

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **A Warning to Every Proud Ruler**

Scripture: Daniel 4

Code: 90-450

Two weeks ago I took the opportunity to talk a little bit about the issues that our world and our country faces today, and I'm going to do that again this morning. And then I'm going to start a book. I'm not comfortable not teaching a book of the Bible, so we'll continue to do some Christ in the Old Testament on Sunday nights, but everybody's been kind of pushing me in the direction of "You need to do the gospel of John." Everybody loves the teaching concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. I did John in 1970, so I need to do it right; I need to get another shot at it. So we'll do that.

But starting a couple of weeks ago we took a look at the condition our country is in, our world is in—and I'm not trying to be political, I'm trying to help you understand what you're seeing in your world from a biblical perspective. And that's my responsibility before God.

We looked at Romans 1, and I want to take you back to Romans 1 because I want you to understand what is really the driving problem behind the collapse of our world. And it can be identified. I've heard a lot of political speeches in my life. No one should be sentenced to hearing very many, and I have certainly had to endure more than I would like. I've heard them in the recent years because of media, more frequently than ever. And I have never, I have never heard one world leader or one American politician state the real problem in this country and in this world—never, not even close. I assume that they don't know it or that they're afraid to say it. So I'm going to tell you what the problem is today—the problem with this country, the problem with the rest of the world, the problem with every nation, every leader, every ruler, every counsel, every committee, every assembly, every group that comes together. It's one problem: Romans 1, verse 28. "They didn't see fit to acknowledge God any longer." That's it; that's it.

Verse 21, "Though they knew God, they didn't honor Him as God or give thanks." So what happened? "They became empty in their speculations, their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools." The leaders of the world are essentially arrogant fools who have no hope of changing anything because they do not understand the problem. Problems in the world are not economic, financial, social, military; not problems of foreign policy, government policy, capitalism, free market, socialism. That's not the problem. The problem is not Iran, or an Iranian-induced nuclear war. The problem is not Muslim terrorists. Those are all symptoms of the problem. The problem is not abortion. The problem is not homosexuality. The problem is not sexual liberation. The problem is they didn't see fit to acknowledge God any longer.

That's the whole point of Romans 1. The wrath of God, verse 18, is revealed from heaven against those who have known God and glorified Him not as God, do not honor Him, do not thank Him, and thus they're empty in their ideas. Their foolish heart is darkened and they are arrogant fools and they are under judgment. God gave them over to sexual immorality, verse 24. God gave them over to homosexuality, verse 26. God gave them over in verse 28 to a reprobate, depraved, non-functioning mind, and the result is unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, envy, murder, strife, deceit, and so it goes. They are haters of God.

Not only do they do these things, verse 32 says, but they give hearty approval to those who practice them. And I told you that the Democratic Party has basically personified verse 32. They have given hearty approval to murder, hating God, homosexuality, sexual liberation. They have made the sins of Romans 1 their party platform, if you can believe that. This nation already is under divine judgment, the judgment of Romans 1. God has already turned us over to the lusts of impurity to dishonor bodies. This is a pornographic culture. God has turned us over again in verse 26 to lesbianism, homosexuality; verse 28, to depraved mind, can't think straight. That's why a coalition of leaders would come up with a party platform that advocates these iniquities and the murder of babies and give hearty approval of it. That's how depraved the mind is. That's how perverted the mind of the people who are supposed to be the elite leaders and educators of the world has become.

This election will show us to what degree this judgment is operating. If the same people are back in power, then the judgment is escalating. If the party that holds to a morality that we all understand and affirm gets into power, then the judgment is slowed down and we have a time of mercy, a reprieve, maybe a little more time, maybe a window of opportunity to honor God. But in any case, what happens in this election will be what God wants to happen. I have to vote against that kind of platform. My conscience demands that I do that. But it's not because I am politically involved. It's because I would always take a stand against anyone who would advocate immorality. We are already living this judgment out in America. If we continue to go in the same direction, then the judgment is speeded up. If we have a little reprieve for a few years, it's slowed down as a mercy from God. But whatever happens will be what God desires, 'cause He's in charge.

