God Save the King

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 December 2021

Preacher: Martin Ayers

[0:00] King Nebuchadnezzar, to the nations and peoples of every language who live in all the earth, may you prosper greatly. It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders.

His kingdom is an eternal kingdom. His dominion endures from generation to generation. I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous. I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me. So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. He is called Belteshazzar after the name of my God and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.
I said, Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream. Interpret it for me. These are the visions I saw while lying in bed. I looked and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land.
Its height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky. It was visible to the ends of the earth. Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant and on it was food for all.
[1:44] Under it, the wild animals found shelter and the birds lived in its branches. From it, every creature was fed. In the visions I saw while lying in bed, I looked and there before me was a holy one, a messenger coming down from heaven. He called in a loud voice, cut down the tree and trim off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. But let the stump and its roots bound with iron and bronze remain in the ground in the grass of the field. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal till seven times pass by for him. The decision is announced by messengers. The holy ones declare the verdict so that the living may know that the most high is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.

This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me, but you can because the spirit of the holy gods is in you. Then Daniel, also called Belteshazzar, was greatly perplexed for a time and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you? Belteshazzar answered, my lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries. The tree you saw, which grew large and strong with its top touch in the sky, visible to the whole earth, with beautiful leaves and abundant food, providing food for all, giving shelter to the wild animals and having nesting places in its branches for the birds. Your majesty, you are that tree. You have become great and strong. Your greatness has shown until it reaches the sky and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth. Your majesty saw a holy one, a messenger coming down from heaven and saying, cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump bound with iron and bronze in the grass of the field while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him live with the wild animals until seven times pass by for him.
This is the interpretation, your majesty, and this is the decree the most high has issued against my lord, the king. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals and you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the most high is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-06-21 07:15:42

The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that heaven rules. Therefore, your majesty, be pleased to accept my advice.
Renounce your sins by doing what is right and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be then that your prosperity will continue. All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of his royal palace in Babylon, he said, is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?
[5:13] Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven. This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar. Your royal authority has been taken away from you. You will be driven away from the people and will live with the wild animals.

You will eat grass like an ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.
Immediately, what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.
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 forever.
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.
[6:21] No one can hold back his hand or say to him, what have you done? At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honour and splendour were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before.

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride, he is able to humble.
Amen. Amen. Brilliant.
Good morning, St Silas. My name is Martin Ayres. If we've not met, I'm the senior pastor here. Thanks, Rosie, for reading that for us so helpfully. It's Daniel chapter 4 and it would be a great help to me if you could keep your Bibles open.
If they've fallen close, it's page 888 in the church Bibles there. And you can find an outline inside the notice sheet if you'd find that helpful as we look at God's word together. Let's pray and ask for God's help.
[7:27] We pray to you, sovereign God, that you are all-powerful and holy and yet you condescend to speak to us and have invited us to become your children.

We pray that this morning you'll give us ears to hear your voice, heads that can understand your word, and hearts that are willing to change and follow you. For Jesus' name's sake.
Amen. Well, I don't know what you thought as that was read, but something happens in Daniel chapter 4 that should be astounding for us, living in Glasgow in the 2020s.
The world around us says, if you just had more money and wealth, if you just had more power and authority to lead your life the way you want, if you just had more success and admiration, if you just had excellent health, then you would have everything you need.
And we meet a man in Daniel chapter 4 who has all of those things in abundance. power, freedom, riches, success, idolization, health.
[8:39] In his generation, he is the master of the universe, and his life completely falls apart. He loses everything. He's humiliated, and he's glad.

