

An Everlasting Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to look and see what God has for us in his word, because we believe that God has something to say to everyone.

He has something to say to people who've been Christians their entire lives. He has something to say to people who've been Christians only for a short amount of time. And he has something to say to those who are not Christians, those who have questions and objections and doubts about Christianity.

And so it's for that reason that we come to God's word. We're continuing our series in the book of Daniel. And this morning we find ourselves in Daniel chapter 4. You'll remember that Daniel's a book that takes place during the late 7th and 6th century, and it tells the story of a man named Daniel who's a faithful Israelite living in exile in Babylon.

And this book tells us two things primarily. It has two purposes. First, to encourage us as Christians, that as we live in the world, no matter how bad things get, God is still in control.

[1 : 17] He rules and reigns over the nations. So there's that encouragement. There's also an instruction. There's an instruction here. We see in Daniel and his friends how it is that we can live faithful lives in a foreign land.

Now, over the last couple weeks, we have focused more on the instruction than the encouragement. We've seen the example of Daniel in chapter 1, the example of his friends in chapter 3.

This morning, we're going to turn from that. Remember, we were looking at the question of how and when we disobey the government. We're going to turn from instruction more to encouragement because we're going to come up against the challenge that we all feel if we live in this world, which is this.

What do we do with wicked and proud and evil rulers? We live in a wicked world with wicked rulers, and that's part of what it means to live in a foreign land.

As we live with those rulers, there's all sorts of temptations that we face, right? It can be tempting to give up. We become only cynical or bitter.

[2 : 20] It can be tempting to fear, right? These are powerful men and women. What are they going to do to us? It can also be tempting to give in to doubt. Does God really care? If these are the people who are in charge of us, is God actually in control of the world?

Because if he were, why would he allow that? And so it's with that cynicism and fear and doubt that we often come to the rulers of this world as we live in exile.

And it's with that problem, that question, that we're going to come to Daniel chapter 4. And so I invite you to turn there with me. You'll find it near the end of your worship guide. You can find it in your Bible, or you can find it, of course, on your phone.

And I'm going to tell you again, this is a very long passage. I'm not apologizing for that. I'm just naming the reality. And the reality is when we come against very long passages, it can be hard at times.

It's hard for me, I'll confess, to stay focused and to know how to track. And so I'm going to give you, I'm going to say it's for the kids, and you can pretend that's true.

[3 : 24] I'm going to give you a reading strategy as we go in, just like I did last time. I want you to track with me, and I want you to track two different words. And I want you to count them. It's going to be the word heaven or heavens and the word earth.

So as we go through this, I want you to be, you can take a pen or a pencil if you want. You can square it. You can highlight it. You can circle it. But I want you to be paying attention to those two as we read this passage.

Remember, as you mark those words, that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold. And it is sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so it's for that reason that we read now, starting at verse 1. Verse 4.

Verse 5.

[5 : 03] Verse 10.

Verse 10. Verse 10.

Verse 13. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven.

Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his mind be changed from a man's and let a beast's mind be given to him. And let seven periods of time pass over him.

The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones. To the end that the living may know that the most high rules the kingdom of men.

[6 : 52] And he gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men. Verse 18. This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation.

Because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation. But you are able. For the spirit of the holy gods is in you. Verse 19.

Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies. The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth, whose leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the heavens lived.

It is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth. And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven, saying, Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field, let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven periods of time pass over him.

[8 : 27] Verse 24. This is the interpretation, O king. It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.

You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will.

And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that heaven rules. Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you.

Break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity. Verse 28.

All this came upon king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months, he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. And the king answered and said, Is this not great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence, and for the glory of my majesty?

[9 : 36] While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven. O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken. The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.

And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will.

Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men, and ate grass like an ox. And his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair grew as long as eagle's feathers, and his nails were like bird's claws.

Verse 34. At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason restored to me. And I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever. For his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

[10:48] And none can stay his hand or say to him, What have you done? Verse 36. At the same time, my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me.

My counselors and my Lord sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven.

For all his works are right, and his ways are just. And those who walk in pride, he is able to humble. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you again that as our King, you give us instruction and direction. And we thank you that you give it to us in your word. We ask that you would do that very thing this morning, that you'd send your spirit to help us to know and understand everything that you've written for us here.

And most of all, that you would cast a spotlight on Jesus Christ, that we would be able to see him as beautiful and glorious. We ask these things in his name. Amen.