There is no political answer to the problems in this nation or the world. Fools gather to solve these problems who reject God, who reject God. I want to give you an illustration that will help you to see this in a vivid way. Turn in your Bibles to the fourth chapter of Daniel, the fourth chapter of Daniel. This is really one of the most amazing chapters in the whole Bible because it's the testimony of the most powerful pagan in the world at the time, a man named Nebuchadnezzar. It's a first-person testimony of what happens to a world ruler who sets himself against God, to borrow the words of Psalm 2. This is a powerful example of what happens to those who try to eliminate God. Much of America was outraged at the execution of our ambassador, and rightly should be outraged. But that is nothing compared to the execution of God going on in the world by nations across the globe. Killing

God is a serious crime for which the payment is eternally devastating.

Now what you have in the fourth chapter of Daniel is a testimony from Nebuchadnezzar. And the bottom line in this testimony is one statement that he repeats four times, and we'll see them as we go. And the statement is this: that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men. The Most High God rules in the kingdom of men. That is the message here, that God rules. Things don't happen by chance; they're not kismet; they're not fate—God rules in the kingdoms of men.

Listen to Jeremiah 13, "Listen and give heed, do not be haughty, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before He brings darkness...before your feet stumble on the dusky mountains...while you're hoping for light He turns it into deep darkness, and turns it into gloom....Say to the king and queen mother, 'Take a lowly seat, for your beautiful crown has come down from your head.'" Defy God and you will be judged. Fail to recognize that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and you will be judged.

You remember Herod in Acts 12 who declared that he was some great thing, and he was immediately struck by God, eaten by worms, and died on the spot. World leaders are consumed with arrogance, pride, boastfulness, narcissism. We see it in our own country in politicians. We see it in world leaders, consumed with themselves. Some of them talk about God, they use the word God, but they're not referring to the true and living God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in Holy Scripture. If you defy the God who is God, the true and living God, you will be judged. This is a marvelous look at that reality.

Let's start in verse 1. This is first person; this is the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar himself. It's very likely that Daniel recorded it and placed it in his book because the Spirit of God wanted him to do that. And this is the true testimony of Nebuchadnezzar.

"Nebuchadnezzar, the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: 'May your peace abound.'" Nebuchadnezzar wants to say something internationally. He wants to speak globally. He wants to speak to all the peoples and all the nations on the earth as far as he knows them—the known world. This is his personal testimony: I want to tell you all something, all you nations, all you people, all you languages, all you leaders. This is what I want to tell you. "It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders"...Words that refer to the miraculous workings of God, to declare the miracles..."which the Most High God has done for me. How great are His signs...how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generation to generation."

I'm just waiting for some ruler to stand up on CNN or Fox News and say that. And until they do, there will be no change. When have you heard someone say, "I want to talk about the Most High God, how great He is, how mighty He is. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. His dominion is from

generation to generation.” Stunning statement coming from a pagan idol worshiper.

Having said that’s what I want to say, he then does a little bit of a backtrack. How did he come to this point where he thought it was good to do this. Well, he’s going to give you his testimony. Verse 4, “I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house.” By ease he doesn’t mean he kicked off his sandals and he was lying on a couch. He means “I was at ease” in the sense of peace, prosperity, tranquility in my empire. There were no fears. There were no apprehensions. There were no enemies on the border. He had conquered the world, had he. He was resting in a time of peace and massive prosperity.

He goes on to say, “flourishing,” literally in Hebrew, “growing green”—“flourishing in my palace.” By the time he gives this testimony, he’s been king for 30 to 35 years, so he’s had time to build his massive empire. And this is the first great world empire. This is 25 years to 30 years after the fiery furnace, which happened early in his reign. Daniel, by now, is 45 to 50 years old because he came as a teenager. So Nebuchadnezzar’s done what no ruler in human history had ever done—built a world empire. And he’s in his palace, relishing all of this.

Verse 5, “I saw a dream and it made me fearful,” “it made me fearful”—terrified me. “And these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.” He was having this dream again and again and again. It blasted him out of his comfort. It was a terrifying dream. Pharaoh, you remember, was panicked by a dream. Pilate was panicked by a dream. And I think the more wicked a person is, the more likely it is that he would be panicked by dreams of horror. You know, Isaiah said in Isaiah 57 that “the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up dirt and mire. There is no peace...to the wicked.” But this isn’t that.