In this chapter, he's rejoicing that that happened to him. So we should be asking, what could it possibly be that this man gained that would mean he could respond like that to calamity?
We're in a series in Daniel. We're looking at these events in the 6th century BC. Daniel and his friends were Bible believers. They were followers of the Lord, the God of the Bible.
And in 606 BC, as bright teenagers, they were taken from the promised land around Jerusalem, where God's people lived, into exile in Babylon. For them, when they were in Jerusalem, where the temple was, they were with God's people living in God's place.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-06-21 07:15:42

They were home with God. To be uprooted from that, they've become strangers, far from home. And the parallels for us as God's people today are hugely significant.
[9:47] It makes Daniel a very precious book for our times. Because if you are a Christian this morning, then you are far from home. The Jerusalem that we long for is when Christ returns and takes us to be with him forever.

The new Jerusalem. And we live in a form of Babylon. We're far from home, surrounded by a place, living in a place where the living God is not worshipped and is not known.
And Daniel teaches us the things we need to know to live as strangers in an environment like that. And teaches us how we're to live in Babylon.
Fully engaged in the world, we've seen that. They were obeying the prophecies of Jeremiah chapter 29 to engage with the world, to seek the peace and prosperity of the city they lived in. But not of the world.
They didn't belong to the world. They were uncompromising in their faithfulness to the Lord. And we've got three points as we look at what happened to the emperor. The first is Nezah is confronted by the God who reigns.
[10:54] He's confronted by the God who reigns. Now Nebuchadnezzar is a terrifying king. At that time, I think it's fair to say the greatest emperor who had ever lived. His empire was so incredible that still today our museums feature things that have been found from that time.

We can go and see relics of an incredible era of civilization that he had built. He's also a man so hot-headed that in chapter 3, he could throw insubordinate subjects into a fiery furnace.
He's a man so stubborn that in chapter 2, he told his chief pagan advisors that he would turn their houses into rubble unless they could tell him what was inside his own head.
And in these first verses of chapter 4, suddenly he becomes a bit more like King George in the musical Hamilton, if you've seen that. You know, this kind of farcical, frightened figure.
You'll be back. You'll remember you belong to me. He's become neurotic and wild. Now why has that happened to him? He tells us in verse 5, he says in verse 5, I had a dream that made me afraid.
[12:09] As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me. And he tells us the dream in verse 10. In his dream, he sees an enormous tree with its top reaching to the sky, a tree that you could see all around the world in his dream, a fruitful, healthy, beautiful tree with animals making their home under it and whole colonies of birds nesting in its branches.

And in verse 14, an angel comes and says, cut down the tree. All that's going to be left is a stump with these chains of iron and bronze around it.
That's the dream with some explanation from the angel. Now why is he so scared of a dream? I think we see here that often behind the greatest human power is just deep paranoia.
And fear. We see the super rich, the super, super rich in our world, you know, living out in the ocean on their yachts, complaining that there aren't enough places in the marinas to berth their yachts. And we see them flying here and there in private jets. And we think they're living the best life that you could live. You know, the A-list celebrities who get to go to every event they want to.
[13:25] They seem untouchable. But Nebuchadnezzar is a reasonable case study that often the more you have, the more afraid you become. Afraid because you've reached the top and you've realized that there's nothing there.

Afraid because you realize that all you have could be taken from you. You're vulnerable. You could lose it all. And we see as well in this chapter the futility of world religion.
the failure of paganism, if you like, to help him. Just think of the cost for Nebuchadnezzar of all these advisors.
Think how much it must have cost him to have, in verse 7, magicians, enchanters, astrologers, diviners. And they're pointless, aren't they? Think of all that religiosity, all that manpower.
There are things that they just cannot tell, Nebuchadnezzar. Just as today, we, humanity, can build the most incredible buildings.
[14:26] We can compose the most moving pieces of music, transcendent music. We can live in decadence. But when it comes to the future, we don't know what's going to happen.

