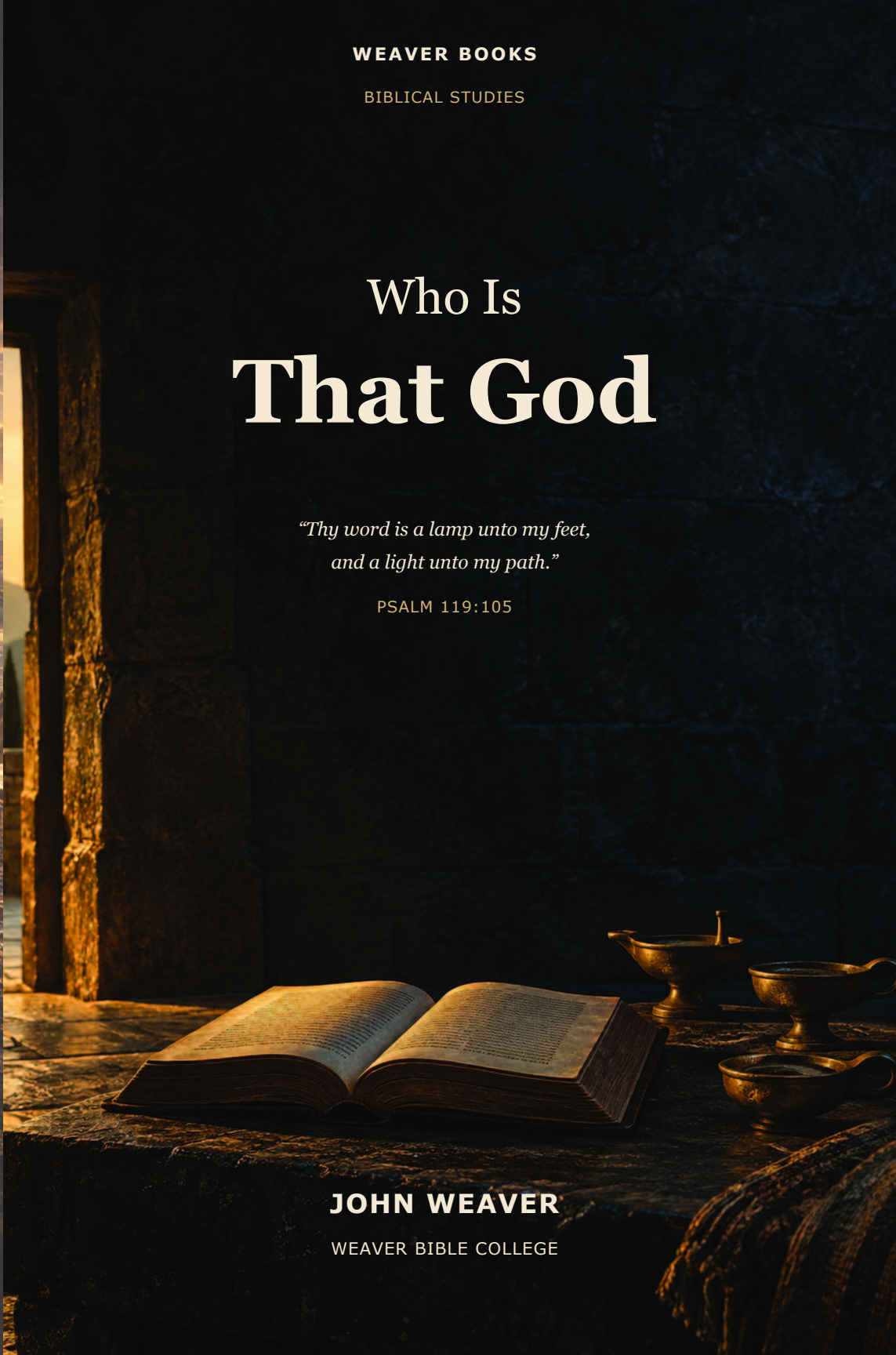
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Who Is That God

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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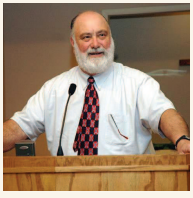
Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.

DANIEL 3:17, EXCERPT

Nebuchadnezzar's challenge in Daniel 3 raises a question about authority, worship, and confidence in God. John Weaver considers the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and their refusal to obey a command that contradicted their duty to God. These messages invite readers to examine both the confession and the conduct of faithful trust.

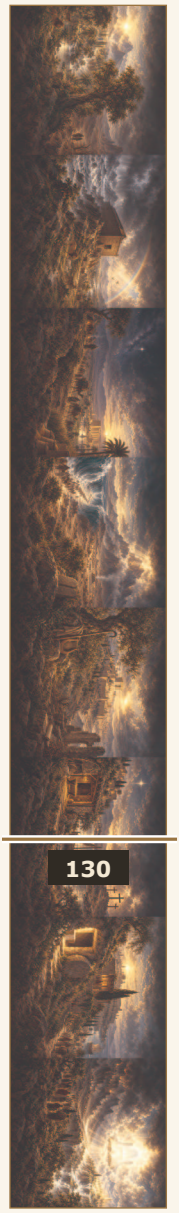
"We may not be delivered as dramatically as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but the fact that we are constantly and continually protected and delivered from death and destruction is no less marvelous or miraculous."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.



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Contents

Chapter 1: Who is That God - Part One of Two 5

Introduction: The Blasphemous Question 5

Other Rulers with the Same Attitude 6

Ignorance: Man by Nature Does Not Know God 7

Arrogance: Rulers Claiming to Be God 9

Nebuchadnezzar's View of God as Defeated 10

God's Sovereignty vs. Human Sovereignty 12

The Response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego 15

The Miraculous Deliverance and Its Impact 17

Applications: Sovereignty Demands Obedience 19

Chapter 2: Who Is That God That Humbles Civil Rulers? 21

Introduction and Review 22

Daily Deliverance and God's Faithfulness 23

Nebuchadnezzar's Confession and Lingering Pride 24

The War Over Sovereignty Since the Fall 25

Civil Rulers and the Rejection of God's Law 26

Daniel's Counsel and Nebuchadnezzar's Judgment 28

The Nature of Nebuchadnezzar's Madness 29

The Heart as the Mind 31

The Vanity of Earthly Greatness 32

Restoration and Lessons Learned 33

Applications for Believers 35

Closing Prayer 37

Topical Index 41

Scripture Index 43

Study Guide Link 45

CHAPTER 1

Who is That God

Part One of Two

Introduction: The Blasphemous Question

I am going to be reading from one of the most familiar stories in the Bible. The message I start today I really will not finish until next Sunday, so this is going to be a two-part message. You will understand the title momentarily.