I’m sure he was an agitated man because of the horrible things he had done. But this is a divine dream, as God gave in ancient times on occasion. “So I gave orders,” verse 6, “to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon...they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream, [so I got] the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans, the diviners.” That would be all the segments of people who were the elite, literate, intellectual scholars and mystics, and I told the dream to them and “they couldn’t make its interpretation...to me.”

There you have a picture of where the world is today. Fools turning to a collection of fools for answers. The world is powerless to deal with spiritual reality. Things of God are hidden from the wise and the prudent, right? Revealed to babes. We know what’s wrong with the world; you know what’s wrong with the world; you know more about what’s wrong with the world than the leaders of the world, far more. This is the folly of human wisdom. It’s a ship of fools. There’s nobody on board who can help. You know, they were bad at this.

If you go back to chapter 2—he must have had a short memory—go back to chapter 2. He tried this once before and he asked them for answers and they couldn’t give him any, so they’re still around

with nothing to offer. They remind me of the United Nations, or the U.S. legislative branch—the folly of human wisdom, powerless to deal with reality because they don't recognize what the real issue is.

But finally, at last, maybe he was holding out till all the nonsense was over with—“Daniel came in before me.” This is all first-person testimony from Nebuchadnezzar whose name is Belteshazzar, Belteshazzar. That's important because Bel, the first three letters, similar to Baal, was the god of the Chaldeans, the god of the Babylonians, and the god of Nebuchadnezzar; he says that. He was named Belteshazzar, “according to the name of my god.” His god was Bel-merodach, that's why he named his son Ebel-merodach. So he had an idol; he had a god, a demon impersonating a god.

So when you come to this point in the story, he's a pagan, he's an idol worshiper. He's still worshiping Bel-merodach, even though early on he saw the uniqueness of Daniel and his friends when they wouldn't eat the king's meat, and he saw them pray faithfully and he saw them delivered from the fiery furnace—those are the miracles and signs and wonders that he saw. But still after 25 to 30 years of Daniel being around, he's still worshiping Bel.

Then Daniel comes and he says about Daniel, this is something wonderful: “In whom is a spirit of the holy gods” is the Hebrew word *Elohim, Elohim*; that's the word for “God.” That's used in Genesis for “God.” Why a plural for God? Because God is three in one. And there is no record anywhere where pagan gods were ever called holy. He's talking about the fact that Daniel has in him the Spirit of holy God.

How did he know that? Daniel's been there, I just said, 25 to 30 years. This isn't the first time Daniel came into the presence of this king, Nebuchadnezzar. He knew Daniel's theology. He knew that Daniel had a God who was holy, and that that holy God lived in him and enabled him and strengthened him and made him the man that he was.

Now let me tell you, just the parallel here. As long as human rulers look for answers among other fools, the answers will never come. They will not come until they listen to someone who knows holy God and in whom the Spirit of God lives and who can show them the revelation of God. We're here, but they don't want us.

So, there's no help. There's no help. So he says to Daniel—calls him Belteshazzar, and he does that in here because this is a decree, a testimony that is going to the whole world, and he will be known in that world by his Chaldean name, not by his Jewish name, so he uses it. And he calls him “chief of magicians.” Let's extend the word “magicians” beyond what you think; it means scholar. And even though it was mixed with what would be modestly scientific and magical, it's a word that refers to scholar, chief scholar. This guy knows more than anybody else. And I know that “a spirit”—again he says the same thing—“a spirit of the holy god is in you and”...I love this...“no mystery baffles you.” You have an answer from the holy God for everything. You have an answer from the holy God for

everything. There are no mysteries with you.

There's some hope here when a king turns away from the fools who had no answers to the one who has the Spirit of God in him and has the revelation of God coming to him. He had the word from the Lord.

And finally, this pagan king is ready to recognize that and he says, "Tell me the visions," verse 9, "of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretations." Tell me, explain to me, Daniel. You are wise; you are wiser than all of them because you have the Spirit of the holy God in you and the revelation of God comes to you. Tell me.