And when it comes to God, we're in the dark about him. There's a TV series about Formula One, Drive to Survive. And it follows the drivers and the teams behind the drivers as they travel the world to the most fantastic cities in the world.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-06-21 07:15:42

You know, they're going to Melbourne and Monte Carlo. And this afternoon, there's the season climax in Abu Dhabi, the decider in the desert. There's billboards about it around our city. And there's this glamour and glitz on the show.
There are these billionaire owners who kind of buy driving teams so that their son can drive for them. And there are these young drivers born into families where because of the money all around them, they're destined for racing cars.
And then in one episode, a Formula One legend, Nicky Lauder, dies. And for all the money and the yachts and the parties and the sports cars and the swimming pools and the champagne, the people who knew Nicky Lauder are broken because he dies.
[15:40] and the winner of the Grand Prix that day says to the camera, we were driving for Nicky today. We just knew he was watching us. We knew as a team he was watching and we did it for him.

And no one stops to say, how do you know that? What are your grounds for thinking that Nicky Lauder was watching you from somewhere after he died?
It shows that under all the wealth and the power and the luxury, no one can deal with death. And so, we just let people live in superstition.
It's superstition, isn't it? Folk religion from the finest engineering driving companies in the world. Folk religion that people think, if I think they're good, then they'll go somewhere better when they die.
We're in the dark. aren't we? We're in the dark. And Nebuchadnezzar is in the dark like that and he's frightened by this dream. So he looks powerful and rich and sorted. And there's lots about him to envy but he's spiritually lost and he's surprisingly scared.
[16:53] So he gets something that he probably doesn't want but he really needs. He gets the confrontation of the word of God and that is something that lots of us probably don't really want in our lives.

But we really need. Daniel is given by God the meaning of the dream to give to the emperor and he tells him in verse 20 the tree you saw verse 20 and he describes the tree for him that it was large and strong and tall and it was seen by everyone everywhere and it was beautiful and fruitful and it provided food and it gave shelter.
And look at verse 22. He says your majesty you are that tree and then he recalls the words from God's messenger to Nebuchadnezzar in verse 25.
You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals. You will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. And then it talks about a period of time as seven times which is probably just that it's a period of time set by God by the sovereign God and the key phrase he says seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the most high is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.
The king will be brought low by the king of kings and so he's urged by Daniel repent turn back to God settle your accounts verse 27 therefore your majesty be pleased to accept my advice renounce your sins by doing what is right and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed it may be that then your prosperity will continue.
[18:40] Turn from your sins turn back to the living God as he confronts you with this word. It's confrontation but it's merciful confrontation and it's the same call that we hear from Jesus in the gospel Mark chapter 1 the time has come the kingdom of God has come near repent and believe the good news turn from your way of life away from God back to the living God from John the Baptist John the Baptist says flee from the coming wrath produce fruit in keeping with repentance the axe is already at the root of the trees and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire and it's the message that's now entrusted to God's people to the church Luke 24 Jesus says that it's written in the scriptures the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem now none of us likes to be confronted do we if you're a guest here this morning still looking in at the Christian faith maybe you're finding that difficult because we feel uneasy about the implications of God's words maybe we don't want to change but when God confronts us it's out of his mercy he's switching the light on he's showing us the truth about him and let's just notice as well who Nebuchadnezzar hears this revelation from he hears it from Daniel he hears it because one of the exiled people of God has the courage to speak the truth to him in love and it's the same way that God is at work today in our world we are the exiled people of God if

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-06-21 07:15:42

you're a Christian we have the revelation from him for a lost world and that is how

