

DEEPER

Daily Bible Study

Podcast, Study Notes, and Teacher Helps

From Pride to Humility

2020, Quarter 1, Lesson 5

Sabbath (January 25): From Pride to Humility

Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” This truth was powerfully illustrated in the life of Nebuchadnezzar, ancient Babylon’s greatest ruler. And yet, remarkably, his experience is also a testimony to the power of God to change lives, and to transform a self-focused sinner into a humble disciple of Christ. In this week’s lesson we will look more closely at the journey from pride to humility that God led Nebuchadnezzar through, and discover how each of us must take that same journey if we will be saved.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Matthew 5:3. What does it mean to be “poor in spirit”? For what reasons might Jesus have opened the Beatitudes, and the Sermon on the Mount, by talking about the importance of being “poor in spirit”? What is the promise associated with this blessing?
- Read Isaiah 14:12-14. What did Lucifer lose through his pride and failure to manifest a “poor spirit”? (He lost his position in the kingdom of heaven.) What other sins often accompany the sin of pride? (Answers will vary. In Lucifer’s case he was also guilty of discontent, evil surmising, lying, stealing [in trying to usurp God’s throne], covetousness, and eventually murder.)
- Read Philippians 2:5-8. What are some of the differences exhibited in Christ’s character, compared to Lucifer’s? (Answers will vary. The absence of pride is certainly a marked feature of Christ’s character.)
- Read the following statement, and discuss what it reveals about the spiritual battle being waged for every person’s soul:

Satan’s aim had been to reproduce his own character in human beings. No sooner was man created than Satan resolved to efface in him the image of God, and to place his stamp where God’s should be. And he has succeeded in instilling into the heart of man the spirit of envy, of hatred, of ambition. In this world he has set up a kingdom of darkness, of which he, the leader in guilt, is prince. He desired to usurp the throne of God. Failing in this, he has worked in darkness, in crookedness, in deception, to usurp his place in the hearts of men. He has set up his throne between God and man, to appropriate the adoration that belongs to God alone (Manuscript 33, 1911). {6BC 1119.9}

Sunday (January 26): Is Not this Babylon the Great?

In Revelation, pride is a defining characteristic of end-time spiritual Babylon, just as it was in the tower builders at Babel, and in Nebuchadnezzar. In many ways, God’s call for His people to “come out” (Revelation 18:4) of Babylon is really a call for them to allow God to pull them from the clutches of human pride. In its place, God promises to re-create His character in them.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Revelation 18:2-7. In what ways does verse 7 speak to the dangers of pride? (Pride is delusional, and here, it leads those trapped in their “Babylonian minds” to believe that they

can live however they wish to, without fear of judgment from God. In Babylon's case, the idea that God will not judge sin or hold people accountable for their decisions results from pride, arrogance, and willful ignorance of God's true character.)

- Read Daniel 4:10-12. For what reasons might God have used the symbol of a tree, as opposed to a head of gold, to represent Nebuchadnezzar in this dream? (Trees are used in the Bible to represent kings, nations, and empires [see Ezekiel 17; 31; Hosea 14; Zech. 11:1,2; Luke 23:31.] But the symbolism may go deeper. A head of gold is a man-made, static object, without life. Spiritually, it was a fitting symbol for the pagan king prior to God's work in his life. A tree, however, is an organic, growing, divinely-created form of life, and as such it represented well the possibilities for new spiritual life that God was extending to Nebuchadnezzar.)
- Read Psalm 1:1-3. What does a tree represent here? (It represents a righteous person.) How does the tree in this psalm represent God's desires for Nebuchadnezzar? (God wanted him to find new spiritual life through a connection with Him, and surrender to Him.) What does the following passage reveal about what it means to be "rooted" in God?

Human histories relate man's achievements, his victories in battle, his success in climbing to worldly greatness. God's history describes man as heaven views him. In the divine records all his merit is seen to consist in his obedience to God's requirements. His disobedience is faithfully chronicled as meriting the punishment he will surely receive. In the light of eternity it will be seen that God deals with men in accordance with the momentous question of obedience or disobedience. {TDG 352.3}

- Read Psalm 1:4. If Daniel ever shared this verse with Nebuchadnezzar, what impact might it have had on the king, considering what happened to the image in his first dream? (Answers will vary. The promise that he could live in such a way that he would not be destroyed by the arrival of the stone kingdom could have been a captivating thought for the king.)

