

God's Sovereignty Humbles

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[0:00] Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar, to the peoples, nations, and men of every language who live in all the world.

May you prosper greatly. It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are His signs.

How mighty His wonders. His kingdom is an eternal kingdom. His dominion endures from generation to generation. I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous.

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. So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me.

When the magicians and chanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream.

[1:12] He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my God and the spirit of the holy gods is in him. I said, Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery is too difficult for you.

Here is my dream. Interpret it for me. These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed. I looked and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land.

Its height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky. It was visible to the ends of the earth. Its leaves were beautiful.

Its fruit abundant. And on it was food for all. Under it, the beast of the field found shelter and the birds of the air lived in its branches.

From it, every creature was fed. In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked and there before me was a messenger, a holy one coming down from heaven.

[2:21] He called in a loud voice. Cut down the tree and trim off its branches. Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches.

But let the stump and its roots bound with iron and bronze remain in the ground in the grass of the field. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth.

Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal till seven times pass by for him. The decision 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. This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means. For none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me.

[3:32] But you can because the spirit of the holy gods is in you. Then Daniel, also called Belteshazzar, was greatly perplexed for a time and his thoughts terrified him.

So the king said, Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you. Belteshazzar answered, my lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries. The tree you saw, which grew large and strong with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beast of the field and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air.

You, oh king, are that tree. You have become great and strong. Your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

You, oh king, saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, cut down the tree and destroy it. But leave the stump bound with iron and bronze in the grass of the field while its

roots remain in the ground.

[4:52] Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him live like the wild animals until seven times pass by for him. This is the interpretation, oh king, and this is the decree.

The most high is issued against my lord, the king. This is the decree that the lord, the most high has issued against my lord, the king. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals.

You will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the most high is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.

The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that heaven rules. Therefore, oh king, be pleased to accept my advice.

Renounce your sins by doing what is right and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.

[6:05] All of this happened to king Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?

The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven. This is what is decreed for you, king Nebuchadnezzar. Your royal authority has been taken from you.

You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals. You will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the most high is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.

Immediately, what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle.

His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird. At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my sanity was restored.

[7:19] Then I praised the most high. I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion.

His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.

No one can hold back his hand or say to him, what have you done? At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom.

My advisors and nobles sought me out and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now, I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the king of heaven because everything he does is right and all his ways are just.

And those who walk in pride, he is able to humble. Amen. When we begin to read Daniel chapter 4, the opening few verses sound very formal.

[8:42] King Nebuchadnezzar, to the peoples, nations, and men of every language who live in all the world, may you prosper greatly. They are very formal.

Now, this is a press release from the palace of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the king.

And this is how he conceived of himself. King Nebuchadnezzar, the king. The only one who was a king in the civilized world at the time.

To the peoples, nations, and men of every language who live in all the world, that was his kingdom. It was a universal kingdom so far as civilization was concerned.

There were still dark regions of the earth that were unknown to the civilized nations. But what had been happening in Old Testament history, in the history of our world, this is the history of our world.

[9:57] What had been happening is that the world had come under single rule by despots who had absolute power over all the nations of the world at that time.

It's a very interesting thing to read the history of our world. And this is not something you will hear in the schools. But you know that Adam sinned.

And the sin brought evil to the hearts of men. Very soon after Adam sinned, his eldest son murdered his younger son.

Being driven away from his family in shame. We know that Adam's son, who was still living, became very proud and very violent and produced a line of violent men.

So that soon there was one of his descendants who was bragging that if there was a vengeance of God upon his ancestor for killing his brother, he would be avenged seven times seven.

[11:47] If anyone harmed him. He bragged about the fact that when a man wounded him, he killed him. And there was violence in the earth.

And as you read the account of the earth coming up to the days of Noah, the reason leading reason that God wanted to destroy the world is the violence of mankind upon the earth.

Well, God did destroy the earth for that violence. And yet very soon after the flood was over, we read of men going to war against other men.

And we read of the concept of the entire earth being brought under one power so that men would not be scattered from one another, but they would unite their power.

You remember the tower of Babel at which that was attempted to be done. And God judged the people at the tower of Babel so that they would scatter to all the regions of the earth and inhabit it as he had commanded at creation.

[12:56] Well, you may have read of the name Nimrod in the Old Testament. Nimrod formed the first great empire of the world called Chaldea.

And soon after him, Assyria arose. Its capital city was Nineveh. You remember how Jonah was told to go to Nineveh.

Interesting that he was sent to Nineveh because God was compassionate to Nineveh. They had become very sinful in his sight and judgment was about to fall on them.

And Jonah was to preach to them that they should repent to save them from utter disaster. Now, Jonah didn't want to preach repentance to them because he believed that God was merciful and would forgive them.

