

Sermon – 02/09/2007 am

Second Dream Fulfilled

Study Text: Daniel 4:28-37

God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows that he shall also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap everlasting life (Galatians 6:7-8). Ignoring God and his word is tantamount to mocking God. Do you take seriously the word of God?

Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers died all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.' (II Peter 3:3-4). Scoffing at God and his word is certainly mocking God, and will lead to God's judgment. Let no one presume upon the grace and patience of Almighty God as Nebuchadnezzar did.

We come today to the end of this chapter and to the utter humiliation of this proud and arrogant man. God's word to him in his dream was fulfilled.

Deliberate Deafness

There are none so deaf as those who will not hear! What was the advice Daniel gave the king after telling him the meaning of his dream (4:27)? The dream pointed to Nebuchadnezzar being humiliated to the extent of living like an animal. *It is you, O king, who have grown powerful* and very proud (4:22). He was chief of all builders, but also chief of all boasters, and chief of all bullies. God, who is jealous for his own glory, determined to humble this upstart – unless he came to his senses and humbled himself first.

Daniel, a man in whom was the Spirit of God, advised Nebuchadnezzar to turn from his sin, from his boasting and his bullying. But proud men are rarely ready to take advice, least of all from those closest to them, or those who love them. Daniel wanted no harm to come to the king (4:19) and for this reason gave him this good advice.

Nebuchadnezzar had called Daniel to interpret his dream because he trusted Daniel. He knew Daniel spoke the truth. Yet he did not take Daniel's advice. Repenting of sin is not easy. Nebuchadnezzar put it off till tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. Soon life was back to normal and the dream was forgotten – by Nebuchadnezzar but not God.

At the end of 12 months Nebu was walking about the royal palace of Babylon (4:29) admiring his handiwork. There were the famous hanging gardens he built, as well as many other beautiful things. Nebuchadnezzar congratulated himself – 'look at the things I have made, aren't I great'. What is wrong with that you might ask? He had worked hard to achieve all this.

I find this passage somewhat scary, having just completed some renovations to my own house! I am tempted to say 'look what I have done'. There is nothing wrong with building a new house and enjoying some comfort, but who gets the thanks and who gets the glory?

As drive home today take a look at the hardware store down the road. The car park is full – yes even today, the Lord’s day. Thousands are busy building their dream home just like Nebuchadnezzar, and they will boast in their achievements, just like Nebuchadnezzar. Thousands are right now boasting in other achievements, in their promotion, their new car, their exam results, or the like. Today is father’s day and millions are boasting in their father or their family – or are supposed to be. What is wrong with this you ask? Let me ask ‘where is God in all this boasting and self congratulation?’

For twelve months Nebuchadnezzar had God’s warning and Daniel’s advice before him. How long since you heard, and more to the point ‘listened to’ the word of God?

Dream Fulfilled

I was going to title this second point ‘lycanthropy’ but this is not a word we hear every day. Yet it is in the dictionary as a specific form of insanity. ‘Lycanthropy’ comes from the Greek meaning wolf-man. It is a recognised form of insanity in which a person thinks they are a wolf or wild beast.

While Nebuchadnezzar was congratulating himself on his worldly achievements and success, *a voice came from heaven* (4:31). God was watching and listening to him all the time. God is long-suffering and patient, but not indefinitely. What God says he will do? Time had run out for Nebuchadnezzar. His day of reckoning had come.

All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar (4:28). This passage opens with these ominous words. Personal tragedy struck Nebuchadnezzar just as God had told him in his dream. God warned him and Daniel advised him to turn from his wicked ways, but he failed to do so. So what now? After this the judgment! God will not be mocked. ‘Vengeance is mine’ says the Lord. No one, not even the king, can ignore the word of God with impunity.

The king of Egypt scoffed at the word of God time and again, before he came under divine judgment. King Herod took the glory that was due to God alone, and he was judged. King Nebuchadnezzar took the glory to himself and he also came under judgment – or rather chastisement at this stage. He was not destroyed by God like Pharaoh and Herod.

In his dream a great tree was cut down and the stump turned into a cow. Nebuchadnezzar was struck with insanity and was driven from his palace to live like a cow in the field. *That very hour*, the hour he was boasting of his greatness, *the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar* (4:33). His royal robes were probably taken off him leaving him naked, for his body was wet with the rain and the dew. He acted like a cow by eating the grass. His hair grew long, as did his fingernails, so that he started to look like the animal which he thought he was.

Heathens often revere animals and try to be like them. There are Hindu holy men called ‘Nagas’ who never wear any clothes. They live in caves or huts in the forest. In our society some people like to dispense with their clothes and live like animals. Some prefer to learn morals from monkeys, rather than from the Bible. Some want to get back to nature, rather than get back to the Bible.

Realisation and Restoration

Seven times will pass over you till you know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men (4:25). The extreme humiliation was for the purpose of getting Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge the Almighty God as ruler, even over Babylon, and that he was a mere man and servant of God. The Creator of the universe is sovereign over every part of his creation.

The letter returns to a first person narrative as Nebuchadnezzar tells of his restoration. At the end of the divinely appointed time Nebuchadnezzar said I 'lifted my eyes to heaven and my sanity was restored' (4:34). He acknowledged God's absolute and eternal sovereignty on earth as well as in heaven. He praised and honoured the Most High *who lives forever* .

Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his palace and his throne. In fact *excellent majesty was added to him* (4:36). He became an even better king, and a more respected king, from the realisation that God ruled over him.

It was not the riches and power *per se* that offended God, for he restored these to Nebuchadnezzar. It was Nebuchadnezzar's failure to acknowledge God as the giver of all good things, including power and authority, in the kingdoms of men.

In all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and depart from evil. This is the advice of another great king called Solomon (Proverbs 3:6, 7). It is wisdom for all kings, both great and small. 'Fear the Lord and depart from evil' is wisdom for us all.

To what extent Nebuchadnezzar repented of his sin and departed from evil we are not told, and so the question of his conversion is left open. But he did learn to fear God. He acknowledged that God is great, that God is just, and *those who walk in pride he is able to put down* (4:37). Such fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; the beginning of wisdom and of life.

Fear of the Lord must underpin any belief in God and Jesus Christ. There are many who repent and say they believe, but they do not fear the Lord. They do not believe in the sovereignty of God. They come to God on their own terms, not God's. They never acknowledge their total depravity or the sovereign grace of God in bringing them to himself. They run their own lives and simply ask God to pick up the pieces. But God must be sovereign over all aspects of your life – your work, your study, your family and your finances.

The other day while I was visiting my daughter we went for a drive. From the back seat she said 'it feels strange being in the back seat'. She was used to being in the driver's seat. Nebuchadnezzar was used to being in the driver's seat. God put him in the back seat. Do you like being in the driver's seat or do you humbly take the back seat as the Lord directs your ways?

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