

Nebuchadnezzar Believes

The fourth chapter of Daniel is very unusual in the pages of scripture. It is the personal testimony of a king - from king Nebuchadnezzar to the Babylonian nation. God had visited the king earlier in a dream and revealed the future of the empires that would follow his kingdom. But the king did not understand that Daniel's God was the God of gods. His gods were nothing and meaningless because they were made by man from the forest. Jeremiah the prophet said, "Because it is wood cut from the forest, The work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. They decorate it with silver and with gold; They fasten it with nails and with hammers So that it will not totter. Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, For they can do no harm, Nor can they do any good." (NASB, Jer. 10:3-5). In Daniel 3 God had to rescue Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego from the fire because they would not worship a man made image. Nebuchadnezzar was angry but God controls fire and everything else. The king did not completely understand. So in Daniel 4, God visits the king again with a dream and then a very personal punishment to get his attention.

THE INTRODUCTION. Here is Nebuchadnezzar's introduction of his testimony to the Babylonian Empire.

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 signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me. 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." (NASB) Dan. 4:1-3

The words from this man are exciting. "The Most High God has done for Me!" "Mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." These are not the words of a king

who was worshipping the chief Babylonian god Marduk. Nebuchadnezzar has a change of heart. He has finally recognized the Most High God.

HIS TESTIMONY. What did the population think when they read the king's words?

I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners came in, and I related the dream to them; but they could not make its inter-



pretation known to me. But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying, O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation. Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. 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. 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 the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it. I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven. He shouted out and spoke as follows: "Chop 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. 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 . . . (NASB) Dan. 4:4-15a

The king called in the local false prophets and demon empowered magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners but they were not successful again. The demonic world was not able to interpret this divine dream. The king's heart rejoiced when Daniel arrived. Daniel was called the chief of the magicians, a title given to him by the king. Just imagine how these men must have felt. Here is an Old Testament saint in the demonic pit of Babylon and he is more highly recognized than Satan's men. What a contrast! This is the power of God - the work of the Holy Spirit.

The king then described the dream of a tree which provides protection and security. It is chopped down and stripped but the stump and roots of the tree are left in place. Then comes our first clue that the tree is a person.

. . . and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his

mind be changed from that of a man, and let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him. This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers, and the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may 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." "This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you." (NASB) Dan. 4:15b-18

This person will become like a beast of the field and will remain that way until he understands and admits that the Most High God makes people to be either successes or failures. Do you think you are responsible for your own success at work, at church, or any other place? Nebuchadnezzar did! This is a message for all of us.

THE INTERPRETATION. Daniel respected the king and cared for the man. When he heard the dream, he immediately knew the message and he was grieved.

"Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.'" . . . (NASB) Dan. 4:19a-27

The king understood that the message was bad, and encouraged Daniel to proceed anyway.

"Belteshazzar answered and said, 'My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you, and its interpretation to your adversaries! The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth, and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged-- it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the

earth. And in that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it; 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, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him; this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king; that you be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time

will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes. And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will

be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules. Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness, and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.’ (NASB) Dan. 4:19b-27

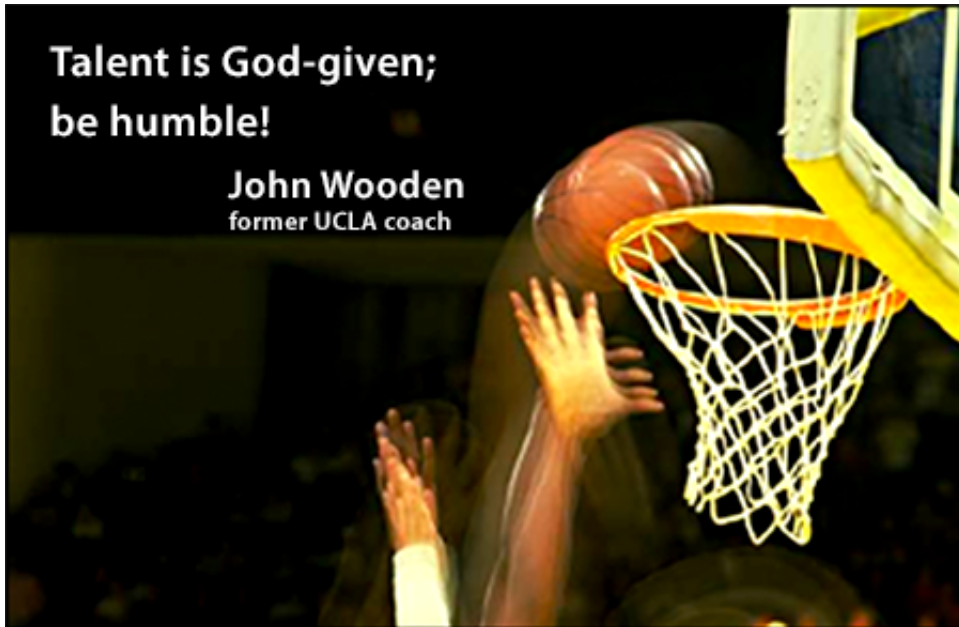
Daniel sent the message loudly and clearly. God is in control of even our successes. He was in control of Nebuchadnezzar’s successes, wealth, and fame. God had been trying since chapter two to move the king’s heart from his idols to the true God and now God must use suffering and humiliation to do it. Sometimes God must use suffering and pain to change us

because we will not change on our own. What a warning for us! When we face a trial of suffering, we usually want to know why it is happening and how long it will last. I believe that God usually gives us warnings before discipline comes - just as He did the king. But even with suffering staring the king in the face, God showed the king mercy by predicting that he would finally yield and humble himself. But it took him seven years.

Daniel again showed his heart for the king and suggested that he pursue holiness and care for the poor. Maybe God would not cause him to suffer.

HIS HUMILIATION. But the king did not listen. Today

God warns us with His Word and by His Holy Spirit Who speaks to us in our spirit. Have you ever had a sense or a nagging conviction that you should do something or that you should not commit a certain sin? The Holy Spirit may be warning you.



For this king, God spoke directly to him through Daniel. Sometimes we do not listen - the king did not listen. So he will suffer - sometimes we do!

“All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’ While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the

beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.' Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws." (NASB) Dan. 4:28-33

Archaeology has discovered the following inscription from Nebuchadnezzar on an artifact called the Gratefend Cylinder,

"Then built I the place, the seat of my royalty, the bond of the race of men, the dwelling of joy and rejoicing . . ."

The king was proud - "built I"? He did not listen and suffered for it. Berossus and Megasthense, fourth century writers, say that a Babylonian king suffered an unusual illness of madness. There are various views about which illness the king suffered. What disease he suffered is not important. God could have created a unique one just for this man. But history records that the king was proud and he did suffer.

But at the end of that period I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward 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 And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?' At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I

was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride." (NASB) Dan. 4:34-37

CONCLUSION. The king finally understood. I believe we will see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven some day. These words of the king are unique. It is his testimony about how he finally came to believe God and cling to Him only. He also discovered two important truths. The first truth is that if God does not help us succeed, we will not succeed! God is our success! God is my real employer. Here is a verse for us to remember,

Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. (NASB) Psalms 127:1

The second lesson he learned - a lesson we all need to learn is that God,

. . . IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. (NASB) James 4:6

Have you ever felt that God was working against you? When we are proud and take credit that belongs to God, He may be working against us. Proud parents, proud church leaders, proud managers of organizations may find that God will start working against them. Early in Nebuchadnezzar's career God worked with him. But eventually God worked against him until the king KNEW WHO did it all.

Humility is submission to and dependence on God!