And he didn't want to see this potential enemy of the Jews survive and conquer the land of Israel.

[14:11] But he did preach after being saved from the belly of the whale. And there were many people who repented and believed, including the ruler who commanded that his people fast and pray and humble themselves before Almighty God.

Well, after the Assyrian Empire, which did indeed conquer northern Israel, not southern Judah, but northern Israel in the land of the Jews, there came another great empire called Media.

And following Media, there came Babylon. Babylon, the great on the Euphrates River.

Babylon, the great on the Euphrates River.

Babylon, the great on the Euphrates River. Babylon, the great on the Euphrates River. One of the greatest battles ever fought. And Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the armies of both nations.

[15:47] And his nation, Babylon, became the ruler over all the earth. Following Babylon, there came the nation of Persia.

Following Persia, there came Greece. And you remember that Alexander the Great, if you watch movies or read history, conquered Persia, himself dying in Persia after winning the battle.

And his Greek empire being divided between three of his servants and captains. And of course, following that came the great empire of Rome, ruling the world.

In a sense, this single empire of the world was one through all of this history. And that's why in chapter 2, there is one figure, one statue that appears to Nebuchadnezzar.

And when he inquires of Daniel, who was carried captive to Babylon when he destroyed Jerusalem, Daniel told him that the golden head of the statue was representative of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

[17:11] And that the silver chest and arms of the image represented a nation that would follow him as the empire ruling all the earth.

And then that the belly, which was of bronze, would represent still a further empire. We've already named these empires. And then the legs and the feet that are made mixed of iron, iron which crushes things, as the empire of Rome did, but also mixed with clay, which made it weak, would finish this history of one nation ruling all the earth.

And at the time of that last empire, the time of Rome, there would be a stone that was taken out of the mountain, not cut by hands, but that stone would hit the legs and the feet that were mixed iron and clay, and therefore weak, and destroy the whole of the image.

And following that, there would no longer be a single empire that would rule all the earth. And of course, that stone was the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who did come to the earth in the days of Rome.

And it was the last empire to rule all of the earth. There have been individuals who have dreamed of having rule over all other nations, but every effort since has failed.

[19:01] Because Jesus Christ went to the cross to save people of every nation and tribe and people, and he has promised that his gospel will be spread through all nations.

He was crucified to save those people. He rose again from the dead. The apostles were witnesses of his death and witnesses of his resurrection.

And following his resurrection, they were witnesses of Christ ascending into the clouds, but then they saw no more and were witnesses of no more.

But David, who lived long before them, was a witness of what happened after the clouds hid Jesus Christ from their sight.

He entered into the throne room of God the Father Almighty, who said unto him, Sit at my right hand until I make all your enemies your footstool.

[20:11] And he was given power over all of the nations that are on the earth. When you read the newspapers and look at the TV and you see the great convulsions of the nations and the change in power here and there and wars and rumors of wars, do you realize that Jesus Christ is king of the nations and that he is fulfilling his purposes through all of these means that are taking place?

And that the great threats that many proud people will give in the world today, that they are going to be the dominant power that rules everyone, that these things will come to nothing.

It would be true of the United States if they tried to be rulers of the world. And it will be true of all others who want to be despots in the world.

Well, here is Nebuchadnezzar sending out a press release from his palace in Babylon. And the world was looking for this press release for a long time.

Here is the powerful man who ruled all the other nations. They all sent emissaries to do business with this king and ruler of all the earth.

[21:40] And for seven times. And the footnote here says that would be seven years. Although some have guessed seven months.

Nonetheless, seven months or seven years in which no one was admitted to speak to the ruler. Seven months or seven years in which there never was a release of information as to what the ruler was doing.

Emissaries of all the nations were coming to the palace. None was admitted to see Nebuchadnezzar. None received a message from Nebuchadnezzar.

No one knew where he was. Imagine if this happened at the White House. And no one had seen the president for seven months or seven years. And there was no information as to where he was. Now you can imagine that rumors begin. Has there been a coup? Has someone else taken over? Is he sick?

[22:56] Has he died? What is going on? Seven years or seven months. They are looking for something. Out of the palace of Babylon.

But nothing had come. And so Nebuchadnezzar says, well, I want to tell you about this. He decided to issue a press release.

And it's absolutely spectacular what he says. It is a sensational explanation. You cannot imagine a ruler of the world saying, I want to tell you why I haven't been communicating.

I was crazy. I thought I was an ox. And all this while I've been eating grass in the field. I never came into the palace.

Never ate the food that was cooked by the cooks in the palace. And in the rainy weather, I stayed outside with the animals.

[24:01] And through all of this time, my hair was matted so that my hair looked like feathers. And my nails grew like the claws of an animal.

