

## The Most High God Reigns Daniel 4:17

**“This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and sets up over it the basest of men.”** (Daniel 4:17)

One author “rightly calls this “one of the immortal sentences of the Hebrew Scriptures!” God gives these kingdoms “to anyone he wishes.” As a further rebuke to Nebuchadnezzar’s pride and to that of all the kings of the earth, God points out that at times he even allows the “lowliest of men” to reign.”<sup>i</sup>

During these last several years, political statesmanship has fallen to a low ebb. It seems that showmanship outperforms statesmanship; popularity outranks policy. But our text today gives us fascinating insight into the sovereignty of the Most High God over our national leaders. The severe chastening of Nebuchadnezzar was designed to teach him something that he would never forget: **“the most High rules in the kingdom of men.”** But pause for a moment to ask: “Do you and I believe this?” In this current political cycle, with elections on the line, do we really believe that the most High God reigns over the kingdom of men?

Consider the applications of that principle: the Most High God gives the national leadership to whomever He chooses. Over nations he sets the lowliest of man. This means that sometimes a nation’s leaders are the basest of men: the most crude and proud of men, the least moral and righteous of men. But, thanks to the working of the Most High God, He humbles the proudest of men. And the heart of the king is still in the hand of the Lord to turn it wherever He will (Proverbs 21:1).

So let’s picture this historic scenario to see if it sounds in any way familiar to us. It was the greatest nation on the face of the earth. It had been immensely blessed by God with crucial military victories, an economy that was the envy of the world, and well-watered agriculture that was second to none. The leader of this great nation was a proud and pompous leader; it looked as if nothing can stop him as he sought to increase the greatness of his nation. But among his trusted advisors, there was a wise and humble believer. The national leader was haughty – known for congratulating himself on a regular basis. Impulsive in his behavior, he was known to be willing to demote some of his fellow leaders on a whim. Nevertheless, this leader lead his nation to a time of unparalleled economic prosperity, the like of which the world has rarely seen. Some of the great wonders of the world were found in this great nation.

But suddenly there was news of a significant change coming. This nation’s leader largely ignored the warning signs, while the wise believer urged humility and caution. But the leader

grew so impulsive that people begin to wonder if he had lost his mind as he is struck down with sickness.

If you are struck by the parallels between Daniel's day and our own day, then I would like to make a simple appeal. Read the Book of Daniel. Re-read it. Read it again and again as we work through this coming series. Read it to your children and grandchildren. Take the time to research its most cryptic sayings.

"Daniel is one of the most unusual books in the Bible, simple enough for children's Sunday school lessons and yet challenging for Bible scholars and students of prophecy . . . Daniel 'may be described . . . as one of the simplest or as one of the most complex books in the Bible . . . Daniel is a fascinating and difficult book.'"<sup>ii</sup>

But as you read it, keep this simple theme in mind: ". . .to the intent that the living may know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomever He will, and sets up over it the basest [ of men." (Daniel 4:17)

#### *The Watchers*

The first part of the verse apparently refers to God's holy angels who do His bidding. They act in complete agreement with His decrees. And these words remind us that there is spiritual warfare behind the scenes of all this. Satan's lurid pride, the cause of his great fall, is being acted out on the world stage among human leaders. This spiritual warfare – at work in so many scenarios today – was described by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:12-13 **"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."** Believers who understand this spiritual warfare will pray fervently – a part of the wrestling described here. In the words of Ephesians 6:18, **"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"**

To aid you in praying during this national crisis, we have prepared a booklet on Seasons of Prevailing Prayer<sup>iii</sup> (studying seasons of prayer in the Book of Daniel). Please click on the link above to download a .pdf of this booklet.)

#### **The Most High God**

The Most High God refers to the God who is over all. He is the supreme ruler of heaven and earth. He is far above all others – including entities which are called "gods." Babylon was rife with gods of all kinds: earth, storms, fertility, etc. But Daniel, whose name means "God is my judge," exalted the Most High God.

- *Who protects His own in the fiery furnace*

Nebuchadnezzar received a vision from God about the coming world kingdoms (Daniel 2). But instead of humbly recognizing this revelation, Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to exalt his kingdom. He prepared a golden image, and insisted that all of his officers and wise men bow down and worship this image. But 3 Hebrew men refused to bow down. In an arrogant, oppressive challenge to them, King Nebuchadnezzar uttered these words, “. . . and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” The battle lines were drawn between the Most High God and the pompous king in Daniel chapter 3. And as you read the rest of the story, you will see how the Lord delivered those men from the fiery furnace. And don’t miss these words in v. 26 “Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, *and spoke, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth . . .*” (Daniel 3:26)

### **The Most High God Rules over All the Kingdoms of Men**

- **He overrules proud political leaders of the past**
  - **Nebuchadnezzar**

In Daniel chapter 4, we have the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar. His story is a warning to all the arrogant leaders and potentates over the people. Nebuchadnezzar needed to learn that the Most High God reigns over the kingdoms of men. Turn to Daniel chapter 4 to consider what he learned, as God gave him a mental disorder called “boanthropy.”

Daniel 4:2 the king wrote, “I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me.”