[12:02] I want you all to think back with me to about this time. Last year, we just started the COVID crisis, and there was a lack of clarity. We were unsure about how long it was going to last.

Some people were thinking it was going to go through the summer. Some people were already predicting it was going to go through the fall. There were a few people predicting maybe it would go into 2021. And in the midst of that, you'll remember we were trying to flatten the curve.

And in April, this month, the numbers were stabilizing in New York State. So they were stopping to go up. They were starting to get leveled. It was an encouraging sign. And so the governor of New York State, Andrew Cuomo, came out and made a statement that ended up blowing up in the news because he said this.

The number is down because we brought the number down. God did not do that. Faith did not do that. Destiny did not do that.

A lot of pain and suffering did that. That's how it works. It's math. Now, we're not going to deny the reality of human agency.

[13:07] Our actions matter. And it's incredible arrogance and hubris for us to claim credit, ultimate credit for what God does in this world. There's a false choice here.

You don't have to choose between human action and God's intervention in the world. And yet that's what Andrew Cuomo did in that statement. And he shows us something now that's true in Daniel's day, was true in Daniel's day, which is that the heart of man is tempted to forget God.

The heart of man is tempted to take credit for what belongs to God alone. And that, in fact, is the question for us of this passage, who rules the world?

Who rules the world? Who is, in fact, in charge and in control? And so that takes us directly to our test. And our test is this. First of all, the word earth. How many times?

I can't hear you. Thank you. Ten. That is the correct answer. Earth shows up ten times, verses one, verses 10 through 11. Verse 15, two times. Verse 20, 21, 22, 23, 35 times two.

[14:14] Ten times we see the word earth. Okay, the word heaven. How many times? 16. Thank you. Verse 11. Verse 12. Verse 13, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23 times two, 25.

26, 33, 34, 35, and 37. There's a reason that heaven and earth appear over and over again because it gets to this question. Who rules the world?

Heaven or earth? There are two kingdoms. There's a king on the earth and a king in heaven who is actually in charge. And we see both of those kings here. In verse 22, you'll see in the dream, the king has grown and become strong.

His greatness has grown and reaches to heaven and your dominion to the ends of the earth. Nebuchadnezzar is the king of this world. And there's also a king of heaven.

You'll notice at the very last instance of the word heaven. Verse 37, I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the king of heaven.

[15:16] So there's a king on earth. There's a king in heaven who's in charge. That's the challenging thing Nebuchadnezzar comes up against. That's what we're going to look at this morning.

And as we do it, we're going to see two things. First, number one, the pride of rulers. Number two, the power of God. We're going to see the pride of rulers and the power of God.

First, the pride of rulers. What's true of Nebuchadnezzar, what's true of Andrew Cuomo is this. They claim glory for themselves.

They claim glory for themselves. And of course, Nebuchadnezzar has good reason to claim glory for himself. We see in this dream in verses 10 through 12 that this tree that represents him reaches to heaven.

His kingdom is great. He has accomplished a lot from an earthly perspective. There are these birds and these creatures who are coming to him for food and protection. And we see the interpretation of this in verses 20 through 22.

[16:17] He has grown and become strong. Now in this phrase, reaching to the heavens, if you know your Bible well, you might hear an echo of something from the book of Genesis. It's an echo of the Tower of Babel when people tried to build a tower all the way to the heavens.

So there's this hint here of Nebuchadnezzar's pride, his desire to be like God. Remember we talked about that in chapter 3. He makes this golden image so that people would worship it.

It gets again to the arrogance of the nations. Nebuchadnezzar then is proud. It's not just that he reaches to the heavens, but he takes credit for it. We see his pride, the results of it.

But in verse 27, we're told he needs to stop oppressing the wicked. He needs to practice righteousness, show mercy to the oppressed.

So Nebuchadnezzar and his power has become so removed from the world that he's oppressing the poor. It has not made him more merciful, but if anything, his power has made him less merciful. Remember earlier I said power.

[17:19] It's not bad, but it's dangerous. And then we see the ultimate statement of pride from Nebuchadnezzar in verse 30. And this is what brings upon his madness.

He makes this confession. Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power, as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty? Nebuchadnezzar believes that he is like God. He takes complete credit for everything that's happened in Babylon. He takes complete glory for everything that happens in Babylon. And so we see the same thing we saw in chapter 3, that when we have an earthly ruler, there is a temptation that while they're only supposed to represent God, they aspire to be God.

That's what's going on with Nebuchadnezzar here. In this world, power corrupts. Power blinds us. It clouds our vision.