"They spake and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, the flute, the harp, the sackbut, the psaltery, the dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”

Other Rulers with the Same Attitude

Note that question Nebuchadnezzar asked: “And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” You and I would sit here today and say, “What utter blasphemy.” Yet do you realize there are other civil rulers in the Word of God that issued the same blasphemous questions and remarks? For instance, hold Daniel 3, but go back in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 18.

Rabshakeh, a representative of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, said in 2 Kings 18:29, "Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand." He continued, "Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria."

Then, in verse 33, he asked, "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?" And in verse 35: "Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?"

In other words, Sennacherib's attitude was this: I've conquered all the other countries. I've conquered their gods. Who does the LORD think He is that He can stop me from conquering Judah and Jerusalem?

In Exodus 5:2, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, had the same attitude: "And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go."

Pharaoh did not recognize any God above himself. He claimed not only supremacy, but sovereignty as well. His attitude was, Your God is helpless; I do not acknowledge Him or His power. Thus, you find three rulers—Nebuchadnezzar, Sennacherib, and Pharaoh—with this attitude.

When men ask blasphemous questions, they display two very damning attributes. First, they display their ignorance. They have no idea who the one true and living God is. They do not know Him, because God has not revealed Himself unto them.

You remember the Apostle Paul in Acts chapter 17, when he was preaching on Mars Hill. He said, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions," for they had an altar to practically every god imaginable. Then he said, "I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." These Athenians had altars to every god imaginable, and, just in case they had left one out of which they were unaware, they had an altar to the unknown god. The truth is that man by nature does not know who God is. He does not know the one true and living God.

Ignorance: Man by Nature Does Not Know God

Many of you will remember what our Lord said in John chapter 4 and verse 10 to the Samaritan woman. He had asked her to give Him a drink of water, and she asked, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" Our Lord said, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

But the whole point is that she did not know Christ. She did not know who He was, nor did she know anything about eternal life or the gift of God. First Corinthians 2:14 explains this clearly: "But the natural man," the unsaved man, man by nature without grace, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Man by nature thinks everything in relationship to God is pure foolishness. He does not have the ability or capacity to know God or the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned.

So obviously, Nebuchadnezzar, Sennacherib, and Pharaoh, in asking such blasphemous questions, were merely displaying their ignorance. Their ignorance is also reinforced by the simple fact that God can only be known by divine revelation. Our Lord Himself, in John 1 and 18, said this: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, that is Christ, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.

In Luke 10:22, our Lord said it like this: “All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.” It cannot be more plainly stated than that which we are about to read. Who knows the Son? The Father. Who knows the Father? The Son. How do you get to know the Father? Only because the Son reveals Him. How do you get to know the Son? Only because the Father reveals Him.

In other words, without divine revelation, without divine illumination, no one can know who God is. Period. Do you remember when our Lord came into Caesarea Philippi in Matthew 16? He looked at His disciples and asked them, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” Well, some said that you are Elijah, Elias, or one of the prophets. And then He said, “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter responded and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." He did not say, "Well done Peter. You're smarter than everyone else. You figured this thing out all by yourself." Neither did He say, "Well done Peter. Because someone told you ahead of time the answer to this question." The only way Peter knew who Christ was was through divine revelation. It does not matter how high you are in the world or how low you are, how rich you are or how poor you are; the only way that you can know God is by divine revelation and divine illumination. No one can know the Father apart from the Son, and no one can know the Son apart from the Father. So when

Nebuchadnezzar came up with this question, "And who is that God?" he was displaying, first of all, his absolute ignorance. Secondly, the question displayed not only his ignorance, but his arrogance.

Arrogance: Rulers Claiming to Be God

Will men challenge God? The answer is yes. Will men even present themselves as God? The answer again is yes. In 2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 4, the Bible says, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." Some men are so arrogantly blasphemous that they portray themselves as God.

So Nebuchadnezzar, Sennacherib, and Pharaoh, in their arrogance, were unwilling to acknowledge and confess that there might be someone above them, someone who had more power than they possessed. Especially as you read in the Old Testament—and it is true in the New Testament as well—you have to remember that most pagan rulers always claimed to be God. Sometimes they claimed to be a god; at times they claimed to be the only god.

They believed that they had an absolute right to establish their own worship and their own religion. In some cases, much of society was polytheistic; that is, they believed in many gods. But you will always come to this realization: the civil ruler always claimed to be the chief god. It did not matter how many other gods were out there; he was at the top of the totem pole, so to speak. He was the chief. Is it any wonder that these civil rulers would recognize other gods while setting themselves up as God? Why were they willing to recognize gods other than themselves? They acknowledged these other gods in order to prove to the people that they were a god themselves.

Most of these ancient religions were state religions: the worship of the state, the worship of the emperor. Some of you are old enough to remember Hirohito in World War II—emperor worship. The same thing was true of Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Sennacherib, and the Caesars. The same thing is true today. They were worshipped as God, and the only reason these civil rulers would acknowledge the lesser gods was for the benefit of the state.

They used religion to control the people, to keep them in awe, and to keep them in check. The worship of the lesser god led to the worship of the civil ruler as God. Since the civil ruler claimed to be God, listen carefully: his military accomplishments demonstrated his power as God. You should read some of these ancient inscriptions. For instance, Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal would say: "I came, I conquered, I killed many. Look at my power." It was their military power, might, and prowess that demonstrated they were God.

Now Nebuchadnezzar says to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, "Who is that God that will deliver you out of my hand?" There was a military reason for that question. Nebuchadnezzar had burned the temple of God, destroyed Jerusalem, broken down its walls, and made slaves of the people.

