

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Senior Pastor Titus Green
September 18, 2022
The Kingdom To End All Kingdoms
Daniel 4:1-37

Context from Daniel 4

600 years before the birth of Jesus, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man in the world. And the book of Daniel begins when Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonians to invade the city of Jerusalem. In that invasion, a group of young Jews were taken captive and brought back to the capital city of Babylon. Daniel and his 3 friends were in that group of captives.

And what we have seen to this point is that Nebuchadnezzar continuously put pressure on Daniel to turn his back on God and adopt the pagan worship and sinful culture of the Babylonians. But Daniel remains faithful to God. Even more, God remains faithful to Daniel. And, for the most part, Nebuchadnezzar has a front-row seat to watch God work. Last week, Neb threw Daniel's three friends into the fiery furnace because they refused to worship anyone but God. And God miraculously spared their lives. But even though Neb keeps seeing God show up in miraculous ways, he continues to be proud and self-centered. Chapter 4 is a detailed account of how God humbled the proud heart of the world's most powerful man.

Daniel 4:1-3

1 King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! 2 It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. 3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

So, this is a letter or a proclamation from King Nebuchadnezzar to all the people of earth. It's kind of like the President of the United States airing a speech during prime-time television. He wants to use his influence to get a message across. And what is that message? Well, he tells us very plainly in verses 2-3: It's about the signs and wonders God performed that taught Nebuchadnezzar that God's kingdom is forever and that His dominion, or his rule, is from generation to generation.

And the first sign Nebuchadnezzar mentions is a dream that he had. He couldn't figure out what it meant, so he called in his magicians and wise men. They couldn't figure out what it meant, either. So, just like he did in chapter 2, Neb finally asks Daniel to come and interpret his dream.

In verses 8-18, he tells Daniel that, in his dream, he saw a big, beautiful tree that reached up to heaven and was visible to the whole world. It was strong and mighty and provided food and shelter for the animals.

But then an angel comes down from heaven and makes a proclamation that the tree is to be cut down and chopped up. Only the stump was to be left bound with a band of iron and bronze. But, then the language changes...

Daniel 4:15-16

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.

So, the angel makes it clear that he is no longer talking about a tree. He is talking about a person. A great and mighty person is going to be cut down. He's going to go crazy for 7 periods of time. Most bible scholars take that to mean seven years. And the angel makes it very clear what the point of all of this is...

Daniel 4:17

17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'

So, here we have this truth for the second time. The whole point of all of this was that the people of this world would know that God rules the kingdoms of men. He chooses who will be king. And His choice isn't determined by anything deserving in them. In other words, kings are not made kings because they are great. They are made kings because God is in control and chooses to make them kings. And Daniel understands that is the point of the dream.

Daniel 4:24-27

24 this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, 25 that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. 26 And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules.

So, here is the third time we see the central truth of this chapter. God rules the kingdom of men. And God is going to teach Nebuchadnezzar that lesson until he is thoroughly convinced that it's true.

And notice what Neb does next. It's so Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 4:28-30

28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"

Over and over again in this book, God showed up. He's done miracle after miracle. He's sent message after message. But Neb's heart was so proud that all of it just rolls off him. For 12 months, God gives him a chance to humble himself before the Lord. But just the opposite happens. He is walking on the roof of his palace, looking out over the city.

There is an artist's re-creation of ancient Babylon that is based on the ruins of the city that are still standing just south of Baghdad, Iraq. And in the center is a step pyramid. That's where Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt the tower of Babel. He also built one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the hanging gardens. Basically, it was a masterpiece of engineering that used water to air condition the inside of the structure. It was a gift to his wife...and air conditioning is a pretty incredible gift in a part of the world that is regularly 110 degrees in the summer.

So, Nebuchadnezzar is looking out over the blessings of his kingdom. And his response is so insightful. He says "Look what I've done by my power. It's glorious."

But God finally says enough is enough.