Success is often more dangerous than failure. It's not wrong to be successful. It's good in many ways. It's just dangerous. So there's some general principles here we see with Nebuchadnezzar.

[18:29] And so knowing these things about the world, as we're looking at the pride of man, knowing that this is the way power works, knowing this is the way rulers often work, is part of how we're wise as serpents and we're innocent as doves.

Remember, Jesus tells us that in Matthew 10, verse 16. As we look at this first section, then, as we're thinking through how it is that we protect ourselves from cynicism and fear and doubt, we need to remember this is part of how we don't give up hope in this world filled by wicked rulers. Because we know this is how the world works. Does it make it right? It means we're not surprised. This is a pattern that we see over and over again.

We expect powerful rulers, and so we expect prideful rulers. Now, I don't say this to make you cynical. Say it so we're not surprised. We understand how God has made the world and also the way that sin infects and distorts the world.

So we're not discouraged, right? We don't give up hope. We're not undone. This is part of what it means to live in this world. But we have powerful and therefore prideful rulers. Now, it would be tempting for me to then now preach to you a sermon about pride.

[19:40] It's a theme in this passage. It's not, however, the primary theme, and it's not the primary thing I want for us to take away for this reason. I don't want you all to take this the wrong way, and I

don't want you to be offended.

But your trees don't reach to heaven. Okay? If I was preaching to a group of world leaders, I would preach to them about the danger of power and pride.

And I would warn them about the fact that while they might be trees reaching to the heavens, God is going to be the one in control. He may take them down. Now, yes, some of you are powerful. Pride and power are a real danger.

For us, however, the point is more in this. We are people. By the way, the Israelites receiving this would have not thought to themselves, oh, we need to make sure we're not like Nebuchadnezzar. No, they would have associated with Daniel, right? They would have thought, oh, this is what God does to kings like Nebuchadnezzar. And so, yes, there's an element of a warning against pride here.

[20 : 42] The point for us, however, is to be encouraged. God has power over prideful rulers. God has authority over prideful rulers.

And so, I'll make just a quick note about Nebuchadnezzar's pride and the fact that he ends up acting like an animal. And it's this, that there's a sense in which the punishment fits the crime, right? He is making himself out to be God.

And so, God says, well, guess what? You're going to look like an animal. He reaches up to the heavens. He finds himself eating grass on the earth. And so, there's a theme here of the danger of pride.

And I'll just read you a couple things from this book about Daniel by a man named Chris Wright. He says this, Punishment fits the crime.

There's an irony here. Then he warns us. When human beings act without any sense of a higher authority, with no sense of accountability to God, then both individually and as a society, we are capable of terrible cruelty to one another.

[21 : 56] Individual pride and state pride get out of control when they are unchecked by any submission to a transcendent authority. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar was heading towards disaster by refusing to acknowledge God.

And then finally, he says this, and this helps us understand what's going on with Nebuchadnezzar becoming like an animal. It is interesting how an attack of humility also led to sanity.

Pride, especially the kind of pride that tries to get away with ignoring God and his demands, is really a kind of madness. To live in God's world and behave as if we have the right to own it and treat others as we like without reference to him is mad.

In other words, God is painting a picture through Nebuchadnezzar of what pride actually looks like. It looks like losing touch with humanity. It looks like losing touch with reality.

And so the punishment fits the crime, right? He tries to act like a god. He becomes less than human. And so that's what we see here in this passage about the pride of rulers, the pride of men.

[23 : 05] And God brings them down. He humbles them. And so as Christians, we're encouraged and hopeful because we see that even as we're up against prideful and powerful leaders, God is still the one in charge.

Even as we're up against prideful and powerful leaders, we see the true fruit that comes from it. And so knowing people are corrupt helps us to be realistic, but of course we need more than that.

We don't just need to know about the pride of humanity, the pride of men. We also need to know about the power of God. And so that's where we turn next. It's not just that Nebuchadnezzar is delusional, but that God is great and powerful.

And so we see the first demonstration of his power in verse 4. He sends a dream to Nebuchadnezzar. By the way, God is acting throughout this entire chapter. And in this dream, he tells Nebuchadnezzar what's going to happen.

It's not just that he's a tree that reaches to the heavens. That's what we saw before. He's also a tree that's going to be chopped down. This tree, right, is Nebuchadnezzar.

[24 : 08] And God is the one acting. God is the powerful one who chops him down. And so we see in verse 16, God's going to have his mind changed from the mind of a man to the mind of a beast. Verse 25, God is the one who's going to act and have him driven from men and eat grass like an ox.

