

Blurry Kingdoms - Building for a Fall

Intro: Today you may be tempted to cheer or gloat at the fall of a celebrity preacher who squandered all they built for sexual mischievance or financial greed. Same for a political figure bc they got what they deserve. The question I want us to ask today, as Chriwt followers, seeking to imitate the humility of our Savior... *am I building for a fall?*

Israel's story is a story of covenant faithfulness and rebellion. יהוה gave His people the Land and His promises, but they repeatedly turned to the gods of the nations. Exile was therefore not an accident—it was covenant judgment. Yet Daniel begins in exile with a message of hope: יהוה has not lost control, and His people must remain faithful.

Daniel 1–3: Daniel and his friends are taken to Babylon, but Babylon cannot take their allegiance. They remain faithful to יהוה in a foreign land. In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar's dream reveals that earthly kingdoms rise and fall under יהוה's sovereign rule, and that His kingdom will ultimately endure. In chapter 3, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah refuse to worship the king's image, trusting יהוה even when faithfulness may cost them their lives. So as we come to chapter 4, the question becomes bigger than, "Will Daniel and his friends remain faithful?" What happens when the king himself refuses to recognize that יהוה is the true King? Daniel 4 turns our attention from the faithfulness of God's people to the pride and rebellion of humanity—and יהוה's power to humble the proud. Ch1-3 focus on Daniel and 3 friends. 3 friends not in ch2, Dan not in ch 3, but our boy Nebby is in all 4 chapters, no doubt to make a greater point that climaxes in ch4.

Pride comes before the fall (Prov 16:18).

Text: MPT-יהוה is the Most High King over heaven and earth. MPS—there is hope, look up, let Jesus build the Kingdom.

Read narrative, then **Daniel 4:34-37**—after the appointed time, Nebby finally looks up to heaven. And when he does, his sanity returns. His response is...worship of the Most High God. He declares that יהוה's kingdom is everlasting, that יהוה does what He wills in heaven and on earth, and that no one can stop His hand. It's fascinating that Nebby goes back to being the main narrator here (v34-37). Notice a key point in v34. Nebby was turning the gift of God, his power to rule, into his own glory. At the beginning of his reign, Jeremiah called Nebby the "servant of יהוה." His power was given to him. When Nebby realizes this: his "sanity" returned. Wow. יהוה had been trying to teach him for yrs. This *attack of humility* led to sanity! That's what humility does. Then, the personal declaration of v37 is profound. Ending with...*He is able to humble those who walk in pride.* Remember, we're dealing w a king over a world-power. This is US, China, Russia-level power. Even Israel in its heyday before the exile(s), was a regional power at best (Brazil, Turkey, S. Korea). This king w literally all the power in the earthly realm is being played like a puppet by the Most High God. Daniel and his three friends are Hebrews, in charge of the king's household after prevailing in the furnace, refusing to worship the gods of Nebby. Now the king is played as a fool, literally acting like an animal for 7 "times" (unclear). He comes to his senses and declares: the Most High God is able to humble those who walk in pride. You see, we blurry the Kingdoms of our world thinking we are the ones in charge.

Simple way to know we're not in charge? Ever been on an airplane? This little device that contains *messages, money, maps, movies, info, entertainment, access*...turns into a clock and if you're lucky an old-school iPod. It's then you realize how NOT in control you are. Katie and I just took a quick getaway a couple weeks ago. It was almost welcoming for me. I just slept or sat there still. But you could feel the tension of the ppl who could not figure out the onboard wifi. They didn't know what to do w their hands, didn't know how to act, everyone was tense. We need some deliberate practices in our lives that remind us that we are not in control. Make it more of a habit to put your phone on airplane mode, replace it w sp discipline.

We're not as connected to control as we think we are. Washington, Beijing, Moscow, Wall Street, our careers/families/bank accounts...these things do not determine reality. Nebby had all the power on earth, but the King of heaven says "you're still mine to humble." And maybe your Babylon isn't a gov't. *Maybe it's your career, your reputation, your money, your family, your own ability.* Whatever it is, you've begun to believe the same lie: I built this. I control this. I determine what happens next. The msg of this passage is: look up to heaven v34. Look at who rules. Pride looks down at what I've done. Worship looks up at the One who reigns. The kingdom you're living in isn't ultimate. The authority you've been given isn't ultimate. The success you've experienced isn't ultimate. Even the things you're afraid of aren't ultimate.

The Most High God rules and reigns both then AND today. He is ABLE to humble...not can or will try...is able!

