

## 5. From Pride to Humility (1Q 2020—Daniel)

**Biblical Material:** Dan. 4:1–33, Prov. 14:31, 2 Kings 20:2–5, Jonah 3:10, Dan. 4:34–37, Phil. 2:1–11.

### Quotes

- As long as a man is thinking of God as an Examiner who has set him a sort of paper to do, or as the opposite party in a sort of bargain—as long as he is thinking of claims and counterclaims between himself and God—he is not yet in the right relation to Him. He is misunderstanding what he is and what God is. And he cannot get into the right relation until he has discovered the fact of our bankruptcy. *C. S. Lewis*
- But here steps in Satan, the eternal rebel, the first free-thinker and emancipator of worlds. He makes man ashamed of his bestial ignorance and obedience; he emancipates him, stamps upon his brow the seal of liberty and humanity, in urging him to disobey and eat of the fruit of knowledge. *Mikhail A. Bakunin*
- There is a commandment against bearing false witness against my neighbor. Is there no commandment against bearing false witness against God? If I were a god, I would reserve my greatest wrath, not for those who ignored me, nor for those who contradicted me, but for those who falsely quoted me. *Martin B. Brilliant*

### Questions

Why is God continuing to deal with Nebuchadnezzar—shouldn't he have given up on him as an unpromising subject? Why does Nebuchadnezzar continue to consult pagan astrologers when he can get the truth through Daniel? Why ask Daniel last? Is he only thankful for the ending of his “punishment”? What kind of picture of God is he developing?

### Bible summary

Daniel 4 recounts Nebuchadnezzar's second dream—of the great tree—and his refusal to give up his selfish pride. This leads to his period of insanity which only ends with his confession regarding the true God. “Anyone who oppresses the poor insults their Maker, but anyone who is kind to the needy honors him.” Prov. 14:31 FBV. Hezekiah's complaint against his coming death is recorded in 2 Kings 20:2–5. God chooses not to destroy Nineveh (Jonah 3:10). Phil. 2:1–11 describes “the mind of Christ.”

### Comment

Nebuchadnezzar still has much to learn. The chapter begins with an “after-the-fact” report. Nebuchadnezzar is happy to report the “miraculous signs and wonders.” But is this the way God would have chosen to communicate and deal with him?

He admits he was “contented and prosperous.” Perhaps that was why God had to get his attention again, using another dream. Why another dream—because the first one's impact had faded, and he had clearly lapsed back into his pagan thinking, even after the furnace experience.

It is interesting that Daniel is called last. Perhaps N. was not always so keen to hear the truth. Evidently the battle for the king is still going on, and reflects the great controversy that pits truth against error.

Nebuchadnezzar would have been happy to know he was the “great tree,” a flattering reference to his extended power and might. But Daniel does not seek only to give vain praise, he

lays out the truth (even though he admits it terrifies him)—the tree is cut down. Not something to tell a capricious tyrant. Daniel even gives an altar call and advises the king to give up his sins.

Evidently the king takes some of this to heart, for the judgement is not immediate. But a year later, expressing his self-satisfied pride in his accomplishments—a clear denial of the true source of greatness—and the voice from heaven tells him his greatness is being taken away from him. His sanity only returned as he “raised his eyes towards heaven.”

His words however show a continuing perspective on God. It’s still an issue of power and dominion, of his ability to humble the mighty, and how once N.’s sanity returned, he was “even greater than before...” One wonders how much he really did learn of the true nature of God... God is often identified as the slave-master of the universe, one who is to be seen as anti-individualism, restrictive of freedom, unwilling to do what He Himself requires. Such attitudes are very much visible today, with many wanting to be totally ‘autonomous’—in other words, ‘I decide what is right for me.’ It’s not hard to see how such modern-day attitudes are really just a reflection of Lucifer’s desire to ‘make himself like the Most High,’ a completely self-centered view that says there are no absolute rights and wrongs.

Tragically, such a viewpoint does lead to death, just as God said it would. Not as some imposed penalty by a divine dictator, but the inevitable result foreseen by a loving Creator.

Now put yourself in the place of God. What would be your response to the Devil’s charges and his campaign of lies? Most of us would probably be tempted to solve the situation by removing the trouble-maker!

But that is not God’s way. And had he obliterated Lucifer, the result could so easily have been misunderstood. The onlooking created beings might have seen in the destruction of Lucifer the message “attack God and He will destroy you,” so furthering the climate of distrust.

God chose to deal with Lucifer’s rebellion as He always does—with love and compassion, working to win the war not by force of arms, “*not by might nor power,*” (Zechariah 4:6), but by spiritual “right,” wanting to win us back to love and trust him as he is.

### **Ellen White comments**

Exalted to the pinnacle of worldly honor, and acknowledged even by Inspiration as “a king of kings” (Ezekiel 26:7). Nebuchadnezzar nevertheless at times had ascribed to the favor of Jehovah the glory of his kingdom and the splendor of his reign. Such had been the case after his dream of the great image. His mind had been profoundly influenced by this vision and by the thought that the Babylonian Empire, universal though it was, was finally to fall, and other kingdoms were to bear sway, until at last all earthly powers were to be superseded by a kingdom set up by the God of heaven, which kingdom was never to be destroyed.

Nebuchadnezzar’s noble conception of God’s purpose concerning the nations was lost sight of later in his experience; yet when his proud spirit was humbled before the multitude on the plain of Dura, he once more had acknowledged that God’s kingdom is “an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.”

It is not surprising that the successful monarch, so ambitious and so proud-spirited, should be tempted to turn aside from the path of humility, which alone leads to true greatness... His passion as a builder, and his signal success in making Babylon one of the wonders of the world, ministered to his pride, until he was in grave danger of spoiling his record as a wise ruler whom God could continue to use as an instrument for the carrying out of the divine purpose. {PK 514-15}