Nebuchadnezzar's View of God as Defeated

Since God did not deliver the city, His temple, or His people, what made these three Hebrew children think that He was going to deliver them? Nebuchadnezzar thought, "I've already defeated that God. Look at His temple, His city, and His people. Your God is helpless. I've whipped Him. I've defeated Him." Thus he viewed the God of Israel as impotent and helpless. If God would not deliver His temple, city, and people, what made them think He would deliver three men? Therefore he said, "Who is that God that will deliver you out of my hand?" His attitude was simple: "Your God is a defeated God. He's not powerful enough to protect His temple, His city, or His people, and He's certainly not powerful enough to take you out of My hands."

In Daniel chapter 2, verse 47, Daniel has already had a run-in with Nebuchadnezzar. This is something that preceded Daniel chapter 3. Daniel has already interpreted the dreams when no one else could, and Nebuchadnezzar makes a startling confession: “The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.”

You say, “Well, he already knew who God was?” No, he did not know who God was. Notice what he is saying: “Daniel, your God can

reveal secrets. He cannot fight, but He can reveal secrets. He is good in that area, but He is just not a fighter. He is just not a warrior."

Do you understand the reason for polytheism? The reason there were so many gods that the heathen had was because no one god was sovereign. No one god had all power. In other words, what they believed in was this: a localized god with localized power. Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 20. Let us begin reading there with verse 23. First Kings chapter 20, beginning there with verse 23.

Israel has already fought with the king of Syria and defeated him. Notice, if you would, the advice that is given to the king of Syria now: "And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms: And number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they."

"And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so. And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Benhadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel. And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country. And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD."

Notice what the heathen said: "The reason we lost that war, He was the God of the hills. We made the mistake. We fought on the ground and on the terms of the localized God. But now, He can't be God of the valleys as well. He only has to be God of the hills, so we'll fight in the plain or in the valleys and surely we're going to be stronger because the God of the hills cannot be the God of the valleys." So Nebuchadnezzar then was willing to recognize, "Yes, your God is indeed a revealer of secrets."

God's Sovereignty vs. Human Sovereignty

"He's got power to do that. But he can't fight. He's not a warrior. He is not sovereign. Oh, he may have had some power. But it was not as powerful as Nebuchadnezzar."

Habakkuk chapter 1, verse 6, says: "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs."

"They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand."

"And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god." Now go back to verse 6: "Lo, I will raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation." God said, "I've chosen the Babylonians to whip Judah."

"He's going to be my rod. He's going to be my staff. He's going to be my switch. I chose Him and I'm going to give Him a charge. I'm going to send Him through the land to whip those people for their rebellions and their wickednesses and their disobediences." But Nebuchadnezzar changed his mind. It is no longer God sending him; he is now imputing this power unto his god.

As you shall see a little bit later, he himself refuses to give God honor and glory. The Assyrians did the same thing. You can read about that in Isaiah chapter 10. He is saying, "Look, this victory is my victory. This is my power. I'm the one that did this."

Now look in Daniel chapter 3 at this truth. Those Chaldeans who were jealous of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego informed Nebuchadnezzar that these men were not bowing down to his god. "Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?"

"Do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready, I'm going to give you a second chance. If ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

That kind of reminds me of what old Fighting Joe Hooker said to the Union Army. When he came against General Lee and Stonewall Jackson, Lee and Jackson were greatly outnumbered. Old Hooker said, “May God have mercy on General Lee, for I shall have none.” But I have news for you: God did have mercy on General Lee, and General Hooker lost the battle. But what God is this? “Who is this God that deliver you out of mine?”

“I’ll give you a second chance, boys. You better bow down when you hear the music, because I want you to know, I’ve already defeated your God. Your God is not going to deliver you.” But notice, if you would, when he heard it in verse 13, the Bible said, “Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury.” The word fury literally means wrath. Here was a king, a monarch bent out of shape, a man in a rage.

He was a man of violent passions, very excitable, and evidently had deep religious feelings for his god. He was saying, “Boys, I gave a command. I commanded everyone to bow down when that music played. You didn’t do it. You get one more shot. If you don’t bow down this time, I’m going to vindicate myself, my power, my sovereignty, my supremacy. I will throw you into that burning fiery furnace. And who is that God that will deliver you out of my hand?”

Nebuchadnezzar was explaining his supreme power and authority to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He implied that his order demonstrated his sovereignty: “You’re not allowed to deliberate on this order, think about it, or have thoughts of your own. I gave the

order. That's sufficient. You simply obey me. I erected this statue purposely, deliberately, decidedly. This is what I want. If you don't do what I'm telling you, it is a direct offense to me, a slap in my face, a denial of my kingship, power, authority, and supremacy."

This statue that Nebuchadnezzar had erected may not have been merely a representation of his god. In all probability, it represented Nebuchadnezzar himself, who was claiming to be God. Look back in your Bibles to Daniel 2:38. When Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he said, "And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold." Nebuchadnezzar had made this golden image, and in all probability the head represented Nebuchadnezzar. He was saying, "This is my god, it's true, but I am my god." He was the one represented on that statue, declaring, "You better acknowledge my deity. You better acknowledge my supremacy." Thus, refusal to bow down and worship was refusal to recognize Nebuchadnezzar as God. That is probably why he was so enraged, furious, and wrathful.

Understand this carefully. Religion, and Christianity in particular, mean nothing to the rulers of the earth except as they serve them in accomplishing their program and policy. The only reason civil rulers will have anything to do with religion in general, and Christianity in particular, is to elevate themselves in the eyes of the world. They have no desire to submit to the one true and living God.

Look back in your Bibles to Psalm 2:1: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

In other words, "We don't want anything to do with God. We don't want God's limitation upon us. We don't want God's boundaries, law, or commandments. We'll use him, we'll use Christianity, and we'll use religion, but nobody's going to tell us what to do." The rebellion of civil rulers demonstrates that they have no desire for Jesus Christ. If they were in submission to Christ, they would obey Him and His law instead of trying to substitute their own law.

