

From Pride to a Heart With No Pride



SABBATH—JANUARY 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Daniel 4:1–33; Proverbs 14:31; 2 Kings 20:2–5; Daniel 4:34–37.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘God has done amazing [surprising] miracles! He has done powerful miracles! His kingdom continues forever; his rule will continue for all generations [a generation is a group of people born and living during the same time]’ ” (Daniel 4:3, ERV).



**Pride causes Lucifer to sin.
So, God throws Lucifer
out of heaven.**

PRIDE IS THE FIRST SIN. Where does the Bible say that pride started? In the heart of Lucifer. Lucifer is an angel. He lived in the courts of heaven. But then his heart was filled with pride. So, God tells Lucifer what will happen to him: “ ‘Your beauty made you proud. Your glory [praise and honor] ruined [destroyed] your wisdom. So I [will throw] you down to the ground, and now other kings stare at you’ ” (Ezekiel 28:17, ERV).

Pride causes Lucifer to sin. Then God throws Lucifer out of heaven. Now Lucifer, or Satan, causes pride in men. He turns them against God. In this way, Lucifer destroys humans. We are all sinners. We depend on God for life itself. All our gifts come from God. So do all the good things we do with God's gifts. That is why we should not let our hearts become full of pride. We should not brag about anything we do.

It takes a long time for Nebuchadnezzar to understand this truth. You will remember that he sees the 4th man in the hot oven. That 4th man is Jesus. But does that change Nebuchadnezzar? No! So, God removes his kingdom. God makes the king live with animals. Then the king finally changes.

“ ‘LOOK AT BABYLON! I BUILT THIS GREAT [MIGHTY] CITY’ ” (Daniel 4:1–33)

Read about King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:1–33. What happens to the king? Why does it happen?

God gives Nebuchadnezzar a second dream. This time, the king remembers his dream. But the Babylonian wise men cannot explain the dream. So, the king asks Daniel to give him an explanation. In the dream, the king sees a big tree. It reaches up to heaven. Someone in heaven orders an angel to chop down the tree. Only the stump and roots are left in the earth. Then the person in the dream says something that must make Nebuchadnezzar afraid. He says: “ ‘Let him not think like [the same as] a man any longer. Let him have the mind of an animal for seven years’ ” (Daniel 4:16, ICB). Daniel understands the dream. He wishes that the dream was about the king’s enemies. But Daniel is loyal to God. He tells the king the truth. Daniel says that the dream is about the king himself.

The Bible uses trees as word pictures to show kings, countries, and kingdoms (Ezekiel 17; Ezekiel 31; Hosea 14; Zechariah 11:1, 2; Luke 23:31). So, the big tree is a good word picture for Nebuchadnezzar. It shows us his heart filled with pride. God gives Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom and power. But the king continues to fail to give God glory. He does not believe that everything he owns comes from God.

What does the king say in Daniel 4:30? How does it show that the king does not understand God’s warning?

What makes pride so dangerous? Pride causes us to stop remembering how much we depend on God for everything. What happens when we do not remember how much we owe God? Then we get into trouble. Pride causes us spiritual problems.



Someone in heaven orders an angel to chop down the tree.

DANIEL WARNS THE KING (Daniel 4:27)

Read Daniel's warning to the king in Daniel 4:27. What does Daniel warn the king about? What does Daniel tell the king to do, and why? (Read also Proverbs 14:31.)

Daniel explains the dream to the king. Then Daniel gives the king some advice. Daniel tells the king what to do so that bad things will not happen. " 'So, King, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Stop doing bad things and be kind to poor people. Then you might [may] continue to be successful [to have success]' " (Daniel 4:27, ERV).

Nebuchadnezzar builds many things in Babylon. He builds gardens. He builds canals. Canals are man-made rivers. Nebuchadnezzar builds many canals in the city. Then boats can travel into Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also builds hundreds of temples. No wonder Babylon was one of the earth's wonders during Bible times! Many times, we do not think about how these beautiful things get built. Often slaves do all, or most, of the work. Kings use their riches for their pleasure. They do not use their money to help the poor. Nebuchadnezzar's pride causes him to feel that he does not owe God any thanks. The king's pride also makes his heart cold. He does not care about people in need. God shows special care for the poor. So, we should not be surprised that Daniel tells the king to remember them too.