God does business here that's our first point Nebuchadnezzar is confronted by the God who reigns but for all that fear when the truth comes to him he doesn't really take much notice so that leads us to our second point Nebuchadnezzar is humbled by the God who reigns so let's pick things up again at verse 28 all this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar twelve months later as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon he said is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty there's the pride and then we get the fall verse 31 even as the words were on his lips a voice came from heaven this is what is decreed for you King Nebuchadnezzar your royal authority has been taken from you you will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals you will eat grass like the ox seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge and here's that golden phrase again that the most high is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled he was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird it could have been a psychosis that's known today as boanthropy where a person is under a delusion that they're an animal whatever it was this king who once thought of himself as one of the gods is reduced by God to thinking he's subhuman until he realizes that he's just a person he's just a man and this great humiliation teaches each of us that even the most powerful people in the world are under the sovereignty of the God of the Bible the living God three times he tells us in this chapter the most high is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and he gives them to anyone he wishes and at the end of the chapter verse 37 he says those who walk in pride he is able to humble he can humble the proud
Nebuchadnezzar himself is our perfect picture of this his empire was phenomenal it stretched all the way from Egypt to western Iran and from Syria to Saudi Arabia just look at it on the map imagine one emperor today having dominion over that part of the world it's extraordinary he's like a cross between Elon Musk and Vladimir Putin he's got the wealth of Jeff Bezos and the political clout of Xi Jinping in China he's walking on the roof of his palace and anyone around would have thought that he had every right to say what he says he's looking out on a city that was built for him that was at least 2,000 years ahead of its time he stands on his palace roof and it was the only viewpoint in the whole world from which you could see two of the seven ancient wonders of the world from the same place over to one side the hanging gardens of Babylon built for him for his wife so that she wouldn't feel homesick for the hilly forests that she grew up around further away the extraordinary massive city walls the outer wall had enough space in its width for a four horse chariot to ride along it and turn around and it stretched for more than eight kilometers he was a great man this is breathtaking greatness and then picture him on all fours roaming around a field his hair long and matted his nails grown out like claws and remember that Daniel and his friends had to risk their own death to refuse to eat the rich meat and vintage wine from this man's table in chapter one and now in chapter four he's eating grass and he's drinking from puddles in the field and God says it's because he wouldn't see that everything we have everything we achieve comes from God and there's a deep challenge for us here because you don't have to be an emperor to be sinfully proud sinful pride is probably what's behind every other sin we commit it's what alienates us from God because we feel
I'm owed this or I did this in Romans chapter one there's this section of the Bible where the apostle Paul demonstrates that nobody is good enough for God and he starts that argument that takes three chapters of his letter with this sin with pride he says that God made everything we should know that and we neither glorify him nor give thanks to him so pride is when we try and take glory ourselves for something instead of recognizing really the glory should go to God who made us it's glory theft it's the sense of self-dependence that says look at this I did it or the sense of entitlement that says give me this I'm due it and what happens to Nezah is a foretaste of the future day for all of us when God acts on verse 37 that those who walk in pride he is able to humble and he will humble so the challenge here is not to be like
Nebuchadnezzar who heard God's word and he did nothing about it today would be a great day for us to heed God's merciful confronting word and just turn back to him turn back to him but when we've done that and we're living as God's people far from home hearing that God is sovereign over a man like Nebuchadnezzar is great news to hear it's great news that there is no power anyone has over you that God hasn't given to them and that God couldn't simply take from them just as Jesus stands before Pilate and he says Pilate says to him don't you realize I have power either to free you

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-06-21 07:15:42

or crucify you and Jesus says you would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above and maybe it's helpful today for some of us to think of a person whose power seems insurmountable to us maybe the difficult manager at work the hospital consultant who humiliates you the head chef in the kitchen you work in who throws his weight around maybe it's helpful to think to yourself my God is sovereign over all the little kingdoms of men and that includes him or perhaps this week some of us need the reminder that when we pray to our heavenly father give us today our daily bread nothing can stand in his way of answering that prayer that our bodies our souls our relationships our clothes our food our shelter our security they're all in his hands and empires and nations are under his feet he would hardly notice them if they rise up against him so Nezer is confronted by a merciful word he's humbled by a sovereign God our third point [28:38] Nezer is converted by the God who reigns so look with me at verse 34 as we're back with Nebuchadnezzar speaking he says verse 34 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 forever he praises God's sovereignty he says his dominion is an eternal dominion it will go on forever verse 35 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 and as Nebuchadnezzar turned to God God restored him he gave him back his position as emperor greater than before but he's a different man now he's born again so have a look at verse 37 now I