And I had lost my mind. And he's communicating this to the world. The man who was ruler of all. Well, these seven times, this lengthy period of time, was predicted to me a full year before it happened.

Before I lost my mind, I was told a year ahead of time that I was going to lose my mind. I had a dream. God did wonders.

The God of heaven, the God of the Jews, the real God, had communicated with me through a dream. He did wonders for me. He gave visions to me.

[25 : 06] He gave messages to me. And they came true. He told me what was going to happen ahead of time. And no one could interpret the dream that I received or the message that had come from heaven, except someone I had captured when I destroyed Jerusalem.

And I brought Daniel back with me and gave him a name that represented my God. But he could tell me what was going to happen.

And he told me that God was going to do exactly this to me. Although he didn't tell me exactly when it would be.

And so a year passed. You can imagine that Nebuchadnezzar lost the edge of wondering when I am going to be made a madman.

And after a year, he would have become more comfortable again walking around the palace. And here is the occasion when from the heights of his palace, he looked over his kingdom with great satisfaction.

[26 : 25] And he said, I did all of this for my own glory. I did it for me. And I had the power to build this kingdom. And the magnificence and the power and the strength of army and the strength of government to bring it all to pass.

And instantaneously, he went mad. God said he was going to do it. God said he was going to do it. So it was that God drove him from his palace to live with the beasts of the field. So if you look in verses 28 to 33, and we have read them, you will see that Nebuchadnezzar was a changed individual instantaneously.

Why did this occur in the history of the ancient world? It happened to Nebuchadnezzar because from God's vantage point, Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest emperor of the period.

And he, in his image of this empire, was the golden head. And God said to him, the empire that comes after you will be less glorious.

[28 : 33] It will only be silver. And then the next less glorious. And in God's view, he was the most glorious of the emperors that ruled the world.

And God seemed to have a heart to talk to Nebuchadnezzar about what was going to happen to him.

Just as Jonah was astounded that God wanted the people of Nineveh to repent, we can be astounded that God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know who was God and wanted Nebuchadnezzar to worship him.

You remember after Jonah had the experience of seeing Nineveh repent, and he was grouching around, I guess we would say, and unhappy with God, that he had saved the Ninevites.

God argued with Jonah and said, Isn't it right that a city like this should be cared for by me?

[30 : 03] And if you don't think so about the people, think about how many cattle are in this community. Shouldn't I, the creator of the cattle, care about the animals?

It's interesting how God speaks about the animal kingdom. When we read about Noah taking all of the animals onto the ark, and then there was this great flood, and there was this lengthy period of time that passed when they were floating in the ark upon the water, it says that God remembered Noah and the animals.

He was thinking not just of Noah, but of the animals. And at Nineveh, he was thinking not just of the people, he was thinking of the animals.

And so, it seems to me, you know, I can remember years and years I would read the book of Daniel, and my impression was that one of the great purposes of the book was to show us that God delivers his people out of great trouble.

I mean, Daniel was delivered from the lion's den. His three friends were delivered from the fiery furnace. Daniel was delivered from threats that came against him.

[31 : 25] But that does not seem to be the major purpose of Daniel and his three friends having been in Babylon, to show that God delivers his people from difficult situations.

But it seems to be that he sent them as a witness to Nebuchadnezzar. God wanted a message to come to Nebuchadnezzar. As a matter of fact, when Daniel was talking about that vision of the statue that the king had in a dream and defined it as the worldwide kingdom that passed from one nation to another for a period of time, when Daniel talked to him about that, he said, God gave me the interpretation of this dream not because I am some great man, but because he wanted you, Nebuchadnezzar, to know what is coming in the future.

God has seen you wondering when you lie upon the bed, what is going to become of Babylon? What will happen after my time? He knew about the kingdom of Nimrod and the death of Nimrod. He had destroyed other kingdoms that came before him. And Nebuchadnezzar was wondering, what's going to happen after me? And God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know.

So, we have Nebuchadnezzar then giving an account of his coming out of the insanity that he experienced for a period of time.

[33 : 10] Now, he's telling this to all the nations, all the kingdoms that he has conquered, all of the peoples upon the face of the earth sending in their languages this message from his palace.

And he says in verse 34, at the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my sanity was restored and then I praised the Most High.

He's talking about the God of the Jews and he knew who the Most High was. I praised the Most High. I honored and glorified him who lives forever.

Nebuchadnezzar was wondering what's going to happen in years to come with my empire. Will I be able to pass it on to my son? Or will someone else bring an army against Babylon like I brought my army against the Egyptians and the Assyrians?

I praised the Most High and I honored and glorified him who lives forever. The Eternal One. God is eternal.

[34 : 42] His dominion is an eternal dominion and his kingdom endures from generation to generation. And that will never change.