This is still true today, but you know, יהוה would rather we humble *ourselves* before He has to humble us? **Jms 4:10—humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up.** When we are humble, we are the most sane. Flip that—when you are prideful, you are crazy. There's something that happens physiologically when we feed our pride that turns us into beasts. Pride, esp the kind that ignores the Lord and His demands, is really a kind of madness. Partly what's being illustrated here w Nebby. To live in God's world and act like we have the right to own it, and treat others however we feel w/o keeping the way of Jesus in mind...that's madness! Even trying to live and work as if Sunday is the Lord's Day and all others are not...crazy. יהוה will not be sidelined like that. We must walk in humility before Him. Bc in the end, Nebby basically said what Jesus said, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus is King of the only Kingdom that's not Blurry. One reason

why Jesus is so uncomfortable to many...He is Lord of an upside down Kingdom. The values that He taught: loving neighbor, humbling yourself, serving before being served, blessing the poor, downcast, merciful, marginalized, pure, peacemakers, persecuted for His sake...this cuts across political lines, economic values, personal attitudes/behaviors. The only way to cope with such a kingdom is to submit, repent, and accept it...the result? **A radically changed life!** Resist it and eventually be given over to the beast you inevitably become. The gospel of the Kingdom is lived out among His ppl (citizens) today. **We are the ones who have changed by its power and hold the world accountable for the unjust status quo.** Otherwise, we are building for a fall.

Rap: Are you building for a fall? *Look up. Look to heaven. Who rules and reigns over your life? Are you acknowledging Him?* He's already Lord, but are you treating Him as such? You don't have the power to "make Jesus Lord of your life," but you do have the power to trust Him. When we fully trust Christ as King, He does the building. And when you try to do it yourself, He catches you when you Fall, brushes you off, reminds you of your sanity/reason, invites you to change. That's the invitation today. Trust Christ, stop building for a fall. Abide in Him as a good Father. Receive, acknowledge Him as Lord!

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Daniel 4 Narration:

Nebuchadnezzar begins this chapter by telling the whole world (v1—every nation, tribe, tongue) what happened to him. (Yes, Nebby speaks from v1-18) And what's striking is that this is not the arrogant Nebuchadnezzar we've seen before. **He is looking back on what the Most High God did to him.**

He says, in effect, "I was living at ease. My kingdom was flourishing. Babylon was everything I had built—and then I had a dream that terrified me."

In the (second) dream, he sees an enormous tree in the middle of the earth. It is beautiful, powerful, and...big. It reaches the heavens and can be seen throughout the earth. **Animals find shelter under it. Birds live in its branches. Everyone seems to benefit from it.** Then the scene shifts...

A heavenly watcher (Aramaic meaning) comes down and announces a decree: **Cut the tree down. Destroy its branches. Strip away its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let everything that depended on it flee.** But there is one strange detail: *leave the stump and its roots in the ground.* Then the watcher says that the one represented by the tree will lose his human mind and live like an animal for seven periods of time. And then comes the reason for the judgment: *"The Most High is ruler over human kingdoms."* **Nebuchadnezzar calls all his wise men, but none can explain the dream.** Finally Daniel comes in at Nebby's request. v18b—they can't, *but you can, because you have the spirit of the holy gods.* (gods-elohim, not fake idols, real deities) Nebby recognizes Daniel has the spirit of the greatest "gods."

And Daniel immediately understands what this means.

The tree is Nebuchadnezzar himself. His greatness has grown. His kingdom has spread. He has become the great ruler of the world. **But heaven has already passed judgment on his pride.**

Daniel tells him: v23-26—"You are going to be brought down. You will lose your kingdom, you will live like an animal, and you will remain there until you acknowledge that the Most High rules over human kingdoms."

And Daniel actually gives the king a warning: Turn from your sin. Do what is right. Show mercy to the needy. Perhaps יהוה will extend your prosperity (v27). But Nebuchadnezzar does not listen.

A year passes.

He is walking on the roof of his palace, looking out over Babylon, and he says, essentially, *"Look what I have built. Look at my kingdom. Look at my greatness. I did this by my power and for my glory."* (v28-30) And **while the words are still coming out of his mouth, a voice comes from heaven, declaring his kingdom...departed v31. The kingdom is taken from him.**

The mighty king of Babylon—the man who conquered nations, destroyed Jerusalem, and carried יהוה's people into exile—is driven away from human society. He lives like an animal. He eats grass. The king who seemed to rule the world becomes like a beast of the field. v33

And notice the reason given again and again: **Until he acknowledges that the Most High rules.**