

THE KING'S PRIDE BROUGHT LOW

BIBLE TEXT : Daniel 4:1-37.

LESSON 421 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom" (Proverbs 11:2).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Daniel 4:1-37

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.

2 I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me.

3 How great *are* his signs! and how mighty *are* his wonders! his kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion *is* from generation to generation.

4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace:

5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.

6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise *men* of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream.

7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.

8 But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom *is* the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, *saying*,

9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that

Bible References:

Notes:

Conquest

Some of the most fascinating true stories ever written are in the Book of Daniel. The fourth chapter is our lesson today, and it is told by King Nebuchadnezzar, a powerful world ruler at that time.

While Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nabopolassar, was king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar had taken his armies hundreds of miles over mountains, through valleys and deserts, to bring back booty from nations far west of Babylon. On his way he defeated the Egyptian army that had gone north to make war against Assyria. After that victory, Nebuchadnezzar turned south and took over Syria, Tyre and Palestine.

Nebuchadnezzar took what he wanted of the vast treasures of these countries and of the most able and smartest of the people he took captive to his own country of Babylon.

The Devil's Demands

Nebuchadnezzar required the kings of these conquered lands to send him a certain amount of gold, silver or goods each year as tribute. He stationed some of his own soldiers there to see that the tribute he demanded was sent. How much like the devil as he captures men and women in this life! Sometimes he captures the most able and smartest boys and girls and brings them into his own kingdom where they must work for him. He leaves some of his imps around to see that they are always into devilment and aiding his cause.

Spoils of War

Nebuchadnezzar had gone as far south as Egypt where he heard his father had died, so he hurried home to Babylon and took the throne as absolute monarch of the empire of Babylon. Its rich farm lands lay between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers. Farmers, builders and scientists were among the great men of the land.

Nebuchadnezzar used the spoils of war to fortify and beautify Babylon. He built waterways, reservoirs, wharfs, and cities. For his beautiful queen whose home had been in the mountainous country of Media, Nebuchadnezzar built the hanging gardens that were among the seven wonders of the ancient world.

These gardens were terraces planted with flowers, shrubs and trees. Water was raised from the Euphrates by hydraulic pumps to water the gardens.

The God of the Hebrews

When Nebuchadnezzar and his army had invaded the little country of Judæa in the southern part of Palestine, he robbed the beautiful Temple that Solomon had built. He took some of the golden vessels that had been consecrated to the service of God

the spirit of the holy gods *is* in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.

10 Thus *were* the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof *was* great.

11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth:

12 The leaves thereof *were* fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it *was* meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven;

14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:

15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* his portion *be* with the beasts in the grass of the earth:

16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.

17 This matter *is* by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to

and put them in the temple of his god in Babylon. Of the choicest of the people he took to be his servants. Among these were Daniel and his three friends.

These young men were quick to learn, and for three years Nebuchadnezzar had them study the wisdom and science of Babylon so they could be helpers in his kingdom. As they served the king and were faithful and honest in all they did, Nebuchadnezzar came to know about the God whom these Hebrew people served.

As you who are Christians are faithful and honest in school and among your playmates, some will come to know about the God whom you serve and may be won for the Lord.

Pride

When Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of his dream about the golden image, Daniel told the king that God had revealed the dream and its meaning, and Nebuchadnezzar had acknowledged and honoured God. Then when Daniel's three friends were in the fiery furnace Nebuchadnezzar had seen Jesus, the Son of God, walking with them, and he had recognised God. Yet Nebuchadnezzar did not want to say that God had given him his place as king of Babylon. Nearly everyone who is not truly a Christian wants to take more credit or honour to himself than he gives to God. Such a person goes around as Nebuchadnezzar did, saying or thinking, "See what I have done!"

Humility

Nebuchadnezzar learned that God does not like people to be proud, and He is able to humble those who have a big opinion of themselves. God is the doer of all things and He resists or stands against people who take credit or honour for the things God Himself helps them to do or does for them; but He gives grace -- the grace of salvation -- to everyone who humbles himself (I Peter 5:5).

God wants everyone in all the world to be saved, but He cannot save anyone who will not humble himself. When a person is lifted up in his own eyes, thinking he can make a success of life without God's help, God cannot help him. That one is so very busy arranging his own affairs that God is crowded out. There is no room for Him to help.

