

Explore the Bible: February 6

Humility Required • Daniel 4:28-37

By Wayne VanHorn



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Our lesson truth is, “Believers must be careful to honor God in all things.” Honoring God is impossible when pride is in play. Today, we go back to around 565 BC to discover how God humbled the world’s most powerful man.

Shortly before his demise in 562 BC, Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar was filled with pride over his accomplishments. Daniel 4:1-27 sets the stage for the judgment on Nebuchadnezzar implemented by God, 12 months after Daniel had interpreted his dream.

These verses contain Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, highlights the inability of the Babylonian wise men to interpret the dream, and Daniel’s revelation of the dream’s meaning.

Pride declared (Dan. 4:28-30). Everything Daniel revealed about Nebuchadnezzar’s dream happened as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace (Dan. 4:28-29 CSB). What sin had Nebuchadnezzar committed? He was guilty of hubris.

He referred to Babylon as “the great,” claiming credit for building the city as his royal residence, and doing so by the “might of my power and for the glory of my majesty” (4:30). The king credited himself with Babylon’s greatness and smugly suggested his majesty alone should be glorified.

Those sentiments are contrary to the truth that God alone establishes kingdoms and He alone is to be glorified. How often do we rob God of the glory of His majesty by nurturing our own pride? As in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, God stands ready to offer a lesson in humility when we let pride swell within us.

Reality defined (Dan. 4:31-33). God always judges sin; He alone determines the timing. Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which Daniel accurately interpreted, was a warning in advance of judgment. The 12 months that passed between interpretation and implementation (4:29) gave the king ample time to humble himself.

Nebuchadnezzar's words revealed his pride (4:30), resulting in judgment (4:31). The same pride that provoked God to give the dream to Nebuchadnezzar had reached the tipping point of divine discipline. The voice that "came from heaven" signified the divine pronouncement of judgment: "the kingdom has departed from you" (4:31). The verb, "departed" indicates a completed action.

The form of judgment would be a seven-year ("seven periods of time") bout with insanity, wherein the once proud king would be reduced to living with wild animals and feeding on grass (4:32).

The only cure was for the king to come to the point of acknowledging the Most High, Daniel's God, as "ruler over human kingdoms." Included in that acknowledgment was the understanding that the one true God could give any kingdom to anyone He wanted.

The phrase "at that moment" reinforces the timeliness of God's discipline of the great king, paralleling "while the words were still in the king's mouth" (4:31). His judgment was exactly as Daniel had foreseen. The king was driven from human society, began eating grass, and was drenched with dew.

As the seven-year judgment progressed, Nebuchadnezzar began to

look like a creature. His hair had grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws (4:33). The one true God defined Nebuchadnezzar's reality. Instead of being great and due the glory of his majesty, the once proud king was reduced to living like a wild animal, a lesser class of being.

Honor given (Dan. 4:34-37). It took seven years, but the king learned his lesson. His hubris had been muted, enabling him to look "up to heaven." His sanity returned (4:34). What does a humble, sane person do? Nebuchadnezzar "praised the Most High and honored and glorified" Him.

The king acknowledged that Daniel's God "lives forever," His "dominion is an everlasting dominion," and His "kingdom is from generation to generation."

As a result of his newly-found humility, Nebuchadnezzar gave glory to God rather than to himself. He proclaimed that "all the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing" and he acknowledged God's sovereignty by saying, "he does what he wants with the army of heaven and the inhabitants of earth" (4:35). No human hand is powerful enough to "block his hand" or say to him "What have you done?"

In Daniel 4:36, the king indicated that his mental health and royal standing returned to him as God reestablished him over his kingdom, and in an even greater way. Nebuchadnezzar was a new man and for now, he praised, exalted, and glorified "the King of the heavens" (4:37).

God's works are true; His ways are just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride.

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