And then comes the recitation of the vision. "Now these were the visions," he says, "in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great. The tree grew large...became strong...its height reached to the sky...it was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its foliage was beautiful...its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it."

That's the vision. Trees, very commonly in ancient times, used to symbolize great rulers. Ezekiel refers to Pharaoh as a tree. You have a similar reference to an Amorite ruler in Amos 2. So what you have here is a beautiful, productive, growing, vast tree, dwelling by itself, dominating the landscape across the world. That's the first part of the vision. And even I can draw the conclusion that this is a picture of Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom.

But then comes a second, and this is the frightening part: "I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one." That's an angel, or whatever his perception of an angel was as God delivers this vision to him, "descended from heaven. He shouted out and spoke as follows: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip of its foliage and scatter its fruit; let the beasts leave from under it and the birds from its branches.'"

Well, that's the scary part—the devastation and destruction of the tree. Now remember, this is a massive tree in this dream, and it's a tree in which everyone and everything is encompassed, and when it is chopped down, everything is lost. But then there's this interesting statement in verse 15, "Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it." So you have a stump in the vision, after the tree has been cut down and everything scattered. You take the stump and you surround it with a fence made of iron and bronze to keep everyone away so no one can take the stump out of the ground. Place it in the new grass of the field and let it be drenched with the dew of heaven. Why? To keep it alive. "And let him"—"him"? Now we know the tree is a him. "Let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth."

It's a fascinating picture. The trunk with its roots remains as a stump, still alive, protected and watered so it stays alive. And now we hear him, and he—it's a man this symbolizes—and verse 16, "his...let his mind be changed from that of a man and let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time"...seven years..."pass over him." By the way, in chapter 7, verse 25, that same phrase, "seven times," or "seven periods," is used to refer to seven years. This is a judgment. Whoever this represents, whatever man that's symbolized in the tree, is going to be turned into an animal. He's literally going to lose his mind. Some have called this like lycanthropy, borrowing from the Latin word for "wolf"; or bovanthropy, borrowing from Latin for "ox." He's turned into a beast. And verse 17 says, "This sentence is by the decree of the watchers"...the angelic watchers..."and the decision is the command of the holy ones, in order that the living may know"...and here's the point..."that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men." God is in charge of who rules and who reigns. He lifts up leaders and he puts leaders down. This is the dream. This is the dream? And the purpose of the dream is to communicate the message that the Most High rules over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whom He wishes.

This is a warning to every proud ruler. The king has turned to Daniel. In verse 18 he says, "This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able." Again, third time, "For a spirit of the holy God is in you."

There's never going to be a change in a country, a nation, never going to be a change until people turn to the one who speaks for God, who represents God, who declares the revelation of God. And that is where Nebuchadnezzar has gone. So we have seen the recitation of the dream down through verse 18, and the request for an interpretation.

Now the revelation of the dream comes in verses 19 and following. So let's see how Daniel responds. "Then Daniel"...verse 19..."whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him." He wasn't confused. He's not appalled because he's confused; he's not confused. The Lord has delivered to him the interpretation. The king responded and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you." The king recognizes this is so stunning, so frightening, so devastating that Daniel doesn't really immediately want to say what it means. "Go ahead," he says. And Daniel's response is one of kindness and compassion.

"My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!" There's compassion in that. There's mercy in that. He knows who this is about, but he cares about this man. There's real compassion there. He knows that the interpretation is devastating. You know, "I wish," he says, "that it was about your enemies. I wish I didn't have to say this to you." I love that, you've got to step up and say what needs to be said, but you need to demonstrate compassion, as Daniel did. And so, he's going to be honest.

“The tree...you saw,” verse 20, “which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, in which there was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged.” Verse 22, “It’s you, O king, it’s you.” Like Nathan with David, “You’re the man, it’s about you, for you’re the one who has “become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.” It is you. There’s no other way to approach a leader than that. There’s no other way to approach a ruler than that. The judgment will fall on you. We say it with compassion, but we say it.

