

**Heaven Rules**  
**Daniel 4**  
**July 4, 2004**  
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Well, good evening. Good to see you all here. Let's, begin our time of study in prayer, shall we? Let's join together.

Father, we're grateful for the reality that You are the single focus of our lives, You are the vision of our hearts, the King of heaven. Lord, we thank You for the reality that even though You are the King of all creation, You are the King of each heart to those who know You and love You. Lord, we bow before You as Your people tonight acknowledging You as our great King. We thank You for the privilege of gathering. We thank You for the joy of knowing You. We thank You for Your faithfulness.

Lord, we're grateful that we can sing, as we just did, that our soul can rest in the knowledge that You order our ways and that You providentially govern our lives as well as the affairs of nations to accomplish Your great ends. Lord, how could we doubt Your wisdom? How we could doubt Your goodness? I pray that You would, even tonight as we look at the book of Daniel, open our eyes to the greatness and grandeur of Your sovereignty.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, I do want us to turn tonight to the book of Daniel. It's one of my favorite books, and I'll, I'm sure over the years, come back to it again and again. And at some point, we may even do a verse by verse study of it because it is so filled with wonderful truth about our God.

I have a book on my shelf in my library called *Ideas have Consequences, Ideas have Consequences*. The basic thesis of the book is that you can't have a certain ideology without it affecting practically how you live, and it sets forth some of the ideologies that have influenced our culture. You may not be aware of it, but our country, as we celebrate our anniversary today, our country was founded by some men who were devout Christians, but there were many others who embraced the concept of deity and even the God of the Bible to some extent although many of them robbed God of any supernatural intervention in the world. They were men who were called deists. The foundation of the culture in which we live really was built on a foundation of deism. Deism teaches essentially this: that God created the world, He created the nations and

then stepped back and allowed everything to take its course and He rarely, if ever, intervenes in the affairs of the world.

Well, that idea was a very common and popular one at the beginning of the life of our nation and that idea has consequences. The consequences leave us with God essentially distant and uninvolved in His world. And so, in a sense, the world is headed at its own course, creating its own path and will end in a place that God knows, but has not necessarily directed.

Nothing could be farther from the truth of Scripture, and I want you to see that tonight as we look at this amazing book of Daniel and specifically one account that he records. This book is not a history book, but it is a book designed to give us a right perspective about history. And now let me remind you of when Daniel served - this is, this is just a little chart that I pulled out of actually the *MacArthur Study Bible*. You'll notice that here is the seventy, seventy year Babylonian captivity, starting in 605 approximately with the first deportation. During that time, you have the ministries of three prophets, three exiled prophets or exilic prophets as they're called: Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel. Daniel was taken into captivity, as we'll discover in a moment, early on in the deportation of Judah.

Now let's look briefly at this man Daniel. Let me just remind you of a few things about him. His name simply means 'God is judge'. He ministered, I should say he lived from about 620 B.C. to about 530 B.C. In other words, he lived somewhere between eighty-five and ninety years, an amazing life for the times in which he served and ministered. His character could not be held in more high esteem. In fact, notice the estimate of Scripture itself. God has an amazing comment about Daniel. Turn to Ezekiel 14, Ezekiel 14 and notice verse 12. Remember now, Ezekiel prophesies during the time of Daniel so this man is still alive. He's not built into a legend. He's still living.

Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Son of man, if a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it, destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it and cut off from it both man and beast, even *though* these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their *own* righteousness they could only deliver themselves," declares the Lord....

He goes on to paint a similar scenario. And he comes back in verse 19:

“... if I should send a plague against that country and pour out My wrath in blood on it to cut off man and beast from it, even *though* Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, as I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “they could not deliver either *their* son or *their* daughter. They would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.”

God is making a point. He’s making a point that these three men were held up in their time and after their time as godly, righteous men. And he paints a scenario that, that the, they could only deliver themselves if He determined to destroy a culture. But the point is that I want you to see is how high, in such high esteem God and the Scripture holds this man Daniel.