Here is what is happening, what has happened, and what will happen in the future: men will deny God's sovereign authority only to establish their own. That's exactly what Nebuchadnezzar was doing. Have you ever stopped to think about this? If God is not sovereign, who is? You can only have one sovereign, one ultimate, one absolute. The words sovereignty, absolute, and ultimate are mutually exclusive in the sense that there cannot be any other. If you deny that God is sovereign, the truth is, you must have a sovereign somewhere. You must acknowledge something.

So Nebuchadnezzar looked at those boys and said, "If you hear the sound of the music, if you bow down, fine; we'll get along okay. Just so you recognize my authority, my sovereignty. But if you don't, who is that God that will deliver you out of my hands?" Nebuchadnezzar did not think too highly of the one true and living God. In fact, he did not think too highly of anyone but himself.

But look in Daniel 3, because his challenge did not go unheeded. After he said in verse 15, "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"—in other words, "There's no God strong enough to take you out of my hands"—verse 16 says, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Note that they said, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter."

The Response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

That simply means this: we do not have to think about it, meditate upon it, ponder it, concentrate upon it, or wait. We will tell you our answer right now. You have to remember that their lives were at stake. Humanly speaking, death was almost certain for these young men, and it would have been a painful death as well. But they said, “We’re not careful to answer.” Their answer was undeniable and unequivocal:

“Our God can deliver us. He can. He’s sovereign.”

Whether He chooses to do so is His business. We do not know whether He will or will not. But we know one thing: we will not bow down. We will not recognize your gods. There are no other gods. Our God is sovereign. He is ultimate. He is the absolute. We are not going to recognize you, Nebuchadnezzar. We are not going to recognize your program, your policy, or your government. There is only one God.

Look at verse 19: “Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury,” and “the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” He had tried to present himself as merciful, giving them one more opportunity. “Therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.”

What would make this man so enraged? Why heat the furnace seven times hotter than normally? If they were thrown into a furnace that hot, they would probably be killed instantaneously. Why was he so enraged? Here’s why: his sovereignty was challenged. His supremacy was challenged. His deity was challenged.

You are going to have problems with civil government when you challenge its authority, deity, supremacy, or sovereignty. He said, “Look, boys, I’m God.” They said, “No, you’re not.” Their answer not only crushed his ego, but denied his godhood, power, and authority.

It is important to note that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were willing to die for their faith in God, even a painful death. They did not know that God would deliver them. They said, “Be it known to you, O King, our God can deliver us out of thine hand.”

“But if not, if he doesn't, be it known unto you, we will not serve thy gods, nor bow down, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

Recognizing God’s sovereignty means that we are willing to obey Him at all costs and leave the results and consequences of our obedience in His hands. When you say that God is sovereign, you are saying there is no other God. He has the right to give the orders and His commandments, and I am obligated, duty bound, and responsible to obey Him. The results and consequences of my

obedience are left entirely in His hands. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not know that God was going to deliver them.

The Miraculous Deliverance and Its Impact

He did so, thankfully. But if you believe, confess, and acknowledge that our God is sovereign, it means that obedience is mandatory. Obedience is obligatory. Our obedience is not determined by our circumstances or situations; it is determined by God's Word. God said it, and that is sufficient. We obey.

Believing God's sovereignty in your mind is easy if you believe the Scripture. What is difficult is applying that truth to your everyday life. Believing God's sovereignty means that you yield your bodies to Him and obey Him. Look in your Bibles to Daniel 3:28: "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God."

What would it have cost Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had God not delivered them? Their lives, their bodies, everything. What impressed this heathen king was that they were willing to yield their bodies. It is one thing to understand that God is sovereign. It is another thing to apply that truth and understand that you are responsible to obey Him in every area of your life, including yielding your body, even if it comes to a life-and-death situation.

The outcome of this story is very miraculous. In verse 27, the princes, governors, captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power: "nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them." What really impressed Nebuchadnezzar and his counsellors was not only that these young men were not burned to a crisp; their hair was not even singed, and the smell of fire was not upon them.

Look in verse 25. Nebuchadnezzar was astounded because he said, "Then answered he and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the

fourth is like the Son of God." What amazed Nebuchadnezzar was that he saw four men, though he knew he had thrown only three into the fire. He saw four men walking around loose; in other words, they were acting as though they were at a Sunday school picnic, enjoying the fellowship and the warm weather.

There is a controversy here, and I am not going to get into that. Some scholars say this was a Christophany. A Christophany is a pre-incarnate appearing of Jesus Christ in the flesh, before He actually became flesh. He was born in the flesh only in the New Testament, but He appears here in the flesh. There are Christophanies in the Old Testament. Some would say that this was a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearing of Jesus Christ. My question is this: If this was a pre-incarnate appearing of Jesus Christ, how could a pagan king recognize the Son of God?

Isaiah 53 tells us that multitudes saw Him, and He was not desirable. They did not recognize Him. How could he do it? Then, in verse 28, "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his"—what?—"His angel."

The point is this: it really does not matter, in one sense of the word, whether you call this a Christophany or not. He may have been there, or God could have sovereignly sent His angel. It does not matter in that sense, because the results were absolutely the same. Look in verse 29: "Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort."

Nebuchadnezzar had asked, "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Ask that question again, Nebuchadnezzar: "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?" God said, "Hold on a minute. I will show you."

"I am the Sovereign, Eternal, Immutable, Infinite, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Majestic, Sovereign God of Heaven and Earth. I can do it." And He did it. We know who the Sovereign God

is. He is the One True and the Living God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. He is the God who delivers.

Applications: Sovereignty Demands Obedience

Let me make two applications. First, it is a fact—a biblical truth—that most rulers do not know Christ, nor do they wish to know Christ. Why? Because to know Him, you must bow to Him, submit to Him, and obey Him. What did our Lord say? "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If Christ is your Lord, you must obey Him. If rulers acknowledge the sovereignty of Christ, they must deny their own sovereignty. If they acknowledge the supremacy of God's laws, they must confess that their own laws are worthless. There are exceptions, but very few civil rulers really know Christ and are genuinely in submission to Him.

