

WHY WAS A KING GIVEN THE HEART OF A BEAST?

[Daniel 4:16](#) “Let his heart be changed from a man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given unto him: and let seven times pass over him.”

Pride is a great wall which separates man from God. A proud person is the opposite of a humble child of God. To be saved we must confess our sins and throw ourselves entirely upon the mercy of God in Jesus. A proud person will not admit his sins nor will he feel the need of a Savior from sin.

P **PRIDE** goes before
destruction, and a
haughty spirit before a fall.
PROVERBS 16:18

The Pharisee in the temple prayed thus, “G0d, I thank thee that I am not as other men are... I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” He was condemned by these words of Jesus, “He that exalteth himself shall be abased.”

Our text is one more example of a long list of proud people whom the Lord resisted. The Lord showed His displeasure by sending a strange malady to a great king.

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1. BECAUSE HE, HAD A PROUD HEART

Nebuchadnezzar was one of the great rulers of his time. He reigned over Babylon more than 500 years before the birth of our Lord. As with many mighty rulers, the danger is always present to regard oneself as some kind of superman or higher being than the average man. He became proud in his own conceit as he himself later on admits (4:37), “And those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” God alone is the Ruler of all nations and He sets up the authority to rule kingdoms of this world.

Because of Nebuchadnezzar’s pride, God resisted him and determined to humble him. The Lord gave him a warning dream which only Daniel could interpret. The king explained to Daniel how he saw in his dream a giant tree which all people could see. The beasts of the field were in its shadows and

the birds lived in the boughs. Then a voice from heaven ordered that the tree be cut down.

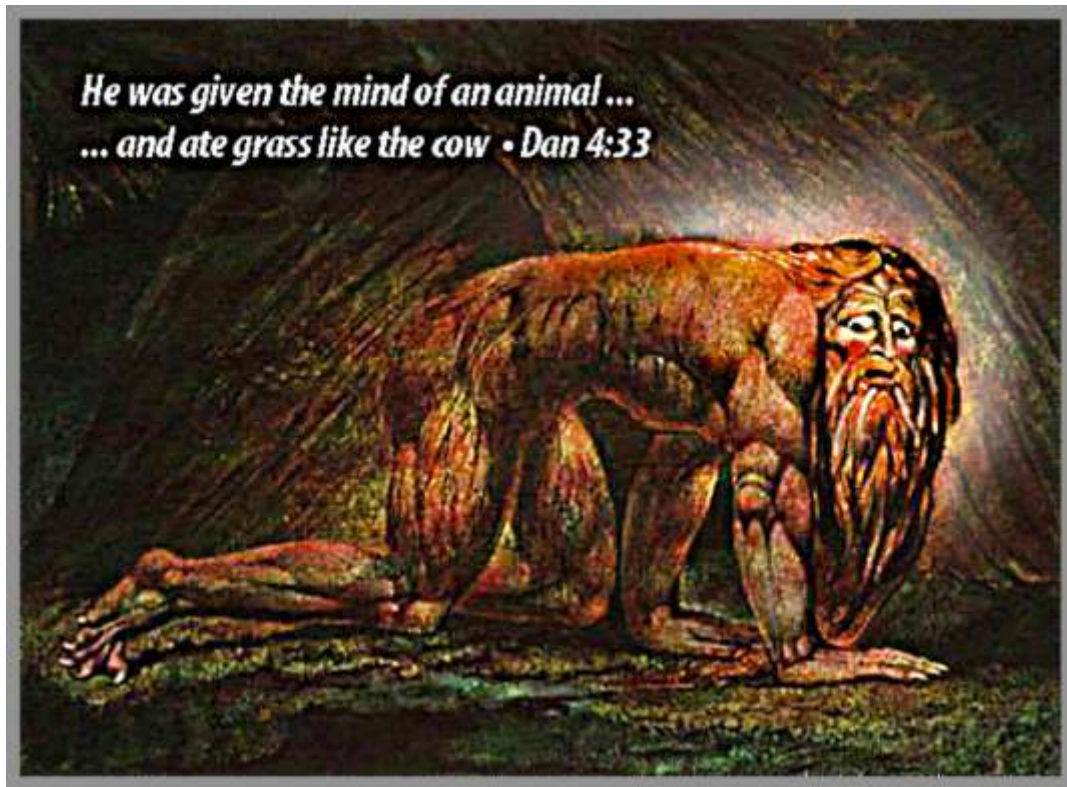
The dream frightened the king and he was troubled (4:5).

