

## The Return of the King

Scripture Text: Daniel 4:34-37

### Introduction

The title of this sermon comes from the third movie in the trilogy, the *Lord of the Rings*. In the third movie, we are told about a kingdom that had gone without a king for a very long time. The rightful heir of the kingdom arose, a man named Aragorn, but he did not want to be the king. He was afraid of becoming like his ancestor, Isildur, who was tempted by power and lost his kingdom and his life because of pride. After many adventures and many displays of heroic leadership, Aragorn, the reluctant king, finally accepted the role and the responsibility that was rightly his, and became the king of his people. Finally, the king returned and the people had good leadership. Nebuchadnezzar was like Aragorn's ancestor who fell because of pride. Nebuchadnezzar lost his kingdom for a while, however, God did restore his life and kingdom. If we mess up and do something wrong, is there any hope for us? Can we ever come back from a prideful fall? If so, when does God restore a person who has fallen because of pride? What we see in this passage is that God is gracious and forgiving, if we would only turn to Him.

### Nebuchadnezzar's Fall

Last week, we learned that humility is a defining characteristic of one who follows Jesus Christ. After all, how could anyone who accepts that he or she is a sinner in need of God's grace and that Jesus is Lord of all not be humble. We also learned some things about Nebuchadnezzar's pride and his humbling experience. One is that God is patiently merciful. God not only warned Nebuchadnezzar in a dream, but He also gave Nebuchadnezzar time to repent. The very fact God warned him reveals His mercy. When God shows us what we are doing is wrong, and He gives us the opportunity to change, He is being merciful to us. But, God was also patient with Nebuchadnezzar. He gave the king a full year to get his act together. Of course, Nebuchadnezzar refused to turn from his pride and God punished him as He said He would. God keeps His word.

We also learned from Nebuchadnezzar's humbling experience that pride can have devastating consequences. As Nebuchadnezzar looked at his great accomplishments, he boasted to himself of his mighty power and glory. He said, "Look at this great Babylon, which I *myself* have built by *my mighty power* and for *my glory and majesty*." All of this revealed his enormous pride. No doubt, many outstanding achievements may be attributed to Nebuchadnezzar, but sadly he failed to give God the glory for his blessings. His heart was full of pride and self-importance, and he boasted of his own greatness and ability. He invited God's judgement, who patiently gave Him what he deserved. Nebuchadnezzar's suffering came in response to his own pride. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a chance to humble Himself, but when he refused to repent and be humble, God did it for him. Nebuchadnezzar began to act like an animal, and he was driven away from people. Ironically, the king who felt himself superior to all others and who was full of glory and majesty had sunk to a subhuman level.

## God Restores At The Right Time

Nebuchadnezzar lost his power and glory, and he also lost his mind. God was punished Nebuchadnezzar *until* he acknowledged that God was the Ruler over all and that He gives power to whomever He wills. However, as we mentioned, God is merciful and wants people to be restored. God does not desire for us to suffer, even when we bring it on ourselves. At the end of God's appointed time of judgment, Nebuchadnezzar raised his eyes to heaven and his reason was restored. Once humbled by God, he was brought back to himself and restored to control of his kingdom. God is willing and able both to humble the proud and to exalt the humble. Look at the following verse.

***Daniel 4:34*** *At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned 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;*

When was the right time? It was at the end of the days, or seven periods of time. Some believe this to be seven years. Even so, why this amount of time? Why did God humble Nebuchadnezzar for this specific amount of time? The short answer is because God ordained it, because He said so. Maybe this was a situation that God was going to humble and punish Nebuchadnezzar for the time that He set. God had already told Nebuchadnezzar how long he would be in this humbling situation. When we turn away from God, become prideful, and try to do things our way and not His way, we should expect some consequence. When we turn from God, particularly after He pleads with us to return to Him, we invite pain and suffering. That is not to say that all pain and suffering is a result of sin and disobedience, but when we do rebel against God, we bring pain and suffering onto ourselves. This was certainly true for Nebuchadnezzar. The punishment is defined by the sovereign God who we offended, not by us.

Perhaps another reason God restored Nebuchadnezzar when He did was because Nebuchadnezzar repented at that time. God may have restored Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom and his honor when he "lifted [his] eyes to heaven". Maybe Nebuchadnezzar had enough sense to willingly turn to God and repent of his pride. Maybe, at the "end of the days" being humbled, Nebuchadnezzar raised his eyes toward heaven, as an act of submission, surrender, and acknowledgment of his need for God, and repented of his pride, and called out for mercy. God may have observed Nebuchadnezzar's simple act of humility and graciously restored his sanity. The great destroyer of Jerusalem, was humbled by God's grace and brought to confess God's mercy. Thus, God restores us when we are humble and turn back to Him. God restores us when we surrender ourselves before the throne of grace and acknowledge our dependence on Him. Have you reached that point in your life? Are you suffering because you have not?