Daniel's message to the king is nothing new. The Old Testament prophets, or special messengers, often warn God's people about being kind to the poor. The prophets tell God's people to be fair. The prophets warn God's people not to hurt the poor or use them to get rich. One reason that God punishes Nebuchadnezzar is because the king does not care about the poor. When we do not care about the poor, we hurt God. So, we must take care of the poor and needy. Then we show people that God owns everything. We show that we own nothing. We are only managers of God's gifts to us.

We must help other people with the gifts that God gives us. Then we will honor God and show that He is our Lord. God owns everything. So, we should remember this Bible truth when we decide what we will do with His gifts. Then we should use His gifts to help people in need.



When we do not care about the poor, we hurt God.

**THE MOST HIGH GOD CONTROLS EVERYTHING
(2 Kings 20:2–5)**

Daniel tells the king to stop sinning and to ask God’s forgiveness. But Nebuchadnezzar’s heart is filled with pride. His pride causes God to punish him (Daniel 4:28–33). How does it happen? The king walks in his palace. He praises himself for all his wonderful works. All the sudden, the king starts to act crazy. His people force him to leave the royal palace. What happens to the king’s mind? He may have a special sickness named lycanthropy. This sickness causes a person to believe he or she is a wolf. Lycanthropy makes a person behave the same as an animal.

Read 2 Kings 20:2–5; Jonah 3:10; and Jeremiah 18:7, 8. What do these verses tell us about the king’s chance to escape his punishment?

Sadly, Nebuchadnezzar must learn his lesson the hard way. As king, Nebuchadnezzar refuses to think about everything he owes God. So, God sends Nebuchadnezzar to live with the wild animals in the field. God gives the king a chance to learn that he owes God everything. The most important lesson God wants to teach the king is that “ ‘heaven rules [controls] your kingdom’ ” (Daniel 4:26, ICB). He wants us to learn this lesson too: “ ‘Holy angels announced this punishment so that all the people on earth may know that God Most High rules [has control] over human kingdoms. God gives those kingdoms to whoever he wants, and he chooses humble [not proud] people to rule them’ ” (Daniel 4:17, ERV).

King Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment is a lesson for everyone on earth. So, we must pay careful attention to this lesson. We should remember that “ ‘God Most High rules over human kingdoms’ ” (Daniel 4:17, ERV).

God Most High has control over everything. Why is this lesson so important for us to learn? How should this Bible truth help us to be careful of the words we say and the things we do to people under our control?



**God sends
Nebuchadnezzar to live
with the wild animals
in the field.**

LOOKING TO HEAVEN (Daniel 4:34–37)

Read more about King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:34–37. How, and why, do things change for the king?

God allows Nebuchadnezzar to get a strange sickness. But after seven years, God makes the king's mind new again. What changes everything? Things change when the king lifts up his eyes to heaven (Daniel 4:34).

“For seven years, Nebuchadnezzar’s behavior fills his people with surprise. For seven years, the king is shamed in front of everyone on earth. Then God gives the king back his mind. The king looks up to heaven. The king’s heart is no longer filled with pride. He understands now that God punished him. So, the king makes a public announcement. He says that he is guilty of sin. He says that God showed him much mercy in giving him back his mind.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 520, adapted.

Yes, big changes can happen in our lives when we look up to heaven. God gives the king back his mind. Then the king shows everyone proof that he learned his lesson.

This story is not really about Nebuchadnezzar. It is about God’s mercy. The king missed three chances to accept the God of Israel as the Lord of his life. The 1st chance came when he saw that Daniel and his friends were smarter than all the wise men in Babylon (Daniel 1). The king’s 2nd chance came when Daniel explained his dream (Daniel 2). The king’s 3rd chance came when God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the hot oven (Daniel 3). If that experience does not change the king’s mind, “nothing else can!” But the king is stubborn. Even so, God gives the king a 4th chance. Then God finally wins the king’s heart (Daniel 4). God gives the king back his mind and his kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar’s story shows us that God gives us many chances. Why does God do that for us? God wants to save us. He wants us to be close to Him too. As Paul tells us hundreds of years later: “God wants everyone to be saved and to fully understand the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4, ERV). King Nebuchadnezzar’s story is a powerful example of this Bible truth.