Second, if you genuinely believe that God is sovereign, you will obey. You will yield your bodies to Him—in morality, in your family life, in your social life, everywhere you go and everywhere you turn. You will obey Him regardless of the circumstances and the situation, because He is the one true and living God, and beside Him there is none other.

We worship and serve Him alone. The God who delivers after this sort, even according to a pagan king, deserves to be worshiped and honored. No one can deny that He is God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we thank You for Your love. We thank You for Your mercy. We thank You for Your truth. We thank You for being God, the God who delivers.

Lord, we praise Thee for all the marvelous, miraculous deliverances that You've given us in our lives. Help us, Lord, to trust in Thee and to yield our bodies only unto Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Who Is That God That Humbles Civil Rulers?

SCRIPTURE READING - Daniel 4:24-37 (KJV)

This is the second message on "Who Is That God?" Daniel chapter four, beginning there with verse 24. "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most high, which has come upon my lord the king. Now they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility." All this came upon king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months, he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake

> and said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most high, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation.

"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

Introduction and Review

Last week we looked at the first message, "Who Is That God?" When Nebuchadnezzar asked that question, it was asked not only in ignorance, but also in arrogance. Other rulers, like Sennacherib and Pharaoh, essentially asked the same thing because they claimed

sovereignty for themselves. They thought themselves to be God, with no one higher, more supreme, or more sovereign than they were.

If we genuinely believe in God's sovereignty, as did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, it means that we obey Him at all times, under every circumstance and situation, and leave the results and consequences of our obedience in His hands. Nebuchadnezzar threatened them. They said, "Our God can deliver us, but whether He delivers us or not, it doesn't matter. We're not going to obey you." So Nebuchadnezzar asked, "Who is that God that can deliver you out of my hands?" He received his answer. It is indeed the sovereign, eternal, immutable, infinite, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent God of heaven and earth, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, who can and did deliver out of Nebuchadnezzar's hand.

He is the same God that delivered in those days, the same God that delivers today, and the same God who will deliver tomorrow. He is still in the delivering business. We may not be delivered as dramatically as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but the fact that we are constantly and continually protected and delivered from death and destruction is no less marvelous or miraculous.

Daily Deliverance and God's Faithfulness

You and I receive protection and deliverance on a daily, even hourly, basis. We are told in Lamentations 3:22-23, “It is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” Have you praised God for His deliverance of you during the night, and for allowing you to awaken this morning? When you go to bed at night, do you praise God for allowing you to live through the day? God has sovereignly, miraculously, and marvelously delivered you through each day and night. Learn to give God daily and nightly praise. Since Nebuchadnezzar asked, “And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” he certainly received his answer. God showed him. Yet Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance remained, and he presumed to ignore the truth of God's sovereignty.

Nebuchadnezzar's Confession and Lingering Pride

What happened in Daniel 4 is intimately connected with what happened in Daniel chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar made startling confessions in Daniel 4. In the first three verses he declared: "Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the most high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation."

Although Nebuchadnezzar made this confession, he was still arrogant and full of self and pride. He had a problem with the truth that God had set him up and made him king. He still believed everything revolved around him, and that everything he had and was resulted from his work and power, for his honor and glory.

Nebuchadnezzar said it very plainly: "The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Everything, according to Nebuchadnezzar, had to be about Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had told him, "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." Daniel had told him, "Yes, you're a mighty king. Yes, you're a great king. But the only reason you're mighty, the only reason you're great, the only reason you're powerful, the only reason you have a kingdom is because God made you that." Yet Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel chapter 4, was still having a problem acknowledging God's sovereignty and supremacy. Nebuchadnezzar was like most politicians: he wanted to say one thing and act entirely differently. He may have said with his mouth, "Yes, he has a kingdom that's an everlasting kingdom and his kingdom is from generation to generation." But his actions demonstrated that he genuinely did not believe that. He still thought in some way that he was supreme.

The full title is this: "Who Is That God That Humbles Civil Rulers?" Nebuchadnezzar found out exactly who He was. He is the same God that has humbled civil rulers in times past, is still humbling them today, and shall humble them in the future.

Especially in light of everything happening in our country, it is high time that all our civil rulers truly find out who is in charge and who is sovereign. I can assure you, it is not a human, finite, civil ruler. It is only the sovereign God of heaven and earth. They need to understand and recognize that.

The War Over Sovereignty Since the Fall

This war that raged between Nebuchadnezzar and God has raged ever since the fall of man—not just between civil rulers and God, but between men and God as well. The war is indeed a war over sovereignty. Before the fall, Adam, created in original righteousness, holiness, and dominion, was willing for God to be God. But when Adam sinned, he tried to usurp the authority and position of God. In essence, he tried to dethrone God and enthrone himself. In Genesis 3 and verse 5, the serpent told Eve, "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

"And ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The Hebrew word for "knowing" has the force of "determining." So literally, what he said is this: "You shall be as gods, determining good and evil." Here is the temptation: You do not need God to tell you what is right and wrong or what to do. If you eat this fruit, you will become your own god and determine for yourself what is good and evil, what is right and wrong.

You can make your own law. You can be your own god. Thus, when Adam took that fruit and when Eve took that fruit, they both were attempting to dethrone God and enthrone themselves. Remember this: It is a sovereign who establishes law. A king rules by his law. In Isaiah 33:22 we are told, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us." King, lawgiver, and judge are all rolled up in the sovereignty of God. What has happened ever since the fall of man is that a war has been raging, and it is a war over sovereignty. Who is sovereign? Who is supreme?

Why do men usurp authority, steal authority, and abuse authority? Because they like to play God. They believe somehow that they can make their own law and do their own thing. Nebuchadnezzar was such a civil ruler. It is not just pagan or

apostate civil rulers who like to play God, although Nebuchadnezzar is the example we are using in Daniel chapter 4. It is not just the multitudinous civil rulers in times past, in times present, and those yet to come who like to play God. No, every man in some degree wants to play God. He wants to be his own sovereign and make his own law. Anytime anyone refuses to bow to the one sovereign God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and obey His Word, he is waging war against God and attempting to become his own god and establish his own law.