Gratitude

If you make good grades in school, or if you earn money to buy your clothes and your needs by having a paper route, by baby-sitting, or picking fruit in the summer, it is because God has given you a mind and health and strength to do these things.

If in the morning, at noon and night, you remember to thank God for the food He provides, for your good home, for the clothes you have, for His protection as you go to and from school and work, the devil will not have so much opportunity to try to make you proud.

The Dream

God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream of a great tree so big that it could be seen in all the earth. This tree bore enough fruit to feed everyone in the world, and its branches and leaves were protection to all the birds, animals, and all people. In his dream the king saw what was called a "watcher," which we believe was an angelic messenger from Heaven, saying that the tree should be cut down and the fruit scattered and all the birds and beasts

whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise *men* of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou *art* able; for the spirit of the holy gods *is* in thee.

19 Then Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream *be* to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth;

21 Whose leaves *were* fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it *was* meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation:

22 It *is* thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.

23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* his portion *be* with the

that had been enjoying its fruit and its shade should get out from under it. It should not be dug up, but its roots should be left in the field where the dew of Heaven would keep it alive. This was to be done so that people would know that God is the ruler of the earth, and He is the One who permits kings, presidents, and rulers to be put in their places.

The Interpretation

When the other wise men of Nebuchadnezzar's court could not tell him what the dream meant, Daniel came. When he was told of the dream, Daniel's thoughts were troubled. For a long time he did not say anything. It was bad news for the king. Did Daniel dare tell him the truth? Yes, Daniel was true to his conscience as he had been from the time he was first brought as a captive to Babylon. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar he was the tree that was big and strong, but he would be driven from his palace and for seven years would live as the beasts of the field until he knew that it was God who had set him up and God who set him down.

The fact that the roots of the tree were left in the ground was a sign that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be restored to him at the end of the seven years when he acknowledged that God rules in the affairs of men.

Warning Unheeded

Daniel urged King Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his sins and do good that God might forgive him. God gave him a whole year in which to pray and humble himself, but the king did not pray.

One day as Nebuchadnezzar walked in his palace and looked out over the great city of Babylon, forgetting God, he rejoiced in the things he had done. He boasted, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" As he was still speaking, the judgment about which he had been warned began to come to pass. The king was driven from his beautiful palace just as Daniel had warned he would be if he did not repent. He lived in the fields, eating grass as the cows do, his hair grew until it was like eagles' feathers, and his fingernails grew to be like birds' claws.

Restored

But just as the dream had foretold, after seven years Nebuchadnezzar's mind was restored and he was honoured as king again. Do you know why God gave back to Nebuchadnezzar a good mind and set him up as king again? It was because that at last Nebuchadnezzar gave glory and honour to God and was willing to say that God is the ruler of the world, and it is God who sets up people and puts them down.

A Testimony

Nebuchadnezzar wrote to all the people of the earth to tell them how the God of Heaven brought him low when he was lifted up with pride. Nebuchadnezzar's message is a testimony of God's goodness, of the wonders God had shown the king and of God's right and power to be King of the earth. It is very much like a testimony you might give in church of the goodness of God that brought you to repentance, to a place where you realised your own weakness and God's right to rule and reign in your heart and life.

Uncertainty of Life

Do you feel safe in your youth and strength? If you are not

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 is come upon my lord the king:

25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

31 While the word *was* in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they

saved, God calls you to repent of your sins and get saved. Your comfortable and favourable circumstances could change over night by such an unexpected happening as your body being mangled by an automobile accident or by such an unexpected visitor as Death taking your father or mother to Heaven. Then would you be able to pray with confidence, or would you have to repent of the sin and pride of your heart before God would hear you?

QUESTIONS

1. Can you name some of the countries that Nebuchadnezzar conquered?
2. What are some of the improvements Nebuchadnezzar made in his own country with the spoils of war?
3. From what country was Daniel taken captive?
4. Whom does God resist and to whom does He give grace?
5. Why is it important for us to be grateful to God for the things He does for us?
6. Did Daniel's interpretation of the dream come to pass?
7. How could Nebuchadnezzar have avoided the judgment that God showed him was coming?
8. How can any one of us avoid the judgment of God against pride?

shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' *feathers*, and his nails like birds' *claws*.

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.