Also, the estimate of history holds him in pretty high regard. He occupied places of high authority in two successive regimes, both of which were hostile to each other, first in the Babylonian Empire and then in the Medo-Persian Empire, and you see that in chapter 6 and following. “So although the known facts of Daniel’s life are few (as one writer says); nevertheless, he is revealed as a man of stalwart character and priceless convictions. He is willing at all times to stand up for what he believes. He is a true hero of the faith.”

His circumstances are very difficult. He was carried away in the first stage of the deportation of Judah. That was in 605 B.C. Daniel, at the time, was somewhere around fourteen or fifteen years old, carried away from his country nine hundred miles to the seat of power in the ancient world, Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar in 605 came to Judah, and he took the best and brightest. He had plans to send them back in a sense, to put them in places of power over this country that they were from, but now as rulers for the purpose and sake of Babylon as opposed to Himself, as opposed to their country.

So, God’s people live in Babylon. Daniel is there. He’s been deported to a thoroughly pagan city and country under the authority of an evil man and a Gentile kingdom that’s power seems absolutely limitless. That’s the circumstance in which Daniel finds himself.

Now why is Daniel’s ministry important? Well, God obviously is judging Israel for their sin by deporting them to Babylon. You find that in a number of places. You can look in 2 Chronicles 36:14 and following and you see that God is judging Israel for their sin, but there’s a danger in God judging Israel and sending them into captivity. The danger was that pagan nations would assume that Yahweh was unable to protect His people, and God’s name would be blasphemed.

You see, in the ancient world, there were three misconceptions about the, the interaction of nation, nations. First of all, they believed that there were many gods. They, they were polytheists. Most of the nations believed that there were many different gods and different nations had different gods that ruled over them or for which they were known.

Secondly, they believed that when there was a battle between two nations, that battle is in fact a battle between the gods of those nations.

Thirdly, they said when nation A defeats nation B in battle, the gods of nation A were more powerful than the gods of nation B at least for that time period, at least temporarily.

So, think for a moment how the ancient world would have perceived when God sent the Babylonians to defeat His people. Their immediate assumption would be: Yahweh is one of many gods, He's the God of the nation Israel and He is weaker and impotent compared to the gods of Babylon.

Well, God uses Daniel to destroy that attitude of contempt on the part of the pagan nations. He uses Daniel in the midst of Babylon to improve the life and welfare of the Jews in the nation. You know, normally when you think about captives in a foreign land, you would expect their lot to be hard and difficult, but this wasn't the case for most Jews in Babylon. One ancient historian writes this:

They lived in good farming areas. They had their own homes. They enjoyed freedom of movement. They continued their own institution of elders, priests and prophets. They experienced adequate employment opportunities and even carried on correspondence with people in their homeland. [He goes on to say] This is a principle reason for God's permitting Daniel to be taken to Babylon several years earlier than the main groups. It was to allow him to achieve such a position before they came.

God providentially sends Daniel in 605 B.C. to Babylon when the, the lot of the people don't go until 586. And the road is prepared for a much easier lot for them in Babylon.

Also, God uses Daniel not only to improve the life and welfare of the Jews, but also to maintain the honor of the true God in the minds of pagan nations. You see, pagans evaluated any foreign deity by the country's size, by its prosperity and by the size and success of its army. When you

look at those standards of measurement, Israel doesn't fare very well. To the Babylonians, their own deities seemed much stronger, and this didn't please God. So, God plants Daniel right in the middle of their culture to remind them of His greatness and power.

The theme of Daniel is essentially this: God is absolutely sovereign in the affairs of all nations. He is the power behind the world's politics. That's the message the life and ministry of Daniel is meant to get across. This by the way, this picture is an artist's rendering based on descriptions and ancient historians and eyewitness accounts of what the city of Babylon may very well have looked like. It was a magnificent city. The great and blessed principle of Daniel is not just that our God shall rule, but that He does rule and that His dominion is an everlasting dominion from generation to generation.

Now, when we look at the purpose of Daniel, let me look first of all – I'm going to come back to the primary purpose because it's in the chapter we're going to look at briefly in just a moment, but there are some secondary purposes that Daniel serves.

First of all, it provides comfort for the Jewish exiles. Remember, these people are now in a pagan land. It comforts them by reminding them that God is in charge, even of the pagan kings in the land in which they're held captive.

