Daniel's help; (3) the infrastructure of government could run reasonably well without the king.

Why no coup? Nobles and counselors may have feared reprisals if Nebuchadnezzar was restored as predicted. Also: most of them would likely lose their positions when a new leader rose to power.

- **Honoring the King of Heaven**

Was Nebuchadnezzar saved? Many commentators believe he was.

Evidence in favor of salvation: (1) honoring God rather than Daniel; (2) praising God using phrases reminiscent of the Psalms; (3) growth in knowledge of God (although incomplete); (4)

Long Fingernails of Chinese Doctor (1920)



Long fingernails on the left hand of a Chinese doctor, ca. 1920 Image courtesy of Pierce, C.C. (Charles C.), 1861-1946. Image is in the public domain.

transformation in world-view, worshipful, submitted; (5) contrasted with Belshazzar in next chapter (Dan. 5:20-22); (6) treatment of Jeremiah (Jer. 39:11-12).

Application

- **Fallen Human Nature is Beastly**

Before coming to Christ, we are all like Nebuchadnezzar: we think highly of ourselves until God reveals our pride and sinful inclinations.

- **God's Global Concern for the Lost**

“God’s concern for persons in every part of the world may also be observed here. Even in pagan Babylon there was a witness—spiritual light—to the power and reality of Yahweh. Nebuchadnezzar and all his subjects were precious to the Lord and were granted a revelation capable of leading them to salvation (cf. 1 Tim 2:4).”

- **Evangelization Requires Patience**

On God’s part and our own.

- **The Blessing of Faithful Friends**

The preservation of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign during his period of madness is extraordinary and could not have happened apart from the loyalty of his court. There can be little doubt that Daniel’s faithful support of the king had a great deal to do with the preservation of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom and his restoration. “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Pr. 17:17).

- **God Opposes the Proud**

So long as we exhibit a prideful attitude, we are of little use to God. Calvin observed, “In God we are anything he pleases, in ourselves we are nothing.” “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble” (Jas. 4:6b). “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Mat. 23:12). The apex of Nebuchadnezzar’s spiritual and personal development occurs in this chapter: when he finally realizes he is nothing apart from God.

- **God Responds to Repentance**

When God gives a warning we continue to ignore, He is forced to bring judgment.

Nevertheless, once we do repent, He quickly responds with forgiveness and restoration (Eze. 18:21-23).

Principles for Living