Daniel 4:17

Daniel 4:24-25 “This *is* the interpretation, O king, and this *is* the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: <sup>25</sup> That 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.”

Daniel 4:32 “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.”

Daniel 4:34 “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:”

- **Belshazzar** (probably the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar)

Daniel 5:18-23 Daniel said to him, "O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor: <sup>19</sup> And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. <sup>20</sup> But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: <sup>21</sup> And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and *that* he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. <sup>22</sup> And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; <sup>23</sup> But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven;"

- o **Over the coming Antichrist**

Daniel 7:25 – As you read this fascinating book, you will see that the Most High God reigns over all the kingdoms of men: past, present and future. This includes the kingdom of the coming Antichrist.

“The little horn (vv. 8, 11, 20–22) previously identified as a person is now interpreted as a king (ruler) of the last days. He is called in Scripture, among other names, the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thess 2:3), the “Antichrist” (1 John 2:18), and the “beast” (Rev 13:1ff.)<sup>iv</sup>

### **The Most High God Will Lead His Saints to Victory**

Daniel 7:18 <sup>18</sup> But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.”

Daniel 7:22 “Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.”

Daniel 7:27 “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

### **Practical Applications for Believers: How to Exalt the Most High God**

Have you humbled yourself before the Most High God? This is the Supreme God, the Sovereign God, who is also the saving God, the Deliverer. He sent His Son, “**the captain of our salvation**” who came to “**bring many sons to glory**” (Hebrews 2:9-10) that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. The captain of our salvation, Jesus Christ, lived the perfect, spotless life that you and I should have lived. And then, as your God-given substitute, He died the cruel criminal’s death that you and I should have died. He tasted death for every man. But the captain of our salvation had predicted, “**I lay down my life, that I might take it again**” (John

10:17). He rose victorious over death, and now He leads His saints to victory. Have you embraced the only Savior who can deliver you from sin, death and hell?

How did a believer like Daniel respond in those cataclysmic times? How did he remain faithful and show support for his leadership? And how should we as believers respond to our own political pandemonium, in the midst of a pandemic?

It's times like these that cause us to appreciate the treasure that we have in the Word of God. And learning to be like Daniel would be a good medicine for all of us in these days.

Consider a few of Daniel's responses.

Let's call them "7 God-honoring responses to our political leaders" in Daniel chapter 4

1. Daniel had maintained a good testimony of honoring the Lord (v. 9).
2. He was known for remaining calm and working through difficulties when things were in an uproar (v.9).
3. He gave careful consideration to what he would say to and about his political leaders (v.19).
4. Daniel made a point of expressing his loyalty to his leader when he could easily have become condescending and reactionary (v.19).
5. Daniel spoke the truth frankly and firmly without holding back the hard, essential truth (vs. 22-26).
6. He made a humble appeal to his leader to repent of his proud ways and to do right by serving people (v. 27).
7. Daniel conveyed his message in such a way that the king could clearly see that he was dealing with God and not men (vs. 1-3, 34-37).

These God-honoring responses will help us to lead by example. We can be what we want others to become. Maintaining a good testimony in turbulent times, helps us to make the appeal that Daniel made in Daniel 4:27:

*"Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."*

King Nebuchadnezzar did repent, and he returned to prosperity with humility. But the story leaves us with an important reminder. Pride, even national pride, can deceive us; but the Lord humbles the proud (Obadiah 2-4). But when they humble themselves and repent, they will know that "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men" (Daniel 4:25).

In a recent speech, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence said, "Everywhere I go, people speak to me about their faith with a word of encouragement. The sweetest words I ever hear is when people will say, as they did over a Carter Lake earlier today — reach out maybe across the rope line and just say, 'I'm praying for you.' And I want you all to know: We feel those prayers every

day.

I think the American people know that the foundation of America is freedom, but the foundation of freedom is faith. The truth is faith is at the very heart of who we are as Americans, and I believe the foundation of this country is strengthened each and every day by the stand that each and every one of you take.

President Lincoln reminded us, quote, "It is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all histories that those nations are only blessed whose God is the Lord."

And so as I leave here today, in these challenging times, and urge you to hold fast to freedom, let's also hold fast to faith. And let's remember to pray.

The Bible tells us that the prayer of the upright pleases Him; the prayer reaches Heaven, His holy dwelling place; and that in times of great challenge in our life or in the life of the nation, we're not to be anxious about anything, but in everything, in every form of prayer and petition with thanksgiving, we're to present our request to God and know that the peace of God that passes all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 135. Citing Montgomery, *Daniel*, p. 236

<sup>ii</sup> Robert D. Bell, "The Theological Messages of the Old Testament Books," Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 2010, p.349. Also citing Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006, p. 329

<sup>iii</sup> Seasons of Prevailing Prayer, accessed at <https://www.cbfindlay.org/seasons-of-prevailing-prayer/>

<sup>iv</sup> Stephen R. Miller, 213.

<sup>v</sup> Remarks from Vice President Mike Pence at Faith in Leadership, October 1, 2020 Accessed at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-faith-leadership-need-revival-des-moines-ia/>