It also demonstrates His unchanging concern for them, His covenant people. Even when they're under the rod of His reproof, He still is watching over them and caring for them.

It provides us with the data necessary to understand end time events. Some of the most clear and concise prophecies of end times occur in the book of Daniel.

Also, it illustrates what true dedication to God means and of what God will do through one man or woman fully devoted and committed to Him. Those are some of the secondary purposes of the book.

Now let me just give you two brief outlines. There's, there are several ways you could outline the book. The first is according to emphasis. In chapters 1 - 6, you have historical narrative, that is: specific accounts from the life of Daniel and his friends. In chapters 7 - 12, you have prophecy. You have prophecy about history.

Or you could outline it this way (and this is interesting): according to the languages used. The first section from 1:1 to 2:4 is in Hebrew in the ancient text. It's simply an introduction. The second section is in Aramaic. Aramaic was the primary language, trade language of that time. So it was written as a message not simply to the Jewish people, but to all the people of the world. And in this section, you get this message: it's a message to the pagan nations, a message of judgment, a message that God is in charge. Then you have a second Hebrew section from 8:1 through the end of the book, and this is Yahweh's message to Israel.

But the basic message, whether to the Jews or to the pagan nations, is exactly the same: God rules or heaven rules as I entitled the message tonight. Chapters 1 - 6 are the personal experiences of Daniel and his friends in Babylon. When you look at these six events, they are not intended to be a history of the Jewish people in Babylon. There are only six events of seventy years. Nor are they intended to be a biography of Daniel's life: again, only six events from his life of eighty to ninety years. Instead, he chooses these events to drive home the primary purpose that he has for the book. And we see that purpose driven home nowhere more clearly than in chapter 4 and that's the chapter I want us to look at tonight.

Turn with me to Daniel 4. We're going to take just the next few minutes to look at one of the most amazing accounts in all of the Old Testament. This is God's third encounter with Nebuchadnezzar. He has confronted Nebuchadnezzar with Himself on two previous occasions. This chapter, I believe, records for us Nebuchadnezzar now coming to true, saving faith. I think when we're done with this chapter you'll agree that we'll see this man in heaven.

It's a unique chapter in that the entire chapter is narrated by Nebuchadnezzar himself except for verses 28 - 33 which are in the third person, they talk about Nebuchadnezzar, and that's because that is describing the period of his insanity where he would not necessarily be able to serve as a credible witness to what happened. So during that time, Daniel reports what occurred. Nebuchadnezzar had insanity for seven years. Some explanation of that insanity would be necessary. Chapter 4 provides that. He reigned for forty-three years. This incident in his life occurred somewhere around his thirty-fourth or his thirty-fifth year. Daniel at this time is about fifty years old.

Now notice verse 1. Verses 1 - 3, you have praise to God and a sort of general introduction:

Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound! It ... [seemed] good to me to

declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for 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.”

Starting in verse 4 down through verse 34, he explains then the amazing circumstances that brought him to those conclusions. I wish you had never heard the rest of this chapter because remember, what you have here is, according to God, the greatest despot that the world has ever known. God called Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian Empire the head of gold. It was the most pure form of despotic, absolute sovereign rule that the world has ever known. As you move down through history, you have a greater mixture of democratic ideas mixing with sovereign rule. But when it came to sovereignty, absolute sovereignty, none equaled Nebuchadnezzar. In fact, in chapter 5 when Daniel is confronting Belshazzar for his sin, he reminds him, in verse 18 he says to Belshazzar:

“O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your grandfather. Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled.”

The point here isn't that Nebuchadnezzar was capricious. The point is that he had absolute, unrestrained sovereign power. He was the head of gold, the world's greatest monarch. And here we have a chapter written in which he acknowledges our God, the God of heaven, to be the King of all the earth. Remember that within three months of the writing of this confession, everyone in Babylon knew about Yahweh.

Now, let's flow through this. Beginning in verse, verses 4 - 9, we have the background. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that greatly troubles him. He says,

“I ... was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and ... [*these*] fantasies *as I lay* on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.” [And] so (verse 6) ... [he] orders ... the wise men [be brought] ... the magicians, [and] the conjurers.”