He now knows that. It has been revealed to the world emperor of ancient times. God is eternal. And all the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing before him. He does as he pleases. It is his pleasure that he did this to me. And he will do in the future what pleases him. with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.

faith. No one can hold back his hand and no one has the right to ask what are you doing?

[35 : 44] Which we are often tempted to ask because of our little trials by comparison to nations rising and falling. we have difficulties in our life and we say Lord what are you doing to me?

No one has the right he is doing as he pleases. And when this man turned into an animal in the field and came out of that to his sanity he said it pleased you and I have no right to ask you why. and I have no capability of holding back your hand from doing what you wish with me. Certainly not with the affairs of heaven and not with the affairs of the nations.

Yes I'm the ruler of the nations now but your rule lasts from generation to generation and never changes. And that kind of sovereignty led the king to bow down and to worship the God of the Jews. His will is supreme. His power is almighty. I have bowed my knee to the God of heaven. He says down in verse 37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and exalt and glorify the king of heaven because everything he does is right.

[37 : 17] and all his ways are just and those who walk in pride he is able to humble and I'm the proof of it.

I was proud. I've recorded for you my words of pride so that you will know that he is able to humble the pride the proud and he is able to exalt the lowest man to the kingdom and Nebuchadnezzar was that too.

He was the most proud man the most boastful man and in the midst of his boasting God humbled him and then he was the lowest man on the face of the earth living like a beast and God was able to exalt him to his kingdom again he said it was restored to me my glory was restored I had the honor and even there was an addition to it because God gave me an even greater benefit of counselors coming and asking my opinion and advice and my rule increased it did not diminish because he gave it back to me I am living proof of what I am telling you in my press release God is king of kings and lord of lords and he will reign forever and ever and of his kingdom there is no end and Jesus is now lord of the nations he is and no kingdom of this earth will be able to resist him or to turn back his will

God does resist the proud and he gives grace to the humble pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud do you believe that it's better to have a humble spirit and be amongst the lowly than to divide the spoil in triumph with the proud pride serves as a necklace of the wicked proverbs 16 5 everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the lord jeremiah chapter 9 verses 23 and 24 let not the wise man boast in his wisdom let not the rich man boast in his riches let not the mighty man

boast in his power but let him who boasts boast in this that he knows me that I am the lord of that you may boast there you have permission from the bible to brag about something that you know god that he is the lord and he is your lord and that's certainly a different message than nebuchadnezzar had at the beginning but it was his message at the end i now bow my knee to this god the king god sent to the earth jesus and he is greater than all the kings and emperors and presidents and strong men and he is seated at god's right hand and that should give you encouragement though there seems to be confusion in our day which nations are rising which wars will take place what will happen to our nation our economy the european economy the economy of the arabs the economy of the chinese what's going to happen in these nations well it's going to be what god wants and no one can stop it and he can humble the proudest and the most mighty and he has done so with nebuchadnezzar to let us know that and to know that now his son reigns with him and he has promised jesus has promised in matthew 24 you remember what he said to his disciples as he was leaving take the gospel into all the world to every nation and in matthew 24 he said this gospel will go into all the nations and then the end will come so there is a purpose to what's happening on the earth and knowing what god's purpose is and what christ's purpose is that the gospel should go to all the earth that should be the heart and soul of the church's efforts to get that gospel to all the corners of the earth i thank god for the way some of europe and the americas north america have given so much to missions my guess is that if america goes down giving to missions as the world is seen now will diminish rapidly and i do pray that god will uphold our nation so that the generosity of the church of america will continue to give that the gospel will go to all the world and that she can continue to send her young men there in those places that are still dark without a knowledge of christ but certainly the lord's will will be done and all the nations will hear and some will be saved out of every tribe and people and we must never lose our enthusiasm for missions it's why jesus is on the throne at god's right hand to bring that salvation and to gather to himself a people who will worship him forever and forever around his throne let's bow together in prayer our father we thank you for the humility of jesus christ that when he humbled himself unto death even the death of the cross it is because of that wherefore you have highly exalted him and given him a name above every name that at the name of jesus every knee is going to bow and every tongue confess that he is lord to your glory father we thank you that you exalted him in that fashion and we thank you that he has given a very clear mission to the church to take the gospel to all the world help us to keep working at that help us to keep praying for that help us to keep giving help us oh lord to keep challenging our sons to go and to make christ known in the far corners of the earth we cannot do it without you but knowing that it's your purpose we pray that you will bring it to pass and use us in some measure that in that last day we shall have the delight of seeing you honored by every language and every tongue that is spoken in the earth thank you for humbling the proud thank you for making a man who boasted about what he did confess that he was nothing compared to you and we pray that you will keep us humble in a like fashion in jesus name amen