You say, “Well, what about leaders who confirm the existence of God.” That’s not enough. You can’t just affirm the existence of God—What God? The true God, the living God, and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the Triune God. Any other god is a false god. And the worship of any false god is animosity toward the true God. He says this is what’s going to happen to you, verse 23. “The king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven years pass over.’” I mean, “this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord, the king, you...you will be driven away from mankind, your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field...you will be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven years will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.” It’s you. It’s judgment on you. You’re going to be humiliated—humiliated, crushed, turned into a madman.

And then Daniel gives him a ray of hope in the vision. Verse 26, “In that day it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.” That’s the only time in the Old Testament that heaven is used in place of the term “God”—that refers to God.

“You’ll get your kingdom back when you acknowledge God. Until then, you will be a madman, a maniac, a beast. It was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree because your kingdom will be assured to you, but not until you recognize that it is heaven that rules.”

You know, that’s what the world has to recognize. The leaders of the world have to recognize that God rules and submit themselves to Him and obey Him and do His will as revealed in Holy Scripture. And that’s what Daniel says to his king. “Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.”



That's an invitation. And you know what he's saying? If you will repent and if you will go in the path of righteousness and acknowledge the true God, and it will be so genuine it will show up in a transformed life, which will be merciful rather than brutal as you have been. If you will turn from your sin, God will withhold the judgment. God will withhold the judgment.

This is a warning with a promise of blessing for repentance. But the king must break with sin and enter a righteous relationship with God. That's what we ought to be praying. You know it says in 1 Timothy 2, "Pray for those that are over you. Pray for the rulers and the kings." What are you praying? You should be praying for their salvation. You should be praying that they would hear the warnings of Scripture. You should be praying that they would turn from their sin and their wickedness and their unrighteousness to the living and true God. That's what that text in 1 Timothy 2 is saying. "For God our Savior is the mediator, the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Pray for their salvation.

Daniel is really saying what Isaiah said in Isaiah 55 when he said, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord...He will have mercy on him, and to our God, and He will abundantly pardon." This is an invitation to Nebuchadnezzar to repent. He pleads with him to repent, but he's like Felix in Acts who said, "When I have a convenient season, I'll call for you. On your way."

This is the mercy of God. God's going to give you some time. You remember Jonah said, "Forty days and this city's going to be destroyed." God gave Nineveh 40 days. And God gives Nebuchadnezzar twelve months until we see the realization of the dream. We saw the recitation, the revelation; here's the realization: "All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king," verse 28, "Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon," still worshiping Bel-merodach, still failing to repent. God is so patient, you know—twelve months for this man, 120 years for the antediluvian civilization. And during that 120 years, Noah preached righteousness and warned them. God always gives a time of warning. The Lord said to Samuel when he was mourning over Saul, "I gave him years, I gave him years and years to repent and change and now I've rejected him."

But Nebuchadnezzar was stiff-necked, proud, arrogant, brutal, inflated, bloated. You see it in what he's saying when he's there. Here's his testimony; this is his own testimony: "The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'" I've done it all. He looked at all he had and set himself above God. Now he's the first great world ruler; he's accomplished a lot. And he took all the credit for it. He was boasting, looking out over the massive Hanging Gardens of Babylon and many other things. They say there were at least 50 edifices that he built that were monuments to his power and wealth and genius. And so he's basking in all of this. Verse 31, "While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been

removed from you.”

Listen, sovereignty is given and removed by God. Rulers are where they are because God put them there. That’s His sovereignty in action. The rulers of the world are where they are because God has put them there for judgment or for good. You should learn that it is God who gives men kingdoms. It is the Most High, as we saw back in verse 17, who establishes rulers. Your sovereignty is removed.

Why this judgment on him? He had, first of all, rejected God and rejected the revelation of God. He was a vile, cruel, violent man—wanted to butcher a whole group of men back in chapter 2. Heated the furnace seven times hotter than normal to burn up the three young men. In Jeremiah 29 we read that he roasted two Jews. In 2 Kings 25 he took Zedekiah after the sack of Jerusalem and he put out his eyes. But before he put out Zedekiah’s eyes, he massacred his two sons in front of him so in his blindness the last vision he would have would be of his slaughtered sons. Second Kings 24 says he imprisoned 18-year-old King Jehoiakim and left him there for 36 years. He was a very evil man. He was arrogant. He was proud. He deserved judgment. Most of all, and the final reality, he refused to repent. And that’s always the issue. He refused to repent. Thunder breaks on his head. He becomes a madman. And everything God said happened to him. He was driven away from mankind: verse 33, “Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled;...he was driven away from mankind...began eating grass like cattle...his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.” He’s a horror. Everything that was promised came true. Seven years he crawled around on all four and ate grass and lived like an animal, a beast. God will bring down every proud heart, every proud ruler.