In verse 7, we learn that once again they are absolutely unhelpful. They're worthless. They have no [they say they have no] idea. Personally, I think they did know because in that time, trees were always a sign of royalty. So they probably understood at least some of what the dream was about, but they lacked the courage to tell Nebuchadnezzar what it meant. So he asks in verse 9, he asks Daniel, the chief of the magicians he calls him, to come and interpret the dream.

In verses 10 - 18, Nebuchadnezzar explains the dream he's had to Daniel. Let me just touch on the high points. Verse 10, he says that

“... *these were* the visions *as I lay* on my bed: I was looking, and behold, [it] ... was a tree [and again, normally in the ancient world, that spoke of royalty] in the midst of [all] the earth ... its height was great. The tree grew large ... became strong....” [and then you get some idea of the breadth of its rule. This was a great king.]

[Verse 13] “I was looking in the visions in my mind *as I lay* on my bed, and behold, an *angelic* watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven. [And here's what he ordered] ... ‘Chop down the tree ... cut off its branches, Strip off its foliage ... scatter its fruit; Let the beasts flee from under it And the birds from its branches. 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 [now here's the first glimpse we get that we're talking about a person]; ... let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, ... let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. 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 [or seven years] pass over him. This sentence is by the decree of the *angelic* watchers and the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realms of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men.’”

Now that was the dream. Interestingly enough, the conclusion is pretty clear there in the end, wouldn't you say? So I don't think they were missing the point. Verse 18: “This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar [which was his Babylonian name], tell *me* its interpretation ... [because they won't tell me, or they can't].”

So, in verse 19 - 27, Daniel interprets and gives application. Notice in verse 19, Daniel's genuine concern for this pagan monarch. And can I say that this should be the reflection of our attitude as



well toward those who are in rule over us? I think sometimes because we live in a democracy, and we can vote and put in office whom we want, our attitude toward them isn't the same as if we had no control. But notice Daniel's perspective. When he hears this, he understands what God has said about Nebuchadnezzar, this pagan king, and look at his response. "Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him." [You see, Daniel was genuinely concerned about what this meant for this pagan monarch. He immediately knows what it is.] [He says] "The king ... [then says to Daniel, Belteshazzar, do not] 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.' Belteshazzar replied, 'My lord, *if only* the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!'"

This man is an amazing man. What an amazingly loyal man to someone that he didn't choose to serve under and who brought him from his homeland some nine hundred miles. And now as a fourteen, fifteen-year-old boy is when he was brought there. He's now fifty years old. So he's lived in Babylon for all of that time. He had every reason to be bitter against this man, and yet you see the compassion of his heart going out toward him.

He says (verse 20), "The tree that you saw, which became ... [long] and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth..." He goes on to recount it. Verse 22: "it is you, O king; for you have 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." And then in verse 23, he says this *angelic* watcher descended from heaven and gave this specific prophecy. Verses 24 and 25 record exactly the interpretation:

"this is the interpretation, O king, this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: that you be driven away from mankind and that your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, that you be given grass to eat like cattle, be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time 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."

Now the stump bound with a band of iron and bronze is the king, and the king afflicted with insanity, a form of lycanthropy, in which a man considers himself to be an animal. It's interesting when you study madness in the Scripture. There are only a couple of reasons offered for what we would call madness. One of them is demonic possession. Another is feigning madness to remove one's self from a difficult situation. You remember David did that - drooled in his beard, pretended to be insane. I have counseled people who began that way in their lives

and eventually it becomes such a habit that that's how they decide to live. And then you have God humbling someone because of their incredible pride, bringing them to the place of disease.

Now in verse 26, there is a stump that remains because God guarantees that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom will be preserved. Now we understand that God can do that, but the question is, how? How exactly on the human level could that be accomplished. A man, the king of Babylon, insane for seven years, and yet his kingdom stays with some degree of stability? Well, there are a couple of possibilities. One, it's in the interest of his royal court to keep it quiet. You see, if he remained king, what happens to them? They retained their positions. In the ancient world as in some countries today, when there was a change of leadership, it was traumatic. Those who served under him often were not simply put out of office. They were executed as enemies of the state. So it was to their advantage to keep the thing quiet. Also in the ancient world, one who appeared insane was thought to have been touched by the gods and was allowed basically to do as he pleased. And so for these reasons, his kingdom stays and capable men such as Daniel would continue to oversee the kingdom.

