

SOVEREIGN GOD, DANIEL 4:28-37

What is God Really Like #5

◆**Intro:** Modern research has show that Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest monarch that Babylon or perhaps the East generally, has ever produced. He must have possessed an enormous command of human labor for nine tenths of Babylon itself and 19/20ths of all other ruins that in almost countless profusion cover the land, are composed of bricks stamped with his name. He appears to have built or restored almost every city and temple in the whole country. His inscriptions give an elaborate account of the immense works which he constructed in and about Babylon itself,



abundantly illustration the boast, “Is not this great Babylon which I have built?” (Rawlinson, Historical Illustrations) Many inscriptions in cuneiform have been found, which describe the city. There is also an account by the Greek historian

Herodotus, who visited the city of Babylon in about 460 BC. Here are some interesting things he recorded:

◆-The city was laid out in the form of a square, 14 miles on each side, and of enormous magnitude

◆-The brick wall was 56 miles long, 300 feet high, 25 feet thick with another wall 75 feet behind the first wall, and the wall extended 35 feet below the ground

◆-250 towers that were 450 feet high



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- ◆-A wide and deep moat that encircled the city
 - ◆-The Euphrates River also flowed through the middle of the city.
Ferry boats and a 1/2 mi. long bridge with drawbridges closed at night
 - ◆Golden image of Baal and the Golden Table (both weighing over 50,000 lbs of solid gold.)
 - ◆-2 golden lions, a solid gold human figure (18 feet high)
- ◆Nebuchadnezzar was our kinda guy. He had it going on and he knew it. And yet, Nebuchadnezzar is history. He's one of hundreds of rulers who controlled the Babylonian lands down through the millenia. And he learned a lesson you and I still need to learn: that God is the only Sovereign Ruler. It's interesting that part of our text in the Book of Daniel today are actually his words.
- ◆“At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes towards heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honoured and glorified him who lives for ever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No-one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?”” Daniel 4:34, 35, NIV.
- ◆In our series we've been looking at what God is really like. We've observed that the Bible tells us that he is all-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere-present, and perfectly good. Today we're looking at his sovereignty.

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◆ **1. What is sovereignty?** Well by definition sovereignty is being the supreme and absolute ruler. Let me see if I can describe that. Sovereignty is what Nebuchanezzar said in our text. It's when you can do as you please and no one and no thing can stop you. It's being bigger than everybody else and accountable to yourself alone. God's sovereignty means that he does not answer to you or me. He is not influenced by you or me. He has the right to the right to dispose of His creatures as he thinks well, without consulting them in the matter. That God is sovereign means that He is "on the throne." He is under no obligation to create, or to sustain what he creates. We can demand nothing of him. We cannot pull his leash or reign him in our direction. He is not bought, or coerced, or pushed or manipulated in any way. Whatever he does is right by definition, not because it is rational to us, or agreed upon by another. And it is his right and prerogative to evaporate a million galaxies or to incinerate the entire human race in an instant. No one speaks, no one breathes, no one burps apart from either his causing it, or his allowing it to happen. That's sovereignty. And God is the only sovereign.

◆ By way of illustration, I recall as a teenager wanting to tune in rock and roll on my dad's stereo. Well dad was a classical music buff. He would even bribe us with quarters if we could name the composer or the symphony playing. So when I tuned to a non-Mozart station his response was, "Not in my house." My reply to that was that he was narrow-minded. As I recall that didn't help my cause any. He used other phrases too, like, "under my roof, we do it my way. When it's your roof, you can decide.", like the time I tried growing a goatee in

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high school. To have the authority to determine what happens is what we mean by sovereignty.

◆ Suppose I came over to your house (roof) and said, “Ya know, I don’t like where you keep your grill, and I really don’t appreciate your furniture style. Your dishes don’t fit my tastes and I think you should move that lamp.” What would you think of that? I’m just guessing that might find me a bit out of place. You are the sovereign in your home. What I think is of little or no consequence.

◆ Well guess what. The world is God’s house and he’s the sovereign under his roof. Psalm 24 says The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; The Bible is replete with texts describing God’s sovereignty.

◆ Ps. 135:6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.

◆ Job 23:13 "But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases.

◆ Prov. 16:4 The LORD works out everything for his own ends-- even the wicked for a day of disaster.

◆ *“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,” Ephesians 1:11, NIV.*

◆ What is the point of sovereignty? There is only one throne and God is on it, was always on it, and always will be on it. Doesn’t matter if you like it, if you believe in him or not. You and I are not on the throne. We are creation. He is creator.

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◆2. Ok then. **What does God's attribute of sovereignty mean for us?** I think a great many things. We'll ponder just a few today.

◆A. If God is my sovereign, I can find deep comfort. Great hope and solace is to be had for those cared for by a sovereign God. Now if I refuse to recognize him as my sovereign Lord, I can expect to live in a higher degree of anxiety, confusion and worry. As long as we think wrongly about God, we live with burdens we needn't carry. I have no comfort to offer you if you want to continue living as though you are the sovereign of your life, or as though because you can't reason it out that there isn't really a sovereign God that rules this universe.