Monday (January 27): Warned by the Prophet

After interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel gave some advice to the king: "[B]reak off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor" (Daniel 4:27). This advice is the same as that given by God's prophets through all time—to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep [oneself] unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Just like Nebuchadnezzar, we would do well to listen to this prophetic message from heaven.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Proverbs 21:3; 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11-17; Amos 5:21,22; Micah 6:6-8. How would you summarize God's prophetic message throughout the Old Testament? (To obey is better than sacrifice.) Although sacrifices were bloody and messy, God's people in the Old Testament often ended up placing their trust and hope of salvation in the ritual of the sacrifice, rather than in desiring a true change of heart. Why might this be such an easy mistake to make, and do we do the same thing today? (Yes, we often do the same thing today. It is easier to believe that by attending church, doing penance, or even "praying for forgiveness," that I have done all that is necessary to be saved. True surrender of the life to God is always a challenge. It is the hardest battle that we all face.)

- Read John 8:11; 5:14. How would you summarize Christ's prophetic message? (It was the same as the message given by the Old Testament prophets—forgiveness of sin should lead to a changed life lived in the strength of God to overcome sin.)
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:34; 1 John 2:1; 1 Peter 4:1; and Jude 24. Is this the same message given by Christ and the Old Testament prophets? (Yes.) Why, then, do you think it is so challenging and difficult for many people to believe that God can actually give *me* victory over sin in *my* life? (Answers will vary.)
- Read the following statements from the writings of Ellen G. White, and discuss how they reflect the same message given by God's prophets throughout history:

Sin, however small it may be esteemed, can be indulged in only at the peril of infinite loss. What we do not overcome, will overcome us and work out our destruction. {SC 32.2}

There will be no future probation in which to prepare for eternity. It is in this life that we are to put on the robe of Christ's righteousness. This is our only opportunity to form characters for the home which Christ has made ready for those who obey His commandments. {COL 319.1}

Tuesday (January 28): "The Most High Rules..."

A major theme in the book of Daniel is that God rules in heaven. In Daniel 2, the image of the metal man is destroyed when God's stone kingdom strikes it and then fills the entire earth. In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar's murderous plot to kill Daniel's three friends is overruled when Christ walks in the fire with them. In Daniel 4, God humbles a proud pagan monarch. In Daniel 5, a divine messenger signals the end of Babylon's dominion. In Daniel 6, God again overrules a murderous plot to destroy his servants. And in Daniel 7, God's judgment stops and then destroys the little horn's efforts to attack God and the saints. However, God's involvement and work among humanity throughout history must, at some point, become personal for each one of us. This was the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar still had to learn.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 4:17,26. For what purpose did God allow Nebuchadnezzar to experience the loss of his kingdom, and his sanity, for seven years? (God allowed this to happen so that Nebuchadnezzar would acknowledge that God rules in heaven.) For what reasons is it so important to realize that God "ruleth in the kingdom of men"? Why isn't it enough to believe that God exists in heaven? (Answers will vary. The difference lies in viewing God as an uninterested "initial cause" that started the universe in motion, or as a personal Creator and Savior Who has invested all of Himself in the welfare and salvation of humanity.) Which kind of God is easier to trust and surrender one's life to? (A personal God is much easier to trust and surrender to!)
- Read Revelation 18:5-7. What attitude is expressed by Babylon here that directly attacks God's sovereignty and right to govern the affairs of humanity? (The idea that God either will not, or cannot, hold people accountable for their sins reveals a Babylonian mindset. This was the same "judgment dysphoria" revealed by Nebuchadnezzar, prior to his seven years of insanity.)
- Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5. In what ways might this passage's description of Christianity in the last days reveal the same problem shared by Nebuchadnezzar and "spiritual Babylon" in

Revelation? (Many Christians at the end of time will believe that they can live however they want, as long as they have “a form of godliness.”)

- Read the statement below, and discuss the warning that we all should take from Nebuchadnezzar’s experience:

Let men become lifted up in pride, and the Lord will not sustain them and keep them from falling. Let a church become proud and boastful, not depending on God, not exalting His power, and that church will surely be left by the Lord, to be brought down to the ground. Let a people glory in wealth, intellect, knowledge, or in anything but Christ, and they will soon be brought to confusion. {8T 127.2}

Wednesday (January 29): Lifting Eyes Toward Heaven

Nebuchadnezzar’s deliverance from the insanity of sin and pride occurred only when he finally lifted “up [his] eyes unto heaven” (Daniel 4:34). Suddenly, his “understanding returned,” and he was a changed man—in many ways! In today’s lesson we will look more closely at the significance of the king lifting his eyes to heaven.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Ephesians 1:17-19. According to verse 17, what is the only way that the “eyes of our understanding” can be opened? (They can only be opened through the power of the Holy Spirit giving us wisdom and revelation.) In verses 18 and 19, what three things are promised to us when the “eyes of our understanding” are opened? (1. The hope of his calling. 2. The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. 3. The exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe.) Which of these three promises means the most to you, and why? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Daniel 12:10. In this verse, and in many other verses in Daniel, “understanding” God’s prophetic messages is very important. What three things, or experiences, does this verse reveal that will help us to “understand” God’s work in our lives today? (Being “purified,” “made white,” and “tried.”) What do you think each of these three things refers to? (Answers will vary.)
- Read the statement below and discuss what it reveals about the importance for each of us to personally surrender completely to God:

God’s work of refining and purifying must go on until His servants are so humbled, so dead to self, that, when called into active service, their eye will be single to His glory. He will then accept their efforts; they will not move rashly, from impulse; they will not rush on and imperil the Lord’s cause, being slaves to temptations and passions and followers of their own carnal minds set on fire by Satan. Oh, how fearfully is the cause of God marred by man’s perverse will and unsubdued temper! How much suffering he brings upon himself by following his own headstrong passions! God brings men over the ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility and a transformation of character bring them into harmony with Christ and the spirit of heaven, and they are victors over themselves. {4T 86.2}

Thursday (January 30): Humble and Grateful

A few days ago, we examined many striking parallels between Daniel chapters 3-6 and the Three Angels' Messages in Revelation 14. Today we will look more closely at the connections between Nebuchadnezzar's changed heart in Daniel 4 and the First Angel's Message.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 4:37. Based on his statement in this verse, how would you summarize King Nebuchadnezzar's view on life after this experience? (Answers will vary. Apparently, he finally realizes that life is to be lived not for his glory, but for God's glory.) What do you think he means by the statement, "[A]ll [His] works are truth"? (Answers will vary. Nebuchadnezzar had certainly experienced some of God's "works," and realized that all God does is for the salvation and benefit of His creatures.)

King Nebuchadnezzar, before whom Daniel so often honored the name of God, was finally thoroughly converted, and learned to "praise and extol and honour the King of heaven." The king upon the Babylonian throne became a witness for God, giving his testimony, warm and eloquent, from a grateful heart that was partaking of the mercy and grace, the righteousness and peace, of the divine nature. {4BC 1170}

- Read Revelation 14:7. In what ways does the First Angel's Message parallel Nebuchadnezzar's statement? (The First Angel calls people to live life with a focus on God's glory and honor. Those who live and share this message will, in some way or other, have learned the same lessons that Nebuchadnezzar finally learned.)
- Nebuchadnezzar's story highlights the importance of the personal influence that we all have on other people. Read the statement below, and discuss the responsibility we have today to live in such a way that God can use us to impact other people:

In Daniel's life, the desire to glorify God was the most powerful of all motives. He realized that when standing in the presence of men of influence, a failure to acknowledge God as the source of his wisdom would have made him an unfaithful steward. And his constant recognition of the God of heaven before kings, princes, and statesmen, detracted not one iota from his influence. {4BC 1170}

- Read Revelation 14:6. Although the First Angel's Message includes a call to give glory to God, it begins with a reference to the everlasting gospel. Why is it so important to always combine the gospel with the call to live life for God's glory? (If we exclude the gospel, then the call to live for God's glory becomes legalistic and ineffective.)

The power of Christ alone can work the transformation in heart and mind that all must experience who would partake with Him of the new life in the kingdom of heaven. "Except a man be born again," the Saviour has said, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3. The religion that comes from God is the only religion that can lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will lead to watchfulness. It will purify the heart and renew the mind, and give us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. {9T 156.1}

Friday (January 31): Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon, and the Sabbath

One of the lessons that Nebuchadnezzar finally learned was that God "ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4:25). In other words, as Creator, God has the right to determine the position and the purpose of the things He creates, including human beings. In

today's lesson we will look at the significance of this aspect of God's power and its relation to the seventh-day Sabbath.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Ezekiel 28:12-15. What position did God give Lucifer in heaven? (He was an "anointed cherub" surrounding God's throne. His job was to explain and defend God's character and His law before the universe.)
- Read Isaiah 14:12-14. What decision did Lucifer make in heaven? (To fight against God and reject the position and purpose that God had given him in heaven.)
- Read Genesis 2:2-3 and Exodus 20:8-11. In what ways does the fourth commandment directly reveal God's right as Creator to determine the position and purpose of the things He has created? (The fourth commandment, perhaps more than any other, reveals God's right to determine the position and purpose of His creation. By declaring the seventh day of every week as holy and blessed, God has created a recurring reminder of His power as Creator.)
- Read Daniel 4:35-37. What evidence can we find in this passage that Nebuchadnezzar had finally learned to recognize God's right to determine his position and purpose as a man? (Answers will vary.)