In verse 27, oh, let's go back to verse 26. There's one more important point here. Here is the point of everything that's happening to Nebuchadnezzar. Notice the end of verse 25. He says this is going to happen "until you recognize that the Most High [that's Daniel's favorite name for God] is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows on it whomever He wishes." End of verse 26: "after you recognize that heaven rules." God has a very specific message to get across to the greatest monarch who ever lived and that is that his kingdom is a delegated kingdom, that he enjoys delegated authority, that God is the ruler over the nations.

In verse 27, Daniel makes it very personal to Nebuchadnezzar. He says that's what's going to happen. "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." Now this isn't a works righteousness Daniel is urging on Nebuchadnezzar. He's basically telling him to truly repent before God and to demonstrate that repentance in true compassion on his people.

Nebuchadnezzar doesn't respond, verse 28 - 33. After a full year of God's patience, the judgment falls. Notice how Nebuchadnezzar described, describes it, or rather how Daniel describes it because Nebuchadnezzar is not in a position to describe this period of life. "All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. 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?” He’s absolutely filled with himself. But you know what? From an earthly standpoint, he had every reason to be. He was the king of the greatest empire on the face of the earth at that time. He was also a great builder. As he looked out on the city of Babylon, it was a magnificent city.

You saw a small rendering of it just a moment ago. The perimeter wall around the city of Babylon was somewhere between twelve and forty-two miles in circumference. I’ve described to you before the incredible height of the wall. It was a magnificent city. It housed one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the famed Hanging Gardens of Babylon. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were a four hundred foot tall (that’s taller than a football field) artificial mountain filled with a terrace and filled with plants and running water and streams. It was a magnificent place on the surface of an otherwise flat desert plain. And as he enjoyed that, he reflected on his own greatness. 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, and you will be [as was prophesied] driven away... and you will eat grass like cattle, seven ... [years] will pass over you [here it is again] until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and He bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ “Immediately the word ... was fulfilled; ... he was driven away ... [he] 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*.”

Now we get to the point of the story. Here is the point Daniel wants us to get and Nebuchadnezzar wanted all of his readers to get. Here’s the point he wanted his Babylonian readers to get as well, verse 34 - 37. This is Nebuchadnezzar’s final declaration of trust in Yahweh, Israel’s God, and in God’s sovereignty. Notice what he says (excuse me):

“But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and I praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth 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?’”

Now there are several important points in that declaration.

First of all, I want you to see that Nebuchadnezzar turns from being to a polytheist – that is, believing that there are many gods with their individual regions – to embracing the reality that there is one God who is over heaven and all of earth. Notice what he says in verse 35: “All the inhabitants of earth are as nothing to Him, and He does according to His will not only *among* all the hosts of heaven, but also among all the inhabitants of earth.”

Also notice he understood His power: “no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” No one can question His wisdom. So he acknowledges in verse 35 God’s absolute sovereignty over all of the universe, His power that cannot be in any way stopped and His wisdom that cannot be questioned. What an amazing declaration of this pagan king, now a believer in, a true believer in the God of Israel. Verse 36:

“At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me [and look how he concludes]. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar [the world’s greatest king], praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

You see, chapter 4 is a story about two sovereignties – the sovereignty and might of the greatest human king versus the power of the Most High God. And of course, Nebuchadnezzar was no match for the King of the universe.

Now what are the lessons from this chapter for us? Well, the first and most obvious ones are the ones that Daniel intended when he put this chapter that Nebuchadnezzar wrote into his book and that is that God is sovereign over earthly rulers. He raises up whom He will. He puts down whom He will. There is no earthly authority (as Paul tells us in Romans 13) except that which is ordained of God. When you pick up your newspaper, and you see that there has been a coup in some faraway place, you can rest assured that, however evil the man may be who has now taken authority, that God for His own purposes has placed him there.