And then God, verse 36, is going to be the one who restores him. God is more powerful than Nebuchadnezzar.

God is the one who's actually in charge. And in case we missed that point, it is repeated three times in this passage. So I'm going to ask you to track with me.

We're going to look at verses 17, 25, and 32. Verse 17, the watcher tells this. It's going to happen that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.

So we're supposed to take that as the point of this. Then we turn to verse 25. What do we find? Ah, he's going to become an ox till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.

[25 : 18] Just in case we missed the point, we also get to see it in verse 32. And you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and you shall be made to eat grass like an ox.

And seven periods of time shall pass over you. Wait for it until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. In other words, the point of this chapter is this. Not primarily a warning against pride, but a reminder of God's great power. He is the one who sets kings up and tears them down. He gives command and rule to whom he will.

And so, as Christians, we remember that God is in control. He is more powerful than any earthly ruler. Now, this doesn't necessarily change our circumstances that I've talked about before. It does change our perspective. And one of my favorite phrases, this is about the book of Revelation, but a man explains the book of Revelation in this way, that it is a heavenly perspective on an earthly reality.

[26 : 20] It's a heavenly perspective on an earthly reality. That's the same thing we see here in the book of Daniel. We have God's heavenly perspective on the earthly realities. As people here on this earth, we see rulers and kings, and we think, wow, that person is frightening and terrible and powerful.

We see God's heavenly perspective. God is even more frightening and more powerful. Now, while this may sound like a simple review, remember what we learned in 2 Peter, the importance of being stirred up by way of reminder.

So there's a sense in which you've been a Christian for a while. I'm going to say things that are obvious. Yes, God's in control. He's more powerful than all the other rulers. And it's easy to forget that as we live day by day life in this world, that God is more powerful than Amazon.com. More workers work for him. God has more cars in his fleet. God is more powerful than the U.S. government. Do you think the IRS is powerful?

They can just take money out of your bank account? Guess what? God is more powerful. Simple, hard to remember. One of the ways that God shows his power is by raising up leaders and then bringing them down.

[27 : 41] Remember, that's the point here that we saw in verses 17, 25, and 32. That we would know, look at it again in 32. He rules the kingdom of men and he gives it to whom he wills.

So we're going to get into the nitty gritty here of how we see the power of God at work in our world and how we can have great hope and encouragement from it. So looking at verses 17, 25, and 32. First of all, God gives us our rulers. He shows us his power by giving us every single ruler that we have. Now, this is important to understand as Christians because this is often a point of confusion in the American church.

And so I'll explain it in this way. By the way, knowing that God gives us our rulers, it's humbling in some ways because they're rulers we don't like, right? And God gave them to us.

It also gives us confidence in peace. There are rulers who are wicked who we don't like, and God's in control. He gave them to us. Here, however, is the point of confusion.

[28 : 48] I'm just going to give you a warning right now. I'm going to use some real politicians' names. I'm going to use a Democrat and a Republican. I'm not endorsing them or criticizing them. I'm making a point about the church.

Okay, so track with me. First, when I was in college, 2008 election happened my freshman year. It was Barack Obama versus John McCain. There were some Christians at that time who believed there was something special in God's plan about Barack Obama.

That somehow God had picked him in a special way, was anointing him, raising him up, and putting him forward as our leader. Did God, this is rhetorical, don't answer this, okay?

Did God pick and choose and raise up Barack Obama? Yes, in the same way that he raised up Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and George Bush and Bill Clinton. Guess what? God gives us all our rulers. Okay, fast forward. A later election, 2016, Donald Trump. There was a group of Christians who believed that God was raising up Donald Trump in a special way as a special representative of his rule and reign on earth. [30 : 02] Did God raise up Donald Trump? Yes, in the same way that he raised up George Washington. In the same way he gave us John F. Kennedy.

In the same way he gave us Teddy Roosevelt. Why? God gives us all our rulers. And so we run into trouble when we think that there's some ruler that's a special chosen representative of God and one that's not.

If you don't believe me, read verse 17, verse 25, and verse 32. God rules the kingdom of man and gives it to whom he will. Every single ruler that we have is given to us by God.

Joe Biden. Did God raise up Joe Biden as our president? Yes, in the same way as he's raised up every president.

God gives us our rulers. And so as Christians, when we look at them, however powerful they may appear, we know that God is the one in charge.

