

Daniel 4:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The king spake, and 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 honour of my majesty?

Analysis

Nebuchadnezzar's statement "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" epitomizes human pride at its zenith. The triple emphasis on self—"I have built," "my power," "my majesty"—excludes any acknowledgment of divine providence or blessing. The phrase "for the house of the kingdom" reflects ancient Near Eastern royal ideology where kings built magnificent capitals as monuments to personal greatness and dynastic legacy.

The timing is crucial: "while the word was in the king's mouth" (v. 31) indicates immediate divine response to proud boasting. God doesn't tolerate prolonged self-exaltation that denies His sovereignty. Nebuchadnezzar had received prophetic warning (v. 27) and twelve months of grace (v. 29), yet chose pride over repentance. This demonstrates that persistent pride after divine warning invites swift judgment. The king's boast came at the pinnacle of achievement, showing that prosperity and success particularly tempt humans toward self-sufficient pride.

This verse warns against the subtle temptation to attribute success to personal ability, wisdom, or effort while forgetting God's gracious provision of life, health, opportunity, and blessing. It illustrates that pride is fundamentally idolatry—worshiping self rather than Creator. This points to Christ's opposite posture: though equal with God, He "made himself of no reputation" and humbled Himself unto death (Philippians 2:6-8), perfectly modeling the humility God requires.

Historical Context

Nebuchadnezzar's boast reflected historical reality—he transformed Babylon into antiquity's most magnificent city through massive building projects. The city's double walls (wide enough for chariot races), Ishtar Gate, Processional Way, ziggurat (possibly inspiring the Tower of Babel account), and Hanging Gardens exemplified unprecedented architectural achievement. Cuneiform inscriptions confirm Nebuchadnezzar's extensive building activities and proud claims of personal accomplishment.

The king's statement came while walking in his palace, likely the magnificent royal residence overlooking the city. From this vantage point, he surveyed Babylon's splendor and credited himself for its glory. This moment of self-congratulation immediately preceded divine judgment (v. 31-33), demonstrating God's intolerance for pride that denies His sovereignty. Archaeological evidence validates Babylon's magnificence while Scripture reveals the spiritual bankruptcy underlying material achievement pursued for self-glory.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. In what subtle ways do you take credit for achievements that ultimately depend on God's provision of abilities, opportunities, and blessings?
2. How can you cultivate habitual acknowledgment of God's sovereignty in success to guard against pride's deception?

Interlinear Text

עַנֵּה	מֶלֶךְ	וְאָמַר	הֲלֹא	כֹּה	אֵל	בָּבֶל	רַבָּה	דִּי
spake	The king	and said	Is not	H1668	this	Babylon	great	H1768
H6032	H4430	H560	H3809		H1932	H895	H7229	
אֲנִי	בִּנֵּיתִיהָ	לְבֵית	מֶלֶךְ	בְּתָקָהּ	חֲסִנִּי			
that I	have built	for the house	of the kingdom	by the might	of my power			
H576	H1124	H1005	H4437	H8632	H2632			
וְלִיקָר	הַדָּרִי							
and for the honour	of my majesty							
H3367	H1923							

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 16:18 (Parallel theme): Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Revelation 17:5 (References Babylon): And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Revelation 18:10 (References Babylon): Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

Luke 14:11 (Parallel theme): For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Ezekiel 29:3 (Kingdom): Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.

Revelation 16:19 (References Babylon): And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

Psalms 73:8 (Parallel theme): They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.

Psalms 49:20 (Parallel theme): Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

1 Peter 5:5 (Parallel theme): Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org