And can I bring it closer to home? We have an election this year. We all feel strongly, or most of us do anyway, about who should be in office. We have ideas, perhaps differing ideas. When we

wake up that next morning in November and we see on the headline of the paper who now will be the President of the United States, our minds should go to Daniel 4. We don't understand God's ways. We don't understand His wisdom. We don't understand His purpose. But whomever is in office after January will be by the determined, providential choice of God. The fact that we live in a democracy and vote doesn't undermine God's sovereign purposes to put in office whom He chooses. Sometimes it's for our blessing, and sometimes it is for our curse, but it is God's purpose. And can I say it this way? For that time, he is God's appointed man.

We get kind of caught up in the political scene. We get influenced by political commentators who claim to discuss politics with half their brain tied behind their back, and we forget this reality: God is the King of the universe. He sits in authority whom He chooses. And when He chooses, He will remove them. And it is absolutely in His sovereign power to do it.

There's a second application. Not only are earthly rulers under God's sovereign control, and they are raised up when He chooses, but nations arise, and nations are destroyed by His sovereign choice. In fact, it's interesting. When you look through the book of Daniel, you see not only the picture of a number of world empires in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 (and at some point, we'll look at that progression of world empires that impact the Jewish people) but you see in both of those chapters that eventually all of them are destroyed. One is destroyed by the one that follows it. And eventually, every earthly kingdom is destroyed. Don't put your hope in princes. Don't put your hope in armies and nations, however strong they may be, because God will eventually destroy them all.

At some point, I'll recount for you the story of Augustine. Augustine, the great early church father, was alive when Rome fell. And he writes and records the incredible turmoil that that brought to his soul. The great empire of Rome for hundreds of years in complete domination of the world, and yet Rome's end came. And that was by God's choice. We sit in America, and we now celebrate two hundred plus years. We're a mere babe on the timeline of history. And either in our lifetime or someday after our lifetime if the Lord tarries, we may very well read a headline like Augustine read about Rome. And that'll be okay because God is still on the throne.

There's a third application, and it's much more personal. We learn from this great king. What a, what an amazing man. What a powerful man. What a brilliant man. What a great ruler. But we learn from him a very practical, personal lesson. Did you see it at the end of verse 37? This is true for every one of us. He says, 'Listen. I learned a, I learn a very important lesson – "the God of heaven is able to humble those who walk in pride.'" There's a very personal application from

the life of this great man. He was a magnificent ruler, the great builder, the great architect, a mighty king, a warrior, a politician extraordinaire. And yet, when he began to think that his own mind and his own skills and his own strength had accomplished it, God says you have an important lesson to learn.

This is a theme throughout the Scripture. Pride comes before a fall. Those who walk in pride, He is able to humble. Can I encourage you with something? When you take a look at how God has used you in the lives of others – maybe the successes, the accomplishments you've had whether they be anything from school, sports, career, whatever it might be in, in the culture, remember that whatever you enjoy is because of God's sovereign goodness to you. There are people who are far more gifted than you are, who are far more bright than you are who have not had those successes. It's only because God chose. And when you and I fail to remember that, when we forget that, then we set ourselves up to be humbled by the God who will not share His glory with another. Magnificent lessons. Heaven rules.

Let's pray together.

Father, we humble ourselves before You tonight, acknowledging that You are God and that You rule in Your universe, that there is not one stray molecule outside of Your control. Lord, we're reminded as we look at this great book and in this magnificent chapter that You are completely in charge of our earthly world, of the rulers that You establish, of the nations and their times. And Lord, I pray that You would help us to think like Christians. Ideas do have consequences and, Lord, we live in a culture that has been influenced by deism. Help us to remember that You are intimately involved in the world that You created, and that You set on thrones whomever You choose for Your own purposes.

Lord, help us in this country, as we think about our history today, as we think even about our current leadership and about what leadership we might have after November, Lord, help us to think like Christians. Help us to think like those who know You and worship You.

And Lord, on a personal level, I pray that You would keep us from exalting ourselves, from looking at our accomplishments, our achievements, our position, whatever it might be, and assuming that our own gifts and our own skills have gotten us there. Lord, help us always to remember that we are what we are by Your grace and goodness. Help us to give You thanks.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.