Daniel 4:31-33

31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, 32 and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will." 33 Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws.

The most powerful man in the world is out on the front lawn eating grass. His hair grew long and wild. His nails were more like claws than fingernails. This almost makes our politicians look sane...almost. And, once again, for the fourth time in our text, we see the reason behind it all. Verse 32 says he will be this way until he knows that God rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. God is in control.

Now, let's look at the rest of the story.

Daniel 4:34-37

34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever,

***for his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;
35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
and he does according to his will among the host of heaven
and among the inhabitants of the earth;
and none can stay his hand
or say to him, "What have you done?"***

So, that's the fifth time in this text that we find that truth. God rules over the affairs of man. Verse 35 says that he does according to his will among the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. To the point that no one can stop Him.

And once Nebuchadnezzar realized that truth, God restored him. Like, it's not until you understand this truth about God that you are able to live in a right state of mind...you're thing crazy until you really believe that God is in control. And notice how Nebuchadnezzar ends his letter.

Daniel 4:36-37

36 At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

Neb praises God. And he tags on that last phrase...God is able to humble everyone who walks in pride.

Okay. So, this is one of those passages that is really easy to see the big idea. Five times we have been told what the point of all of this is. It's the whole reason God did what He did to Nebuchadnezzar and it's the whole reason Nebuchadnezzar wrote a letter to the world.

Big Idea: God is sovereign and will humble those who will not humble themselves.

The point of this passage is to convey a message to the entire world concerning one of the biggest truths there is to know about God. God is sovereign. The word 'sovereign' refers to the authority and ability to do what one wants to do. For instance, we often use this word to describe nations as sovereign states. That means their government is the highest level of authority over a territory and the people living in it.

And, when it comes to God, He is absolutely Sovereign. He has the ability and authority to do anything that pleases Him. He is in control of this world and everyone in it. He is accomplishing all of His good purposes.

Let me share with you some passages that highlight this truth about God.

Job 42:2

2 "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Psalms 115:3

Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

Isaiah 46:9-10

...for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

Clearly, the Bible is saying that God is in control. When Isaiah 46 says that He declares the end from the beginning, that's not saying He predicts the end from the beginning. That's more than God simply knowing the future because He explains what He means in the very next phrase, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose." From the beginning, God has purposed that certain things would be accomplished by His power. For instance, He purposed that Jesus would die on the cross. That's why Revelation 13:8 says that Jesus is the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world.

So, God is accomplishing His purposes by His sovereign power. And, just to press in on this a little further, I want to show you how the Bible presents God working in sovereign power.

God's Sovereignty incorporates seemingly random events.

Proverbs 16:33 - The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.

God's Sovereignty incorporates natural events.

Perhaps no section of scripture vividly portrays this reality more than the book of Jonah. Just listen to the way God exercises power over nature in the book of Jonah.

Jonah 1:4 - But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, & there was a mighty tempest on the sea

Jonah 1:17 - And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah.

Jonah 4:6 - Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over

Jonah 4:7 - God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered.

God is ruling on this earth. He is at work in seemingly random events. He is at work in nature. But that's not all.

God's Sovereignty incorporates the choices of people.

There is a lot of mystery here. I don't understand how this works. God has given men the ability to make real choices. And we are accountable for the choices we make. As a matter of fact, we will see next week that Daniel pleaded with Nebuchadnezzar to turn away from his sin because Daniel clearly believed God was giving Neb a real choice to repent or to continue in his pride. God's sovereignty doesn't negate human responsibility. But God is so big and strong and wise that He can allow people to make real choices that completely accomplish His plans. And there is no better example than the death of Jesus. The greatest sin ever committed was the murder of God's own Son. But listen to what Acts 4 says about the murder of Jesus.

Acts 4:27-28 - for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

Jesus was murdered by sinful men and God will hold every man accountable for His own sin. The bible is clear that God hates and grieves the sin of people and how it harms people He loves. Yet, in it all, God is accomplishing His eternal purposes because He is the Sovereign King who rules in the affairs of men.

