

Following Jesus Together

"A LESSON FROM THREE KINGS"

Recently during our Wednesday evening Bible study within the Book of Daniel, we observed two Babylonian kings who were plagued with pride: **Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4)** and **Belshazzar (Daniel 5)**. During their reigns each of these men was probably identified as "the king of the world," and so each man's temptation towards pride is understandable although not excusable. However, what was noteworthy was not *that* each man succumbed to pride. It was *how* each man responded after his pride was confronted. Their responses to pride could not have been any more different, and therein lies a powerful lesson.

Nebuchadnezzar was reveling in his own greatness: *"Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built ... by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30)*. The Lord swiftly humbled him: *"While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, '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...' (4:31-32)*. This discipline upon Nebuchadnezzar's life last seven periods of time (probably 7 years). Although it took a while, at the end of that season, Nebuchadnezzar demonstrated a significant change in his perspective. The ways in which he viewed himself, his sin, and Almighty God were quite different from the beginning of the chapter: *"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" (4:37)*.

The theological term for this humbling phenomenon is **repentance**—a significant "**change of mind**" that brings about a powerful change in a person's life. Nebuchadnezzar "**recognized**" that the Lord God was really in control (4:32), and his "**reason returned**" to him (4:34). You might say he finally "**came to his senses**" (Luke 15:17) and appropriately acknowledged his "**sin against heaven**" (Luke 15:18).

Belshazzar on the other hand demonstrated no such repentance. There was no acknowledgment of guilt, no demonstration of contrition, nor any perceived change in the way he viewed himself before God. Daniel's pronouncement of judgment against Belshazzar is startling: *"¹⁸ The Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory, and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father (grandfather)... ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud... he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away... ²¹ until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over mankind... ²² Yet you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, ²³ but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven... ²⁶ God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it" (Daniel 5:18-26)*. After being confronted with the seriousness of his sin, there was no evidence that anything actually changed within him. The end of his reign came quickly for *"that same night, Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain" (5:30)*.

So what can we learn from these two kings? First, pride is a penetrating sin to which **none of us are immune**. Diligently be on guard against it! **Proverbs 4:23** states, *"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."* Second, **be sensitive to the Lord's rebuke of your own pride**. God's Word shows us what He says is right and wrong. Pride tricks us into thinking what God says to be "wrong" is actually "okay." Another king's response to the pride of ignoring God's Word reveals this point even more clearly. When King Josiah realized how far Judah had drifted from the Lord, he was pierced by their sin, and the Lord took notice: *"... 'Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself... you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you,' declares the LORD" (2 Kings 22:19)*. The Lord takes notice when we humble our hearts before Him. He desires to deal with our deep-seated pride, so let us humble ourselves before Him today:

"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God..." (1 Peter 5:5-6)



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