

I. The Difference Between one king and The King

A. Nebuchadnezzar's Story

1. In the wee morning hours of a dark night somewhere around the year 550 BC, the greatest ruler of the Neo-Babylonian empire in the history of ever, had a dream . . . and it terrified him.
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a tree standing in the middle of the land
 - b. The tree
 - (1) was enormous
 - (2) strong and large and its top touched the sky
 - (3) it was visible to the ends of the earth
 - (4) Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, on it was food for all.
 - (5) Under the tree the beasts of the field found shelter and the birds of the air lived in its branches,
 - (6) From the tree every living creature was fed.

T.S. Now you might think this a fairly innocuous dream, even a vaguely satisfying dream, but the night vision continued!

- c. A messenger came from heaven saying:
 - (1) The tree
 - (a) Cut down the tree!
 - (b) Trim off its branches, strip off its leaves, scatter its fruit
 - (c) Let the animals and birds flee
 - (d) Let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field
 - (2) The judgment
 - (a) While the messenger still refers to the tree he begins to make his message personal: he begins using a personal pronoun
 - (b) **Daniel 4:15-16 (ESV) ¹⁵ . . . Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him.**
 - (3) The summation
 - (a) The messenger added a final summary statement
 - (b) **Daniel 4:17 (NIV) *The decisions is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.***
2. Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest king in the world at the time, dreams this dream and confesses in his own words, ***"I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me."***

- a. He calls on his wise men to interpret the dream, but no one can interpret the dream, and if they do understand it, they don't let on.
 - b. Finally Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of a great empire, calls a man named Daniel, a prophet and a captive from the city of Jerusalem,
3. Daniel interprets the dream
- a. Nebuchadnezzar himself is the tree, which represents the greatness of his power and kingdom
 - b. The fall of the tree, as a heavenly call for judgment, is a pronouncement against the king himself.
 - (1) Heaven has ruled that the power, authority, and glory Nebuchadnezzar has shall be taken from him
 - (2) The greatest king in the known world will be reduced to living like the lowliest animal grazing in the fields
 - (3) He will live like this for seven years until he learns that he is not the center of the universe, the hub of existence, and the sovereign of all greatness.
4. One year later
- a. The king is walking on the parapets of the palace
 - b. He proclaims, "Is not this great Babylon I have built as my royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"
 - c. The Bible tells us that while the words are still resounding in the heart and dancing on the proud lips of the arrogant king, the judgment announced in the dream a year earlier is carried out.
 - (1) Nebuchadnezzar is driven from power and palace
 - (2) He lives like an animal in the field, feeding off grass, for seven years.
 - (3) His body was drenched with the dew until his hair grew like eagle's feathers and his nails became like the claws of a bird.
5. So Nebuchadnezzar the great and proud king was humbled and remained until the day he recognized the sovereignty of Almighty God.

T.S. But it is not the story of an arrogant king humbled by a merciful God upon which we would focus this morning. Instead, I would turn your attention to Jesus and his words to his disciples on the night he was betrayed, on the day that he died.

B. Jesus' story

1. **John 15:1-11 (ESV)** ¹ *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much*

fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

2. Specifically God would have us focus that little seven word phrase in verse 5 where Jesus says, **“apart from me, you can do nothing.”**
 - a. What makes this saying of Jesus less proud and arrogant than the assertion of Nebuchadnezzar? What makes this saying honorable and Nebuchadnezzar's self-proclamation deplorable?
 - b. What is the difference between Jesus and Nebuchadnezzar?
 - (1) Nebuchadnezzar proclaims global reliance on his majesty and glory and is condemned to seven years of madness.
 - (2) Jesus announces global reliance on himself for spiritual productivity and he is not condemned but honored.
 - (3) What is the difference?
 - c. The difference
 - (1) Nebuchadnezzar is a consumer and Jesus is the source
 - (2) Nebuchadnezzar is a creature and Jesus is the Creator
 - (3) Nebuchadnezzar is merely a man with assigned authority, Jesus is God in human flesh, to whom all authority bends the knee in submission
 - (4) Nebuchadnezzar issues an untruth; Jesus tells the truth
 - (a) **John 1:1-4 (ESV) ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.**
 - (b) **John 1:14 (ESV) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**
 - (c) Nebuchadnezzar is just a man; Jesus is God!
3. **So what does Jesus, God become flesh, mean when He says to His disciples, “apart from me you can do nothing?”**

II. Apart From Me, You Can Do Nothing

A. Two Roses

1. Cut Rose Flower vs Planted Rose Bush
2. **Separated from the source and system that supports life, one can look forward only to death.**

B. What does Jesus offer that we cannot have apart (separated/disconnected) from Him?

1. Three Aspects of Spiritual Life That Can Only Be Ours Through Faith in Jesus Christ
 - a. You can only live a God-directed, God-glorifying life through faith in

Jesus Christ

- (1) Jesus lived a God-oriented, God-directed, God-glorifying life
 - (a) **John 14:31 (ESV)** *but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.*
 - (2) Through faith in Christ and obedience to His word, we also may live a life that honors God.
 - (a) **John 15:8 (ESV)** *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*
 - (b) **John 15:16 (ESV)** *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.*
- b. You can only live a God-tended, God-ordered life through faith in Jesus Christ
- (1) **John 15:1-2 (ESV)** ¹ *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*
 - (2) A life ordered by God is a life that pleases God and receives the reward of eternal life.
- c. You can only live a God-responsive, God-invested life through faith in Jesus Christ
- (1) **John 15:7 (ESV)** *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*
 - (2) Not a guarantee that God will grant your spiritual grocery list if you say a little prayer at sometime in your life
 - (3) This is a guarantee that if you devote your entire life and heart to Christ, God will invest His affection and power and glory in your life.
2. **The secret to a life lived with the blessing and power and mercy and love of God is a lifelong, wholehearted faith relationship with Jesus Christ.**
- a. Apart from him, separated from Him, disconnected from Him, having no faith in Him and attempting to live independent of Him has only one outcome: death.
 - b. Abiding in him, keeping one’s faith in Him and following Him with your whole heart and active obedience leads to spiritually productive lives and eternal life.
 - c. **John 15:4 (ESV)** *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.*

T.S. All of this leads us to one place: a choice to make!

III. Conclusion

A. The intent of Jesus

1. Why does Jesus say, “Apart from me, you can do nothing”?
 - a. Jesus puts each of us in the same position God mercifully put

Nebuchadnezzar 2500 years ago:

(1) Same point God made to Nebuchadnezzar: **warning** against a proud, wasted life of self-reliance that leads only to destruction and death

(2) Same **invitation** God made to Nebuchadnezzar: bring your life to Him in faith and live

b. **Why does Jesus say, “Apart from me, you can do nothing”? To give us a choice.**

2. Choice: The Roses

a. The cut rose flower

(1) Short and sweet

(2) Glorious and fragrant

(3) Destined for death

b. The planted rose bush

(1) Life that is productive

(2) Glorious and fragrant

(3) Destined for life.

B. How can we make the choice for Jesus?

1. Believe Jesus is the Son of God

a. sent from God to reveal God through His life

b. sent from God to die for your sins

2. Trust Him for the forgiveness of your sins

3. Learn His ways - the Bible is the guide for all those who desire to know God, and knowing God is the way to eternal life.

4. Follow Christ in all His ways

a. Trust

b. Obey

C. The Choice is Yours