

DANIEL

Lesson 7: Daniel 4:1-37
Pride Pill

D4 = HARD TO SWALLOW PRIDE PILL

- Solving a hunger problem is fairly straight-forward.
- But how do you handle a proud man? This is no small challenge.
- And the stakes are high! Opposition vs. Help!
- James 4:6: *God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.* **Imagine taking on God!**

A SEVERE MERCY

- God is going to show mercy to Neb in the form of a season of insanity. It will be hard but good.
- Neb thinks he is awesome because of externals.
- He is not. He has simply been blessed by God. All that he enjoys and has accomplished are the product of God's goodness, not his prowess.

- Not all respond well to pride treatment - Pharaoh.
- **1st encounter:** Exodus 5:2: *But Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and besides, I will not let Israel go."*
- **Before plague 8 (locusts):** Exodus 10:3: *Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.'"*

BACKGROUND TO DANIEL 4

- *Babylonian Chronicles* only cover the 1st 11 years of Neb's rule. Nothing of this sort mentioned.
- More endish? Daniel 4:29–30: *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?"*

BACKGROUND TO DANIEL 4

- This chapter is a confession from Neb, much of it in the 1st person, in the form of an open letter.
- Daniel has included Neb's confession in his book. The Bible is inspired but does, in a few places, cite original works. See Ezra 4:11; 7:12 (letters to/from Artaxerxes). Where these are quoted, the inspired account reports what was actually said / done.

BACKGROUND TO DANIEL 4

- Daniel interpreted the dream, one year later Neb goes off the rails, seven years (?) later he recovers – 8 year total process. Could have ended sooner?
- Neb bookends his account with benedictions.
- These capture the conclusion Neb reached by the end of the seven periods of time.

BACKGROUND TO DANIEL 4

- Daniel 4:1–3: *"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 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."*

BACKGROUND TO DANIEL 4

- Daniel 4:34–35, 37: *“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.***

BACKGROUND TO DANIEL 4

- Daniel 4:34–35, 37: *“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 have You done?’ ...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.**”*

BACKGROUND TO DANIEL 4

- Are these the words of a man whom we will meet in heaven?
- No sure, but know this: You cannot approach God through self-sufficiency but in total dependence.
- James 4:6: *God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- Neb was basking in ease at the palace.
- Experienced a frightening night dream.
- Summoned the usual plus a new group, the “diviners” (Astrologers).
- Shared the dream but no interpretation.

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- Daniel not in this group – higher office?
- Massive tree reflecting Neb's ego (global!)
- A “watcher” (angelic being) authorizes the felling and disposal of the tree.
- The stump is retained with a metal band (forestry practice uncertain).

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- Shifts from tree to “him” – so its personal.
- **Goal** – Daniel 4:17: *“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.”*
- God is humbling Neb for the benefit of the living!

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- Charles Spurgeon: “Most men quarrel with this [the sovereignty of God]. But mark, the thing that you complain of in God is the very thing that you love in yourselves. Every man likes to feel that he has a right to do with his own as he pleases. We all like to be little sovereigns. Oh, for a spirit that bows always before the sovereignty of God.”

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- Daniel finds the meaning disturbing and is hesitant to share it – there is some warmth between them?
- You are the tree, you will be chopped down “*until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes*” (Daniel 4:25).

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- Daniel suggests, “Why wait! Deal with it now!”
- Daniel 4:27: *“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.”*
- God uses consequences as we require.

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- Neb did not take Daniel’s advice. Pride blinds.
- One year later: Babylon (my life’s work) is a testament to my might and my glory. “It’s all about me!”
- The vision is immediately and fully realized.
- Daniel kept the kingdom intact? Banded stump?

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- This is illness with a purpose.
- How interesting that Neb sinks to beast level – In 2:38, Neb was declared the ruler of beasts, now he has become one.
- There came a moment when something clicked in Neb’s heart.

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- Daniel 4:34: *“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.”*

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- Daniel 4:37: *“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.”*
- I choose to praise, exalt, and honor the one who justifiably and reliably nailed my pride and brought me to a place of humble dependence on Him.

KEY FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

- In essence, Nebuchadnezzar is expressing gratitude for severe mercy that reveals pride.
- God did not do this just for Neb. He is a poster child for all who live of the danger of pride.
- So thank God for severe mercies that remind you of your complete dependence on Him.

WAYS TO COMBAT PRIDE

- Psalm 36:1-2: *Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes. For it flatters him in his own eyes concerning the discovery of his iniquity and the hatred of it.*
- **Replace “me” with “Thee” as the One whose approval matters!**

WAYS TO COMBAT PRIDE

- Hosea 13:5-6: *I cared for you in the wilderness, in the land of drought. As they had their pasture, they became satisfied, and being satisfied, their heart became proud; Therefore, they forgot Me.*
- **Make Praise Your Practice:** Always express gratefulness for God’s gifts.

WAYS TO COMBAT PRIDE

- Deuteronomy 17:18-20: *Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, ...that his heart may not be lifted up.*
- Journal to affirm what God says matters most.

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