It does not matter what people say, in one sense of the word. I have heard plenty of Christians say, "The Lord Jesus Christ is God." They acknowledge that, and then live their lives as if He were not God. I want you to stop and remember what our Lord said. In Luke 6, He said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?" If He is our God, if He is our Sovereign, we should obey Him. It is our lives, our sins, and our rebellions that deny our professions. I think it was Paul who wrote in Titus 1:16, "They profess that they know Him, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

So it is not just civil rulers; it is man as well. The tendency to play God is more easily and readily seen in civil rulers because they have the opportunity, the platform, and the available resources to exercise absolute power. Since God is sovereign and has all power, when a civil ruler tries to usurp that power or position and become sovereign, he has to demonstrate his sovereignty through tyranny, totalitarianism, and despotism.

Why? You cannot disobey God in one sense of the word—you can when you go against His revealed will—but God also has a secretive will, according to Deuteronomy 29:29, and the Lord is able to work everything out. Man is not like that. Man says, "This is what I want, this is what my will is, and you will do it or I will make you do it." If they claim to be God, they must exercise their sovereignty through totalitarianism, tyranny, and despotism.

Civil Rulers and the Rejection of God's Law

You remember the passage we read last week from Psalm 2:1–3. Psalm 2 explains it: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people

imagine a vain thing?" The word "vain" means something useless and worthless. Why do the people imagine a useless, worthless thing? "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

In essence, the civil rulers say, "We do not like God's limitations. We do not like God being God. We do not like God's boundaries or God's law. We want to establish our own boundaries, our own limitations, and our own law."

That is why, in Hosea 5:10, God said, "The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water." "The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound"—that is, the boundaries. They did not like to be confined, and they did not like to obey God. God says, "Because they have removed my boundaries, therefore I will pour my wrath out upon them like water." They demonstrate their contempt for God by refusing to recognize Him, bow to Him, or serve Him. They demonstrate their contempt by refusing to obey His laws, seeking to abrogate them, nullify them, overthrow them, and establish their own laws.

Turn in your Bible to Psalm 94:20. I have shared this verse with you many times. It is one of my favorite verses, and it explains so clearly what I am talking about. Here is the question: "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?"

Before we answer the question, let us analyze the verse. "Shall the throne"—a throne speaks of government, power, and a king. But note that it is a throne of iniquity, which means it is a wicked king or a wicked civil government. "Shall the throne of iniquity," shall a wicked civil government, "have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" In the Bible, mischief is another word for sin.

Shall a wicked civil government have fellowship with thee which makes sin legal? Shall a wicked civil government that tries to overthrow God, dethrone God, enthrone itself, violate God's law, and make its own law in opposition to God's law have fellowship with

God? No. God is not going to bless, support, or countenance such governments. God's not going to honor a government that tries to overthrow His law.

What did God say in Isaiah 42 and verse 8? "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." God is not going to honor a wicked civil ruler or a wicked civil government.

Please understand that the word sovereign is an exclusive word. There can only be one sovereign, only one ultimate, only one supreme. That one ultimate, absolute, supreme, and sovereign can never ever be a finite human civil ruler. It can only be the one true and living God. God is not going to share His sovereignty. This one concept ought to throw the divine right of kings into absolute turmoil. If God shared His sovereignty, He would not be sovereign.

Daniel's Counsel and Nebuchadnezzar's Judgment

Go back to Daniel chapter 4 and see this whole passage in terms of sovereignty. Daniel is speaking to King Nebuchadnezzar, and in verse 27 he says, "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility."

What is Daniel counseling Nebuchadnezzar to do? He is counseling him to repent, to break off his sins, and to replace those sins with deeds of righteousness: "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." If Daniel is counseling Nebuchadnezzar to break off his sins by righteousness, who is it that defines righteousness, and where do we find righteousness? In God's Law, in God's Word. Daniel's counsel is: You repent. You submit to God and to His Law. You do what He tells you to do. You obey Him.

"If it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility." In other words, Nebuchadnezzar, if you want peace, long life, and a long-lasting kingdom, you repent and obey God. Nebuchadnezzar refused to repent and obey. In fact, God was gracious to Nebuchadnezzar in that He gave him twelve months to turn from his wickedness.

"At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon." Isn't that amazing? For twelve months after Daniel had counseled him to break off his sins by repentance and obey God, Nebuchadnezzar had thrown away and wasted twelve months. A whole year had gone by. His mind was unchanged, and his sins were unrepented of. Look in verse 28: "All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar."

What was it that came upon him? Listen carefully. He lost his kingdom, and he lost his mind. In verse 30, "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee." There is the loss of his kingdom. "And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." There is the loss of his mind. So what did Nebuchadnezzar lose? His kingdom and his mind.

A lesson needs to be learned, and a truth needs to be emphasized: sooner or later, all wicked rulers will learn that it is God who rules in the kingdom of men, and that He gives the kingdom to whomsoever He wills.

The Nature of Nebuchadnezzar's Madness

I do not get bent out of shape over the Illuminati, the new world order, the Council of 13, the Club of Rome, or the Committee of 300. Why? Because God is on the throne, and God is going to bring them down. They are going to learn a lesson just like Nebuchadnezzar. They will learn clearly and distinctly that God is sovereign. They will find that out either in salvation or condemnation, but they will find it out.

Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind. Those who refuse to bow to Jesus Christ and acknowledge Him, His sovereignty, and His law have already lost their minds. It is only a matter of time. As soon as God permits, they will lose their power and their kingdom as well.

The Bible says in verse 32, “...and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee.” Seven times is simply the Chaldean way of saying seven years. For seven years Nebuchadnezzar will not have a kingdom, and for seven years he will be insane.

In verse 33, “The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws.” This is a condition known as boanthropy, a form of madness in which the victim imagines himself to be an ox, or more specifically, a bovine—a cow. That is how you get the word boanthropy: anthropos is the word man, and bo comes from bovine. It amounts to a man living like a cow.

This is not the only such incident recorded in history. John Gill, in his commentary, quotes Eben Ezra, who reports that on one of the islands in Sardinia, a man fled from his parents, lost his reason, and lived among deer for many years. He went upon his hands and feet like them. One day the king of the island went hunting and caught many deer, among them this man, who was taken for one of the animals. His parents came, owned him, and spoke to him, but he did not answer.

