

Daniel 5:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

Analysis

Daniel recounts Nebuchadnezzar's fall: 'But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him.' This traces the causal sequence: pride led to judgment. The 'heart lifted up' and 'mind hardened in pride' depict settled arrogance—not momentary lapse but ingrained attitude. The result was forcible removal ('deposed,' 'they took his glory')—divine judgment executed through circumstantial means (madness). This historical precedent warns Belshazzar: God judges pride consistently. The reference to chapter 4's events reminds Belshazzar of what he should know—his grandfather's experience should have taught humility. That Belshazzar failed to learn this lesson (v.22) seals his judgment. This demonstrates that historical examples serve as warning; ignoring them compounds guilt.

Historical Context

Nebuchadnezzar's seven years of madness (chapter 4) became public knowledge—court officials, subsequent rulers, and certainly royal family knew this history. Belshazzar's failure to learn from it represents willful blindness. Ancient Near Eastern cultures highly valued learning from predecessors' experiences—wisdom literature repeatedly urged learning from history. Belshazzar's disregard of his grandfather's hard-learned lesson demonstrated contempt for both God and wisdom itself. Church history shows similar patterns: every generation must learn anew, often through hard experience, truths previous generations discovered. Yet

Scripture preserves these lessons precisely so subsequent generations might learn without repeating destructive patterns.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does Nebuchadnezzar's heart being 'lifted up' and mind 'hardened in pride' teach about pride's progressive nature?
2. How does God's consistent pattern of judging pride provide both warning and assurance of His character's unchangeability?
3. Why is failing to learn from historical examples (especially family history) particularly culpable?

Interlinear Text

וְכִדִּי	רָם	לִבּוֹ הָ	וְרוּחוֹ הָ	תִּקְפָּה	לְהִפָּחֵה
H1768	was lifted up	But when his heart	and his mind	hardened	in pride
	H7313	H3825	H7308	H8631	H2103

הִנָּחַת	מִנָּה:	כִּרְסִי אֶ	מַלְכוּתִי הָ	וַיִּקַּח הָ	הָעֵד יוֹ	מִנָּה:
he was deposed	from	throne	his kingly	his glory	and they took	from
H5182	H4481	H3764	H4437	H3367	H5709	H4481

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 3:13 (Parallel theme): But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Jeremiah 13:18 (Kingdom): Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory.

Exodus 9:17 (Parallel theme): As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

2 Kings 17:14 (Parallel theme): Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

2 Chronicles 36:13 (Kingdom): And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel.

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

Proverbs 16:5 (Parallel theme): Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Jeremiah 19:15 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

Luke 18:14 (Parallel theme): I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.