And that's what God taught Nebuchadnezzar and wants to teach us through him. God is Sovereign.

And there are lots of applications for that truth. If you are a follower of Jesus, let this truth wash over you for just a moment. God is in control. He isn't worried and we don't need to be, either. God is in control. Our politicians and government leaders aren't in control. The majority vote of our fellow citizens won't ultimately determine our future, God will. God is in control. What crazy, scary, out-of-control thing in your life is threatening to steal your joy or crush your hope today? How would you feel if you believed that your Heavenly Father is good and is in control of it all and is working out His good purposes for you? He is.

God is Sovereign. And there are many applications of that truth, but I want to remind you of the big idea of our text. It isn't just the truth that God is sovereign. It's the truth that our Sovereign God will humble those who won't humble themselves before Him.

Proud, sinful kings like Nebuchadnezzar will not withstand the rule of God. They will either willingly bow in humility before the Lord today or, one day bow in His holy presence.

Philippians 2:9-11

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Every king and ruler and world leader will one day bow before Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

- One day, Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin and King Charles will bow before the Lord Jesus to the glory of God the Father.
- One day, Muhammed and Gandhi and Confucius and Joseph Smith will bow before the Lord Jesus to the glory of God the Father.
- One day, every person who has defied Jesus as their true and rightful King will bow before Him as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Just like Nebuchadnezzar was shown mercy over and over again. God is showing mercy to the people of this world. He is giving wicked men an opportunity to repent. But the day of reckoning is coming. And when it does, every knee will bow before Jesus Christ as Lord.

And, before we wrap up, there's a question we should be asking. What does it look like to live in humility before God? Because all of us have the potential to live with Nebuchadnezzar syndrome. All of us have been given a little kingdom...our homes our hearts our lives...and many of us don't realize that the heart of Nebuchadnezzar, a heart that wants to be in control, sees ourselves on the throne of our own little kingdom...and we can't stand the thought of not being in control...

What does it look like to avoid Nebuchadnezzar's heart and live in humility before the Lord?

Daniel 4:29-30

29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"

There are two things here that reveal where pride was at work.

1. Nebuchadnezzar was proud because he was relying on his own power.
2. Nebuchadnezzar was proud because he was living for his own praise.

That's what pride looks like. It looks like depending on your own power and living for your own praise. And that teaches us what humility looks like.

Humility depends on God's power and lives for God's praise. And that's our application for this morning. When you bow in humility before God as your Sovereign King, you depend on His power and you live for His praise. So, whose power are you depending on?

Humility depends on God's power. Have you come to the point in your life where you realize that you do not have the power to live apart from the grace of God? Have you realized that, if your life depends on your power and ability to get things right you cannot possibly succeed?

That's why we need Jesus. Jesus came to die in our place as a sacrifice for our sin. He came to restore us to God as our Source of strength and power to live. And Jesus rose from the dead as a display of His power to raise us up to a brand-new kind of life. So, are you depending on the power of Jesus to live your life or are you depending on the power of you?

Think about the struggles and battles of your life today. What situation in your family or at your work or in this world are you working through today? Are you truly depending on Christ's power or are you daily living in yours?

Humility depends on God's power...Humility lives for God's praise. One of the great applications of this truth is that you would stop and worship God today. That you would look at your life, see the blessings and give God praise. That you would look at whatever situation you are in and say, "God, help my deepest desire for this situation to be your glory." How would it change the things you are walking through today if you didn't want to get your way but wanted God to get His for His glory? How would it change the way you live in your marriage or parent your children or do your work if your greatest desire was to see praise go to God more than having praise come to you...

So, may we learn the lesson from a lunatic king...God is sovereign and will humble everyone who will not humble themselves. May we live in humility before God as God. May we depend on His power and live for His praise.