They set bread and wine before him, but he refused them. Then they gave him grass with the deer, and he ate it. In the middle of the night he escaped again to the deer of the field. What can you say? He was insane. The same thing happened to Nebuchadnezzar. He would learn the hard way: he would suffer madness, live like an animal, and be given the heart of a beast.

Daniel 4:16 says, “Let his heart be changed from man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.” For seven years he would not have the heart of a man, but the heart of a beast.

Daniel 4:23 says, "And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one"—that would be an angel—"coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the

roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him." So here again, seven years.

The Heart as the Mind

But note specifically that God says, "Let his heart be changed from a man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him." I have preached for many years a message entitled "Keeping the Heart," from Proverbs 4:23. I will be absolutely honest with you: it is a message I preach to myself every day. I think it is one of the most fundamental, elementary, and necessary messages of this day and time. In that message, I demonstrate that the heart is the mind. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Notice, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." That is based on Proverbs 23:7: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." The heart is indeed the mind; it is our reasoning and our understanding.

Matthew 15 explains this. Peter said, "Declare unto us this parable." And Jesus said, "Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?"

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

Our Lord said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders." You cannot commit any sin until you first think about it. Whether adultery, murder, fornication, or theft, you must first think about it. Thus, "Out of the heart proceed all of these evil thoughts."

Go back in your Bibles, if you would, to Daniel chapter 4. The heart is the mind, the reason, and the understanding; that is where all sin begins. You cannot act until you first think, and you do what you do because you think the way you think. “As the man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Daniel chapter 4 specifically identifies the heart with the mind and reasoning. Consider verse 16: “Let his heart be

changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him." It was his heart that was changed. Now go down to Daniel 4 and verse 34.

After seven years, "At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me." I thought it was his heart that was changed. It was his understanding, or his mind, or his reasoning ability. He says it again in verse 36: "At the same time my reason returned unto me." What two things did Nebuchadnezzar lose? He lost his kingdom, and he lost his mind.

The Vanity of Earthly Greatness

He began to think like an ox, act like an ox, eat like an ox, and believe himself to be an ox. He crawled around on all fours. His hair grew long and became matted like bird's feathers, and his fingernails grew like bird's claws. Verse 33 says, "The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

Thus the proud, arrogant, ignorant, pompous monarch was wholly and completely deprived of his reasoning ability and governed by the mind of an animal. What good was his kingdom now? What good were all his riches? Where was all his greatness? Where were all his courtiers and servants? Mighty Babylon was now no more than a stone wall or a fence to a cow. Can you imagine that? Here was the man who said, "Is not this mighty Babylon which I have built by the might of my power and for my honor and my glory?" Now he saw nothing of it. What a fence!

He roamed and lived in the woods. God had deprived him not only of his kingdom and his mind, but also of his honor and power—and it was done instantly.

We have a lot of civil rulers like Nebuchadnezzar. They have lost their minds. Notice what God says: "Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." Isn't that amazing? Civil rulers—anyone in a position of power and honor who does not

understand God and the things of God—is no more than a beast that perishes. He is foolish, senseless, and mindless, with no reasoning or understanding, totally devoid of them.

There is another word here that merits our attention. Daniel 4:33 says, “The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar.” He was driven from men. Nebuchadnezzar not only wanted to get away; they wanted him to get away. They drove him like a cow: “Get out. Stay away. Don't come back.” He may have hastened to leave since he had the mind of a beast. He did not want to be around them, and no one else wanted him around either. His trusted counselors, lords, and diplomats were eager to get rid of him. Nebuchadnezzar, with the mind of an animal, wanted to go, and those around him were more than willing to let him go.

Restoration and Lessons Learned

God did restore Nebuchadnezzar. When God gave him back his mind and his kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar learned some of the most important and valuable lessons of his life. After God restored him, the men who had driven him away sought for him again. Go back down to verse 36: “At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.”

Nebuchadnezzar had learned that God is in charge, that God is in control, that God rules in the kingdom of men, and that He gives it to whomsoever He will. He learned that God was sovereign and that he was nothing, while God could do anything and everything that pleased Him. Look at verse 35: “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”

He learned that only God had an everlasting kingdom; that God ruled in the kingdom of men and gave it to whomsoever He willed; and that he had a kingdom only because of God's divine providence. He learned the hard lesson of Psalm 75:6–7.

"For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another."

You know what else Nebuchadnezzar learned? He learned that he was disposable. Sometimes we think, "God just couldn't get along without us," or, "The world couldn't get along without us." I have news for you: He can. He can. The fact that God uses us is only by His grace. Each of us is disposable. If everyone in this room died today, the world would go on tomorrow, just as though we had never been born.

Nebuchadnezzar learned that he was disposable. He also learned that God is able to abase those who walk in pride. Here are Nebuchadnezzar's own words: "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most high, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

I do pray that it is time for God to do some more abasing. It is time for the rulers in our country and in this world to realize that God is sovereign, God is supreme, and they are only His vassals. Our civil rulers are delegated authorities. They do not have the right to steal, usurp authority, or lord it over God's heritage. They do not have the right to change, alter, or supplant God's law. God put them there to enforce His law and execute His righteousness, not to destroy it. They are to be His ministers of justice, His executors of righteousness. Those who fail to do so, He shall abase.

Nebuchadnezzar said, “I learned one thing. Those that walk in pride, He's quite able to abase.”

Applications for Believers

First of all, we should learn to thank God daily for the simple fact that we are still in possession of our minds, our reasoning, and our understanding. Do you realize that God does not have to strike us instantly with judgment, as He did Nebuchadnezzar, to take away our minds? A little virus or an accident can handle that. We need to learn the value of our minds.

I have told Alice that, if it were my choice—and it is not my choice—but if the Lord lets me live to a ripe old age, I believe I would rather lose my body than my mind. Rusty was a dear friend, and Alice and I would visit him every year when I was out there preaching. The last summer we were there before he died, he told me, “John, my body’s deteriorating. I can barely do this. I have this, I have this, I have that. But thank God, my mind is still as sound as it ever was.”