◆It was when Nebuchadnezzar stopped thinking of himself as in charge; it was when Neb stopped thinking of God as little "g", or a tool, a limited add-on to life that he could call on like he called his wall-building servants; it was when Neb bowed his head to the real sovereign that his sanity was restored! (v34 *I looked up to heaven and my sanity was restored*).

◆Do you want sanity in your life? Do you want a peaceful soul that can face the demons, the unknowns, and the horrors that come in a fallen world knowing that you can't lose even if they kill you? Then you need to start with bowing your head and lifting your eyes to heaven. Are you sick of your addictions? Are you tired of your searching? Has your way of being a person not brought you the fruit of a peaceful life? It's time to bow your head again. Lets say you are a follower of Jesus. That's step one. But next steps are allowing his sovereign rule over, say, your mouth, or into your relationships, or

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how you do business. Sovereign covers it all, people. If God is sovereign he has the last word on everything about you! Where in your world are you ignoring that like Nebuchadnezzar?

◆ Sovereignty means there are no accidents. I'll say it again. There are no accidents with God. And that give his children peace. Accidents happen when we lose control, right. A motorist was before the Judge in court and the Judge asked, "How did you happen to run into the other car in this case?" The motorist replied, "It was entirely my wife's fault. She *fell asleep* in the back seat!" Guess he had gotten used to her backseat driving. No one was in control!

◆ God is always in control. Speak it to your children. Sing it in your songs. Remind yourself of it in the midst of difficult decisions and unknown questions. And, by all means, stop slapping God in the face by "knocking on wood" or trying to read the stars. Don't wish people good luck. There is no such thing as luck. Just throw that right on out. Pray for blessing instead.

◆ B. When people live in awareness of the sovereign God they become more bold and confident! This is really the gist of the book of Daniel. Daniel wrote in the face of the Babylonian Empire which had swallowed up Palestine. Israel was dwarfed by every standard of human calculation. - Packer p.24 Yet the central truth Daniel taught Nebuchadnezzar is that "the most high rules in the kingdom of men." 4:25; 5:21

◆ "and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to

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the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.” Daniel 2:20-22, NIV.

◆ It was this conviction of God’s sovereignty that made Daniel and his friends men who stuck their necks out. They could not be intimidated by the press. Popular vote meant nothing to them. Do you remember how bold the three friends in the burning furnace were?

◆ “Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, *“O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”* Daniel 3:15-18, NIV.

◆ People committed to the sovereign God are not intimidated easily, are they.

◆ C. Sovereignty means you exist for God. You were in fact created for his purpose. You will never fill your complete fulfillment without bowing to him! You are not here just to do your job for a while and then die. You are not

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here primarily to get married and have kids. You were created by him, for his reasons, at his pleasure, in his timing.

◆ *“But we know that there is only one God, the Father, who created everything, and we exist for him. And there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom God made everything and through whom we have been given life.” 1 Corinthians 8:6, NLT.*

◆ Where we are, and what we are, and who we are has been determined by the pleasure of our good God long before we were born. Therefore, your image is not dependent on your ability, your notoriety, or accomplishments, as much as the world pounds that into you, but on God’s declared value and identity of who you are and what he meant for you. That means our race, our wealth, our business, our family are his doing. He chose your color. He chose your sex. He chose your nationality. You don’t do this. Don’t walk around the earth debating, and deciding and self-identifying. This will not fill the empty ache you feel in your heart. But can. Walk the earth seeking him! He has greater purposes than mere prestige, fame, or luxury or pleasures people clamor for. You are not less important because you make less money, and to think so is disregard the sovereign God. You are not ugly and unwanted, or cherished more because you are beautiful, or muscular. You were ordained, intended by the Sovereign God. If you are third chair flute or second chair baritone, you need not feel like a slug. I know these things feel monumental in the moment, but you, young person are so much more than your position on a team. Your feet walk in the plans of a sovereign God who calls you by name. You exist for him. I’m not

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saying never try to improve or learn, or repair or change. I'm saying those things are bonuses on your already treasured life.

◆ **Conclusion:** I'm glad God is sovereign. I'm glad somebody is. And I'm glad that somebody is good, as we saw last week. Do not doubt the sovereign rulership of God. Nobody in Hell doubts it. Every demon knows it's true. God's sovereignty is best experienced when we acknowledge it in all areas of our lives. When we say, "God, my business is yours. I am here to do your will. You lead it and me." or "God, I commit my children's future to you. They are yours. I have dreams for them, but I trust your dreams are for the better. I will serve them, and love them for you." When this is how we approach life, the sovereignty of God fills puny humans with comfort, courage, and meaning.

◆ I invite you to pray this scripture with me right now. It is a prayer of David.

◆

- ◇ Pray 1Chron29:10-13 together.
- ◇ 10 David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.
- ◇ 11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.
- ◇ 12 Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.
- ◇ 13 Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.