The end of the story is so wonderful. Verse 34, “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me.” God gave him back his reason. “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.”

You may be educated; you may be elite; you may be a lawyer; you may have been in the halls of power, but all that awaits a person who rejects God is madness and judgment. Again I say, I’m just waiting for someone to stand up in the halls of power and say, “I don’t have a depraved mind; I don’t have a reprobate mind; my reason has returned to me, and I bless the Most High and praise and honor Him who lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion and whose kingdom endures from generation to generation.” “All the inhabitants of the earth,” verse 35,” are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” God is doing in this world in everything that happens.

Nebuchadnezzar said, “I now understand; I’m not in charge. God’s in charge.” Finally acknowledges God. And there’s a good theology here. He acknowledges in the words that I read you that God is

eternal, omnipotent, immutable, superior, sovereign, powerful, true, just, compassionate, gracious, merciful. The only hope for the world, the only reprieve we get on final judgment is the salvation of leaders and the salvation of people. Fence around the stump protected the stump and for the seven years that he was out there, there was no other king in Babylon. Usually there would be a rush to fill the throne. But there was no other king. Maybe Daniel oversaw that. And when the time came, he came back and God restored him. And he's one of the first people I want to meet when I get to heaven.

Verse 36, "At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me to the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; and I was established in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me." Wow, even became a greater ruler. "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true...His ways are just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride." What an amazing, astonishing testimony.

I want to close by going back to Psalm 2 for just a moment. The nations are in an uproar; just turn on the news. People are trying to devise things that are useless. The kings of the earth are taking their stand. The rulers are having their counsels. The problem is, they're all set against the Lord and against His anointed, who is Christ, and they're all saying, "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast their cords from us!" We will not be obligated to Scripture, to the Word of God. He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury as He terrified Nebuchadnezzar, because He has established His King, the One who He has begotten, the one who will rule the nations and the ends of the earth and "break them with a rod of iron and shatter them like earthenware."

There is only one King, and that is God. And one anointed by that King and that is Christ. Verse 10, "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence." And verse 12, the Hebrew says, "Kiss the Son." "Kiss the Son, that He not become angry and you perish in the way." Kiss the Son or "His wrath will soon be kindled." That's what's going to happen to the world. The last line, "How blessed are all of us who found refuge in Him!"

What's wrong with our world? Rejected God; same thing that's always been wrong. What are the solutions to all of the things that come from that? The only solution is to worship God by honoring His Son, the only Savior, the only hope. People talk about hope and change. There's only one hope—that's Christ. There's only one change—that's regeneration. Otherwise nothing changes and there's no hope.

Father, we are again confronted by the relevance of Your Word, its power, its clarity. Though an ancient document, it knows more about current events than the folks that are living them. Thank You for the warning that is herein given; but the only hope for rulers and judges and kings and people is to

worship You with reverence and to kiss your Son, to embrace Your Son as Lord and Savior. The hope is there and nowhere else. We know that the Lord reigns, Psalm 93, the Lord reigns; Psalm 96, the Lord reigns; Psalm 97, the Lord reigns; Psalm 99, the Lord reigns. You reign over the affairs of men. You set up kingdoms and rulers and You have done that and You will continue to do that for Your own purposes—for judgment or for mercy. But You reign, and we acknowledge that, and we rejoice in that, and we thank You that no matter what happens in this world, we have found a refuge in You. You are our hiding place. You are our safe haven, a harbor of security through Christ. How we bless You that in the midst of a world plummeting toward judgment, we're in the ark who is Christ, and we'll ride out the flood into a new world. Thank You for this promise in Christ, in His name. Amen.

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