“The king makes a public announcement. . . . He says that God showed him much mercy in giving him back his mind.”

How has God helped you to see how much you need Him?

A HEART FILLED WITH THANKS (Daniel 4:35)

Nebuchadnezzar feels sorry for his sins. Then he gives his heart to God. He announces: “ ‘People on earth are not really important’ ” (Daniel 4:35, ERV). What does he mean?

How do we know that Nebuchadnezzar really accepts the true God? The biggest proof is that he writes the letter that is part of Daniel 4. The king sends this letter all over his kingdom. In his letter, the king talks about his pride. He talks about losing his mind and behaving the same as an animal. Then he says he is thankful to God for saving him from his sickness. A king in Bible times hardly ever writes bad things about himself. Almost all royal records from Bible times praise and honor kings. So, Nebuchadnezzar’s letter is a big surprise. It shows us that the king truly gives his heart to God. The king’s letter is a witness. It tells everyone on the earth about his experience with God. The letter talks about God’s power and His control over everything. The king cannot keep silent about what he experienced and learned about God. The letter is a prayer to God. The king praises God too (Daniel 4:34–37).

The king has a new heart. His life has changed. So have his beliefs about life. He sees that human power is limited. In a moving prayer, Nebuchadnezzar gives thanks to Daniel’s God. Nebuchadnezzar says that God controls everything. That is why the king says that “ ‘People on earth are not really important’ ” (Daniel 4:35, ERV). Nebuchadnezzar’s prayer shows us that humans do not have anything to brag about at all. The last time we see King Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel is in chapter 4. This last story shows us a king with no pride in his heart. His heart is filled with thanks to God and praise. The king warns us against having hearts filled with pride.

Of course, God continues to change lives today. Sinners may be very proud. But God has the mercy and power to turn proud sinners into children of the God of heaven.

Read Philippians 2:1–11. What do these verses teach us about why we should not feel pride in our hearts?



The king sends the letter all over his kingdom.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “In the past, Nebuchadnezzar’s heart was filled with pride. Now he becomes a child of God. In the past, Nebuchadnezzar used his power to control people and boss them around. But now he is a wise and loving king. The king shows that he cares for his people. He wants them to be happy. The king works hard to encourage people to obey God. In the past, Nebuchadnezzar talked against the God of heaven. So, God punished Nebuchadnezzar. Now the king accepts God’s power. The king knows that God is King of kings and Lord of lords. God teaches Nebuchadnezzar the lesson that all leaders need to learn: If you want to be a success, then you must do good things. Nebuchadnezzar tells everyone in Babylon that Jehovah is the living God. . . .

“God’s plan is for the most powerful kingdom on earth to praise Him. And it does. The king makes a public announcement about God’s mercy. The king says that God is good. He has all power in heaven and on earth. This act is the last thing written about the king in the Bible.”—*Prophets and Kings*, page 521, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:



“Each person’s pride is in a fight with everyone else’s pride.”

① “Pride causes every bad behavior. Pride is the worst sin against God. Do you think that my language is too strong? If yes, I want you to think about something. . . . The more pride you have in your heart, the more you hate pride in other people. Do you want to know how much pride you have? The easiest way is to ask yourself: ‘How much do I hate it when other people are not kind to me? How much do I hate it when people refuse to pay attention to me? How much do I hate it when people try to boss me around? Or act as if they are better than I am? Or when they show off?’ What I want to say is that each person’s pride is in a fight with everyone else’s pride. It is because I want to be the most important person at the party that I get mad when someone else gets more attention than I do.”—C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), page 110, adapted. What is Lewis saying here that can help you see how much pride is in your heart?

② Daniel chapters 3 and 4 teach us about the power of God. He controls everything in heaven and on earth. Why is this idea so important to understand? How does the Sabbath help us understand this truth?