He said, “You know, just this week I was thinking about a quote that I read in a book in 1935.” I could not even remember what we were talking about in 2000, but he remembered a quote he had read nearly seventy years earlier. He said, “I went to my library, pulled the book down, and opened it to the very page the quote was on.” Here was a man who died at eighty-three, still in perfect possession of his mind, although his body had deteriorated.

You have to stop and think: What good is your body if you do not have the mind? You can have all the physical health in the world, but if you do not have the mind to use it, what good is it? We need to learn to thank God that we have the understanding and reasoning ability we have. Some have more than others, I understand that, but at least we have some. I am thankful for every little bit God has given me. What I want is a single, undivided, devoted mind for His honor and His glory. So we need to learn to thank God for our minds.

Secondly, we must also see the vanity of materialism, pride, arrogance, and human glory and greatness. He was known as Nebuchadnezzar the great. Where was his greatness for seven years?

Where was the gloriousness of his throne for seven years? Here was the mighty warrior, so formidable in the camp, the conqueror, the mighty one, running around on all fours, eating grass like an ox. He did not have enough sense to keep his clothes on his back, comb his hair, or trim his fingernails.

Do you realize that all our earthly fame, glory, and possessions will vanish in a moment? If you have not seen the pictures, type in Nashville, Tennessee, the flood. Practically speaking, it is all gone, and it went in a day. What good is a multimillion-dollar building once it is full of water and mud? Here is the vanity of materialism.

In Jeremiah 9:24, God says, “But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me. That I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” God said, “If you’re going to glory, glory in me. Don’t glory in your gold, in your possessions, in your kingdom, in your power, in your mind. All that’s going to leave. Glory in me.”

The third application is this: We must learn that God resists the proud; that is, He fights against them. God places contempt upon those who only have contempt for Him. Nebuchadnezzar would be more than a man; he would be God. So God made him less than a man—He made him an animal. We are told in 1 Peter 5:5, “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” If we would be holy, we must also be humble.

Fourthly, God is the just God. He loves justice. Justice is the habitation of His throne. We may lawfully pray that God will deal with ignorant, arrogant, proud, boastful tyrants and despots, and with those who abuse His people and refuse to magnify His name. We may lawfully pray that God will abase them and bring them down. Why? Psalm 58:11 says, “So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous.”

"Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." When God brings the wicked down, they will know, as well as everyone else, that there is a reward for the righteous and that God judges the wicked. Everyone will know who He is, either in salvation or condemnation.

We may lawfully, biblically, and righteously pray that God would bring down, abase, and destroy those who are contrary to Him and contrary to His Word. Who is that God that humbles civil rulers?

Closing Prayer

Ask Nebuchadnezzar; he can tell you. He is the sovereign God of heaven and earth.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee, praise Thee, and give Thee honor and glory. We acknowledge that Thou art the only God, and besides Thee there is none other. Thou art the Sovereign, the Supreme, the Ultimate, the Absolute. We bow before Thee as Thou hast revealed Thyself in Jesus Christ, our Lord. We pray, Lord, that Thou wouldst indeed abase those that walk in pride, and honor and exalt those that walk in humility, who worship Thee in spirit and in truth, seek to glorify Thy name, and obey Thy word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen and amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 1: Who is That God Part 1 of 2
JW01264 | YouTube

Chapter 2: Who Is That God That Humbles Civil Rulers?
JW01265 | YouTube

Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.

A

Applications for Believers p. 35

Applications: Sovereignty Demands Obedience p. 19

Arrogance: Rulers Claiming to Be God p. 9

C

Civil Rulers and the Rejection of God's Law p. 26

Closing Prayer p. 37

D

Daily Deliverance and God's Faithfulness p. 23

Daniel's Counsel and Nebuchadnezzar's Judgment p. 28

G

God's Sovereignty vs. Human Sovereignty p. 12

I

Ignorance: Man by Nature Does Not Know God p. 7

Introduction and Review p. 22

Introduction: The Blasphemous Question p. 5

N

Nebuchadnezzar's Confession and Lingering Pride p. 24

Nebuchadnezzar's View of God as Defeated p. 10

O

Other Rulers with the Same Attitude p. 6

R

Restoration and Lessons Learned p. 33

T

The Heart as the Mind p. 31

The Miraculous Deliverance and Its Impact p. 17

The Nature of Nebuchadnezzar's Madness p. 29

The Response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego p. 15
The Vanity of Earthly Greatness p. 32
The War Over Sovereignty Since the Fall p. 25

W

Who is That God Part 1 of 2 p. 5
Who Is That God That Humbles Civil Rulers? p. 21
Who Is That God? p. 5

Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.

Genesis

Genesis 3 p. 25

Exodus

Exodus 5:2 p. 6, p. 7

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 29:29 p. 26

2 Kings

2 Kings 18:29 p. 6

Psalm

Psalm 2 p. 26, p. 27

Psalm 2:1 p. 14

Psalm 2:1-3 p. 26, p. 27

Psalm 58:11 p. 36

Psalm 75:6-7 p. 33

Psalm 94:20 p. 27

Proverbs

Proverbs 4:23 p. 31

Proverbs 16:18 p. 36

Proverbs 23:7 p. 31

Isaiah

Isaiah 33:22 p. 25

Isaiah 42 p. 28

Isaiah 53 p. 18

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 9:24 p. 36

Lamentations

Lamentations 3:22-23 p. 23

Daniel

Daniel 2:38 p. 14

Daniel 3 p. 6, p. 15

Daniel 3:28 p. 17

Daniel 4 p. 24, p. 31, p. 32

Daniel 4:16 p. 30

Daniel 4:23 p. 30, p. 31

Daniel 4:24-37 p. 21

Daniel 4:33 p. 33

Hosea

Hosea 5:10 p. 27

Matthew

Matthew 15 p. 31

Matthew 16 p. 8

Luke

Luke 6 p. 26

Luke 10:22 p. 8

John

John 1 p. 8

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 2:14 p. 7

2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 2 p. 9

Titus

Titus 1:16 p. 26

1 Peter

1 Peter 5:5 p. 36

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