Daniel explained the dream in [Daniel 4:19-26](#). The great tree is king Nebuchadnezzar. But because of his proud heart God would humble him and give him the heart of a beast. A stump of the tree would remain, so after a time, the kingdom would be restored to the king again. Then Daniel offered this advice to the king (v.27), “Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.”

After the initial shock wore off, instead of heeding Daniel’s advice, Nebuchadnezzar became more boastful. Like a proud peacock strutting about, the king said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty” (v.30) . Pride goeth before a fall. God did not stand idly by as this vain man uttered his boasts.

2. BECAUSE HE WAS RESISTED BY GOD

There is only one Ruler of the nations, He makes or breaks, He alone is the King of Kings. How vain and foolish men often become when they receive some power and begin to imagine themselves to be little gods. The Lord will not tolerate such people indefinitely. He withstood Nebuchadnezzar. “Let a beast’s heart be given unto him,” said the Lord, and the king became afflicted with a form of insanity called lycanthropy. Such an insane person believes that he has been changed into an animal, and he acts like one. Nebuchadnezzar was driven from men (v.33), and he began to chew grass and crawl on his hands and feet. His hair became stiff and long and matted. His nails were like claws. His wild eyes would glare between the strands of hair as if he were looking out from behind vines. He would utter unearthly screams and growls and claw the ground like a mad beast. Such a picture we would expect to see only in a night-mare. How the mighty have fallen!



God raised David from a humble shepherd to one of the greatest kings of Israel, and He humbled one of the greatest kings of the earth to become the lowest of beasts. God resisteth the proud.

In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar God promised to leave the stump of the tree in the earth. In His mercy the Lord restored the king's sanity and permitted him to rule in the kingdom again. All the counselors and lords placed Nebuchadnezzar in a position of honor and power again.

No doubt, the king continued to reign with a different heart and attitude. He spoke some fine words about God the Ruler of the world (v.37), "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose words are truth, and his ways judgment." We have no right to judge his heart or doubt his sincerity. One thing is certain, however, he could only be saved if he trusted in the coming Messiah. We hope he learned more of the truth from Daniel, and that he accepted the only saving faith.

We need never fear the rulers of this world, for God still rules in the heavens, and He rules the world for the protection and benefit of His holy Church.

Down through the ages Kings of the earth have defied the Lord and tried to destroy His people. They have fulfilled the words of [Psalm 2](#), "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder,

and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”

The Lord can humble the proud and mighty, as He did with Saul, Haman, Pharaoh, Belshazzar, Herod, and Pilate. We have seen some of our modern rulers strut and threaten, boast and rave, and we have seen how the Lord humbled and disgraced many of them. The warning lesson of Nebuchadnezzar was there all the time for all to see, yet too many disregarded it.

There is a lesson here for all of us. We should fall on our knees before God and humbly acknowledge all our sins and transgressions. We should be overcome with a sense of our own unworthiness, and, like the publican, smite upon our breasts and say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” We plead with the Lord to be gracious and merciful to us for the sake of Jesus and His sufferings on the cross. Through faith in our Savior the Lord will forgive all our sins and remember them no more.

Jesus said, “Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” God truly lowers the proud and vain people, but he raises the humble believers in Christ to the highest glory and honor in heaven. AMEN

PRAYER. O Lord of Lords and King of Kings, Ruler of all things, keep us from pride and conceit which can destroy our bodies and souls. May the spirit and mind of our Savior always be found among us. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death for us. O Lord, we know that we deserve eternal punishment for our iniquities and sins, but we also know that in Thy mercy and love, Thou didst redeem us in the blood of Thy dear Son. To Thee, O Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, be all honor and glory, world without end. AMEN.