## God is God and We are Not

Like a broken record, we are continually reminded in Daniel about the sovereignty of God. In fact, that is the main theme of the book of Daniel. God is in control and He

moves kings and kingdoms like pieces on a chessboard. Nebuchadnezzar once thought he was in control, but he found out, as we all should, that control is an illusion. Another truth that I think we see in this passage is that God is God and we are not. That may sound very similar to what we already know from reading about Nebuchadnezzar, however, there is a bit of nuance to that truth in Nebuchadnezzar's restoration. Who are we to question God? Nebuchadnezzar once thought that he could. In fact, back in chapter three, Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel's three friends who was the God who could save them from the fiery furnace. Of course, Nebuchadnezzar found out and Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were saved without even a hint of fire on them. Nebuchadnezzar comes to another realization after being restored, in that who are we to question what God does? Look at the following verse.

***Daniel 4:35*** *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?"*

Nebuchadnezzar finally acknowledged that all those who live on the earth, including himself, were as nothing compared to the awesome God on the universe. That is not to say that God does not care about us or that we do not have intrinsic value to Him. We do for every human being is born in the image of God. However, we should also understand our place. Who are we to question God? Who are we to say to God, "What have you done?" Another person discovered, or at least was reminded of this truth, after arguing with his friends about his suffering. Look at the following verse.

***Job 9:12*** *Behold, he snatches away; who can turn him back? Who will say to him, "What are you doing?"*

God does whatever He wants within His good character. After Job and his friends debated Job's unfortunate circumstances, God finally asked, "Who are you to question me? Were you there when I made the universe?" What could anyone of us say if God asked us that question? How could any of us question the One who created everything and gave life to everything? Job's response to God's question, as should be ours, was humbleness and silence. Look at the following verses.

***Job 40:3–5*** <sup>3</sup> *Then Job answered the Lord and said:* <sup>4</sup> *"Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. "* <sup>5</sup> *I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further."*

Being restored has to do partly in having a right view of who God is and who we are not. How could any of us rightly question God? When things do not go according to our plans, who are we to question what God is doing? When things happen in the world that we do not understand, who are we to turn to God and question Him or blame Him for it? Trouble happens when we put ourselves in the position where only God belongs. The right response, the only response, is to believe that God is sovereign and trust Him to work out His will and His plan as He desires, and know that it is the best.

## God is the Real King

As difficult a lesson it must have been, Nebuchadnezzar finally acknowledged the one true King of heaven, and it was not him. He praised God for being *the King* and acknowledged that He always did what was right. Look at the following verse.

***Daniel 4:37*** 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.

When Nebuchadnezzar was finally restored from his debilitating and humbling experience, he then blessed the Most High God. He praised and honored God because all that He does is right and just. God is able to humble anyone who presumes to know better than He does. The very last sentence of the chapter summarizes the message of the story—that God is able to humble those who walk in pride. Perhaps this raises the question as to whether Nebuchadnezzar truly turned to God and trusted in the King of heaven as the one, true, and only God. Some disbelieve that the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar actually came to a saving knowledge of the true God. Others believe that Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged some kind of faith, but it was not enough to save him. One cannot be absolutely sure about this, but the language of the text suggests that Nebuchadnezzar did in fact have a saving encounter with the true God.

Who is king? Who is in charge? It is not the president of the United States. It is not a prime minister in another country. It is not some earthly king. There is one true King and that is God. However, we can get more specific than that. What Nebuchadnezzar did not know at the time is that God's Son, Jesus the Messiah, is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Jesus Christ is the real king who rules heaven and earth. Though He was born as a little baby in the little town of Bethlehem, the little king ushered in His kingdom which is unlike anything else and which spreads the whole world. This king will also return one day, not as the meek baby or the Lamb of God, but He will return as the Lion of Judah who will judge the world and bring an everlasting peace. Are you ready for the return of the King? Have you accepted Him as King, as Lord, as Savior?

## Conclusion

The moral lesson of the story is this, "Those who walk in pride, God is able to humble." Are you being prideful? Do you think a little too much of yourself, or not giving God the credit He deserves? Are you not where you should be in your relationship to God? The good news is God is merciful. He desires for people to turn back to Him. This passage is a wonderful example of God's grace and act of restoring those who give up their pride and surrender to the real King. What disaster are you approaching that can be averted by repentance? If God was merciful to King Nebuchadnezzar and restored Him, would God not do the same for you. Jesus Christ is the supreme example of God's grace and mercy to mankind, and the cure for our pride. Through Christ, we have forgiveness and the promise of a meaningful and abundant life, here and for all eternity. Have you received God's gift? If not, you can today. This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!