Nebuchadnezzar praise and exalt and glorify the king of heaven because everything he does is right and all his ways are just and those who walk in pride he is able to humble now if you were here just three weeks ago when we looked at Daniel chapter 1 just think back to Daniel and his friends when they were enrolled as freshers in the university of Babylon for full immersion in Babylonian culture you remember that and ask yourself who do you think at that moment is most likely to change their world view and get converted where would your money go if they were taking bets was it going to be Daniel and his friends teenagers far from home enculturated and confronted with cosmopolitan pluralistic sophisticated Babylon or the emperor himself my money would have been on Daniel and his friends to lose their faith yet here we are three chapters later and thanks to those young men's willingness to draw a line not to compromise thanks to their courageous but if not faith in the fire and the fury last week a door has been opened for the gospel by God and here we are seeing that the emperor of the known world at that time turned to God he repented he had his sins forgiven he came to worship the God of heaven

I don't know what you think of that but I find that really encouraging let me ask who is it you could picture who is the least likely person you know to become a Christian maybe you could ask someone about that over coffee who's the person that they might give upon and think they would never become a Christian maybe someone else but then there's no way they'd be interested in Jesus and let's hear God that he is powerful even to save Nebuchadnezzar and it was such a surprising method that the Lord used here wasn't it who would have thought that it was by the Lord taking everything away from Nebuchadnezzar that he would bring Nebuchadnezzar to repentance to lift his eyes to heaven if you were Daniel and that was your boss you might have thought oh come on God don't do that or he's never going to turn to you you're going to put him right off the salvation of your soul is so important

God can sometimes take things from you as an act of mercy a merciful humiliation where we lose the things we were depending on so that we turn and depend on him instead and there is nothing you or I have that it wouldn't be worth losing for the surpassing worth of knowing the living God who reigns a few years ago it was a politician Jonathan Aitken I remember cabinet minister wealthy from a noble background convicted of perjury in court went to prison turned to Christ and people looked on that cynically and he looks back thankful that the sovereign God took everything from him to humble him and it converted him could it be something we pray for for friends in the losses and disappointments of the pandemic maybe to pray for on Tuesday when the next announcement comes if there are new restrictions and people feel devastated people who are losing businesses because of the pandemic and the restrictions people who are losing their health could we pray that God will be at work so that it's merciful humbling and that for all people lose it opens the way for them to lift their eyes to heaven and to praise the most high and isn't it great that God is like this that he humbles the proud and he lifts up the humble in a world where you know the super rich are just blowing all their money to try and win at space tourism in a world where sometimes it feels as

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-06-21 07:15:42

though the rule makers don't think the rules apply to them in a world where there's things like toxic masculinity and racial discrimination isn't it wonderful to hear that there is a God in charge and he will humble the proud and he'll lift up the humble and as we hear that he gives the kingdoms of men to anyone he wishes and as we hear that he exalts the humble picture a king who was willing to be laid as a baby in a wooden feeding trough because there was no room for him who was a child becomes a refugee who being found in human likeness humbled himself by becoming obedient to death on a cross and picture God the father saying to his son the words of Isaiah 49 he says to Jesus it is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel
I've kept I will also make you a light for the Gentiles that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth kings will see you and stand up princes will see you and bow down because of the Lord who is faithful the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you it's because God has exalted that king the humble king who in humility died a sin bearing death that we can lift our eyes to heaven and see that all our proud all our pride has been paid for and we can be forgiven and we in Babylon can ask that same God the most high to speed the return of our king let's pray together just a moment of quiet to reflect on God's word would have an love so anyway it was a■ Nab le s and that we praise you mighty God that when your word confronts us it's a merciful word a word that reveals truth to us in love that your call to turn from our sins back to you is a call of love and grace we praise you that you are the God who reigns that you give your kingdoms to whoever you please and no one can hold back your hand or say to you what have you done may you help us by your spirit to respond rightly to your reigning power and to receive this news with real confidence so that we go out into this world able to point people to you as Daniel did able to speak your word to others who need it and not overawed by the power of those around us for we ask in Jesus name
[37:36] Amen Amen

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-06-21 07:15:42