[31 : 07] We know that God is the one in control. So our hope is in God, right? What we don't say is, oh my goodness, finally so-and-so is in charge.

Everything's going to be all right. God now cares. No, God's always at work. He always cares. He gives us all our leaders. And so this protects us. It protects us from all sorts of tribalism. And it protects us from being pulled off into some extreme movements of people who like to claim that there's one person who represents God, another doesn't. One was appointed by God, the other wasn't.

But just remind them, it says it three times in Daniel 4. God gives us our rulers. Now we also have a, we come into a tough issue as well in the American church with this.

So one way we fall off is by believing some rulers are given to us by God. Others are not given to us by God. Another way we fall into this is when we abuse the phrase that God's in charge.

[32 : 04] Remember, I've told you God is still in control. He rules and reigns over the nations. Some people take that to mean, well, we shouldn't care about politics. And those people who care about politics have not reached the elite spiritual plane that I have reached where I understand these are things I don't need to be concerned about.

You'll see this around election times. I, believe it or not, am friends with many pastors on Facebook. And sometimes you'll see a pastor post on election day, hey, Christians, just want to remind you no matter who wins, God's still in control.

Now that's a great sentiment. It's true. God is still in control. However, these same people, when there's an issue that they care about politically, we don't care about. And then God's not in control and we really need to worry about it and work hard when it's an issue we do care about.

And so there's sort of this inconsistency and there's this, there's actually, it's kind of condescending often when Christians say this. When they say God's in control, often what they mean is, I don't want to hear about how you care about politics because that just means you're not like a very spiritual Christian.

And so we need to be careful about what we mean and what we're saying when we say that God rules and reigns. First of all, it is good to have righteous rulers. It's bad to have wicked rulers.

[33 : 21] The risk of saying the obvious. Proverbs chapter 29 verse 2 tells us that when we have a good ruler, the righteous rejoice. So there's some kind of emotion involved in having a good ruler.

There's something good about wanting good rulers. There's something to be grieved when we have wicked and bad rulers. And so there's a condescending way of saying God's in charge, a way of saying, hey, actually I just kind of want you to shut up and I don't want to hear about this.

But then there's a perspective forming way. There's a condescending way to say God rules and reigns. There's a perspective forming a helpful way of saying it. When we as Christians say that God rules and reigns, that he has control over the nations, what we are saying is this.

It's not that we are unconcerned with the political rulers of this world. Not that it does not affect us or it is wrong for us to have a variety of responses. But what we are saying is this.

We don't ride the roller coaster. We do not ride the political roller coaster. What I mean by that is this. I have a friend who's a pastor.

[34 : 26] He was at a church. It's a very bad situation. He's not at that church anymore. But he was having to deal with all kinds of crazy situations. And so he called up a mentor of his who told him, you're going to find yourself in all sorts of situations.

There's going to be a temptation to feel all kinds of emotions and to get caught up in what's going on. And at that moment, you have a choice. You can ride the roller coaster or you can not ride the roller coaster.

In other words, you can let your emotions be ruled by this. You can always be going up and down. You can put your ultimate hope and your satisfaction and your contentment based on what's going on in this situation.

Or you can have one step back and realize there are real difficulties, real challenging things, and you are rooted in something better and greater.

Christian, the same is true for us. The same thing that was true for Daniel. There are all kinds of crazy things going on in this world. We have wicked and proud rulers.

[35 : 27] We have imperfect rulers. There are reasons to rejoice with the righteous and to lament the wicked. And we don't ride the roller coaster because we are one step back rooted in something greater and more powerful.

We are rooted in this, that no matter what happens, God rules and reigns over the nations. He sets up rulers and he tears them down.

And so it protects us, right? It protects us from all sorts of tribalism. It protects us from extreme behavior. We can care about these things. We can be involved in them. And our roots go down to a deeper water table.

We are not having feast or famine based on whether the political reigns that were recent helped us or not. Because our roots go all the way down to something deeper and richer.

It is the source and the life that we have from God and his word, knowing no matter what happens, he is in control and in charge. And so we can weather all sorts of storms.

[36 : 34] Our lives, our emotions, our lives, our emotions do not ebb and flow by what's going on politically. We're not controlled by it. We're not ruled by it.

And it's good and right for us to care about it. So that's how we hold the balance. That's how we use the phrase, God rules and reigns. He's sovereign. We don't use it as a condescending phrase for other Christians who are concerned about politics.

But we use it as an encouraging phrase, a perspective forming change. Yes, something might happen we don't like. And God is still working history to his ends. The end is not here.

