

SERMON | GOD OPPOSES THE PROUD

SERIES | STRANGE LAND

STUDY GUIDE | DAVID STOCKTON | SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2024

SERMON SUMMARY

Daniel 4 starts off very interestingly with King Nebuchadnezzar writing about, “The miraculous signs and wonders that the Most-High God has performed for me.” Daniel then hears the king retell his dream and by God’s grace, interprets it for him. The dream was about a huge tree that was cut down to the stump by a decree from heaven. Then his dream, another decree from heaven, declares the man shall be given the mind of an animal and be drenched in the dew of heaven, so that the living may know the most-high God is sovereign and loves to raise up the lowly.

Next, King Nebuchadnezzar hears the message and does not respond to the vision correctly, just like he didn’t respond to his dream of the statue correctly. 12 months later, he is saying to himself how amazing he is, and then went crazy for 7 years. At the end of chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar describes what happened at the end of the 7 years and we see God restore his sanity, restore his throne, and give glory to God for it all. God opposes the proud and God is sovereign. By the grace of God, we are able to be restored and transformed.

God was speaking to the prideful, self-sufficient, barbaric king, who was in authority then. God is working on those in authority over us now. It comes down to whether the person will listen or not. As we see in this chapter, Nebuchadnezzar finally responded correctly.

In Daniel 5, we see Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson, Belshazzar, had become king and he was feeling pretty good about himself. The Medes-Persian army was waging war against them, and he felt so snug and confident, he decided to have a huge party. Then, while the party was going, he decided to level it up by bringing in the fancy goblets they took from the Israelite God years ago to drink wine from. When they were properly sauced, they started praising the god’s of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, and we see God give them a message (Daniel 5:5-6). The message freaked King Belshazzar out. All his wise men had no idea what was going on. The queen tells the king about Daniel. Daniel is probably pretty old now and seems to have faded into the background. When Daniel comes, the king offers Daniel rewards if he can tell him what the writing on the wall means.

The message is clear, and the message is simple. **God hates pride and opposes the proud.** God will bring low all those who have propped themselves up. There are three things that help keep us humble.

1. **Repent** from our sins, self-reliance, self-centeredness, selfishness, and realize life is not about us. Repentance, like jumping off a cliff into a deep pool of water, is a very hard and scary first step, but after that, you are carried by another force and in the end come up clean and refreshed.
2. **Receive** comfort knowing God is talking to our leaders and is keeping track of what they do in order to reward or humble them properly. God will judge them. We are not the judge. That doesn’t mean we can’t know if someone is doing wrong and even speak out against the wrong. But God does say He is the one to avenge, and He is the only one who can judge perfectly and accurately every time. Be patient, prudent, and persevere as a faithful presence like Daniel. And we will see the judgment of God come down on the evil doers.
3. **Remember** the humility of our Savior. Look at the King of Kings and see how He lived among men. Jesus was more humble than we can imagine. He made Himself of no reputation. He took on the form of a servant and described Himself as meek and lowly of heart (Philippians 2:7-10, Matthew 11:29).

Dennis Edwards shared his thoughts on humility for the Church as, “How can Christianity in America today have a stronger witness, more fruitful influence, increasingly more Christlike reputation? Recover what humility is meant to be. Christianity is a polarized mess these days and I believe humility could get us back on track.”

‘Augustine states, “Almost the whole of Christian teaching is humility.”’ (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*1).

May we all take note of the wisdom taught in 1 Peter 5:5-6, Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.

SCRIPTURE READING

READ THIS WEEKS BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 4:1-8, 19-27, 34-37, Daniel 5:5-6, 17-31 (NIV)

Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream of a Tree

4 King Nebuchadnezzar, To the nations and peoples of every language, who live in all the earth: May you prosper greatly! **2** It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. **3** How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation. **4** I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous. **5** I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me. **6** So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. **7** When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. **8** Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Beltshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.) – Daniel 4:1-8

Daniel Interprets the Dream

19 Then Daniel (also called Beltshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, “Beltshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you.”

Beltshazzar answered, “My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries! **20** The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, **21** with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the wild animals, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds— **22** Your Majesty, you are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

23 “Your Majesty saw a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live with the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.’

24 “This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: **25** You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. **26** The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. **27** Therefore, Your

Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: **Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed.** It may be that then your prosperity will continue.” – Daniel 4:19-27

³⁴ At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. ³⁵ All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?” ³⁶ At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. ³⁷ **Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.** – Daniel 4:34-37

⁵ Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. ⁶ His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking. – Daniel 5:5

¹⁷ Then Daniel answered the king, “You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means. ¹⁸ “Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. ¹⁹ Because of the high position he gave him, all the nations and peoples of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. ²⁰ But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. ²¹ He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.

²² “But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. ²³ Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. ²⁴ Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription.

²⁵ “This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN

²⁶ “Here is what these words mean: *Mene*: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. ²⁷ *Teke*: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. ²⁸ *Peres*: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

²⁹ Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. ³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, ³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two. – Daniel 5:17-31

BIBLE PASSAGE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you in these passages? Did the Lord highlight anything to you? What do these passages teach you about the character of God? What do these passages teach you about mankind? What do these passages teach you about how mankind should respond to God? What do these passages teach you about how to respond to others?

Read these passages again (use a different translation if helpful). How did these passages help to convict, correct, or encourage you?

GROUP DISCUSSION

DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS WITH YOUR GROUP

1. Have you ever been described as humble?
2. Can you think of someone you would describe as humble? Why?
3. How has God humbled you throughout your life?
4. What is a practice that can help cultivate Christlike humility in your life?

PRAYER

Take some time for prayer requests and pray over one another before wrapping up.