Because the end is something God is bringing. By the way, what would happen if God did give us a special president, right, that he had selected above all the others, different than the way he'd selected other presidents?

That would be too small of a hope. A man is too small of a thing for us to put our hope and confidence in.

[37 : 39] God has given us a man to put our hope and confidence in. It is not a man of this earth. And so, Christian, we avoid the cynicism and fear and doubt in this world by knowing no matter what happens, God raises up rulers, God takes down rulers.

God is always in control. He rules our rulers. And so, we don't shake and tremble at the people who have power in this world.

We're not cowed by them. We're not afraid of them. That's actually what Daniel models for us in this passage. Daniel, we can see, has some trepidation about whether he's, not whether, but about sharing this dream.

He still speaks the truth to Nebuchadnezzar. Now, that's a risky thing to do, right? He's telling Nebuchadnezzar something he doesn't want to hear. In fact, some people believe the reason that Nebuchadnezzar waited until the end to ask Daniel, even though he knew that Daniel was the one able to interpret dreams, was that he didn't want to hear what Daniel had to say.

So, he waited until the last chance possible. Daniel here knows what we know as well, that he doesn't need to shake and tremble at the rulers of this world.

[38 : 54] Now, I've hit hard for you, verses 17, 25, and 32. God raises up rulers. He brings them down. But that's not the only repetition in this chapter, nor is heaven and earth.

You know, if you've been with us for a while, that I'm all about bookends in sections. And we see a clear bookend here at the beginning and the end of chapter 4. King Nebuchadnezzar sings God's

praises to segment off this chapter.

He says in verse 3, he's singing a song here, I suppose, How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

And then we see the same thing in verses 34 and 35. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. And none can stay his hand or say to him, What have you done?

[39 : 59] Repetition is this. His dominion is an everlasting dominion. His kingdom endures from generation to generation. In other words, he's repeating what we already know from chapter 2.

Remember, we saw the statue of the nations, and they were going to fall one by one. There was the head of gold that would be for a time. The chest and arms of silver, that would be for a time. The middle and thighs of bronze, that would be for a time.

The legs of iron, that would be for a time. Nations come and go. God's rule and his kingdom and dominion are forever. And so Nebuchadnezzar is reminded of that, that God's kingdom, unlike his, is an everlasting kingdom.

It's the kingdom of heaven, not the kingdom of earth. Later in the Bible, we see another conflict between heaven and earth. And in this one, the king of heaven himself comes down and visits the earth.

And of course, that is our Lord Jesus. He comes down. He has conflict with this kingdom. He also teaches us that God is the one who raises up leaders and brings them down.

[41 : 10] In fact, he says this explicitly in John chapter 19. It's Jesus' trial. He's been brought before Pilate. Pilate is a powerful man. And Jesus tells him this, You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.

Jesus also teaches us that God raises up rulers and brings them down. Even more than that, Jesus is the one who brings the eternal kingdom, the kingdom that endures from generation to generation. At the very beginning of his ministry in the Gospel of Mark, he says, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.

And so we don't give in. We don't give in to doubt about God and his power. We don't give in to fear of earthly rulers. We don't give in to cynicism because we know God is in control. He raises them up and he pulls them down.

And he is bringing a great and everlasting kingdom that will destroy and break down and eclipse all and every other kingdom. And so, brothers and sisters, we hope not in earthly rulers because that is too small of a thing.

[42 : 27] And also because they cannot bring the great and everlasting kingdom, the heavenly kingdom. But instead, we have great confidence and hope in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, because he is the one who is coming.

God says he sets up kings and takes them down. He has set up and will set up one king that will never be taken down. And that's our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so, that is our hope and our confidence in this world. We do not rise the ebb and the flow, the up and the down of politics and rulers and kingdoms.

But instead, we do what King Nebuchadnezzar did so that he could be restored. Verse 34, Brothers and sisters, that is our hope as well.

As we live in this world, we lift our eyes to heaven, looking to Jesus, our great and true King, who is going to come and bring his everlasting kingdom and his dominion that will never end.

[43 : 33] And so, I invite you to pray with me. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your word that you've given to us. And we ask that you would use it in our lives to bring change in our heart, in our words, in our actions, that we would have great confidence and trust in you, that we would not rise or fall with the news of the day, but we would instead rest and trust that you are the one who rules and reigns over this world.

And we thank you that you rule and reign over our lives. And so, we ask these things, not in our strength, but in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.