**OUR MOST HIGH GOD**

**(Daniel 4:1-37)**

His name was Dr. George McCauslin. One man claimed that Dr. McCauslin was one of the greatest YMCA directors that this world has ever seen. At one point in his career, Dr. McCauslin was the director of a YMCA near Pittsburgh in western Pennsylvania. His YMCA was hemorrhaging members; they had financial troubles and terrible staff problems. Dr. McCauslin was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. He was working 85 hours a week, had trouble sleeping, and whenever he did take some time off, all he did was fret and worry about the problems at his YMCA.

He went to see a therapist. The therapist warned him that he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He knew he needed God’s help, but he just wasn’t sure how to go about it.

One day, Dr. McCauslin took the afternoon off. He brought along a pad of paper, something to write with, and he went for a long walk in the woods of western Pennsylvania. As he walked along in the cool of the woods, he felt his blood pressure beginning to lessen, and the tightness in his neck muscles began to loosen. For the first time in months, he began to relax.

Dr. McCauslin, sat down under a tree. He took out his pad of paper and his pen, and he wrote a letter to God. He wrote: “Dear God, today, I hereby resign as general manager of the universe. Love, George.”

As he told that story to a friend, with a twinkle in his eye, he added, “And wonder of wonders, God accepted my resignation.”

Do you need to resign as the general manager of the universe? Your job is not to fix all the people and all the problems around you. Your job is not to shape your children, your grandchildren, your spouse, your friends, and your neighbors into just who you want them to be.

Maybe you need to resign as general manager of your own life. Maybe you have problems that you have been trying to solve. You are losing sleep. You are out of answers, and you aren’t sure of what to do next.

Just resign, and give it all over to God. God never meant for you to be the general manager of anybody’s life, including your own.

Tonight, we are going to see that God is in control. We are going to focus on a title for God that is found numerous times in Daniel 4. It was introduced back in Daniel 3:26. On that occasion, King Nebuchadnezzar referred to God as the Most High God. He does so again in Daniel 4:2. Then, a handful of times, God is referred to simply as the Most High (vv. 17, 24, 25, 32, 34).

Our God is the Most High. He is not the High God or the More High God. He is the Most High God. We are going to examine four truths about our Most High God.

1. **OUR MOST HIGH GOD REIGNS SUPREME OVER ALL.**

The chapter begins and ends with a declaration of God’s sovereign power. Look at vv. 1-3 and vv. 34-37. Both passages contain a testimony from King Nebuchadnezzar about the greatness of the God of heaven. Both were written after the events that are described in vv. 4-33. The King is looking back upon what he learned, and what he learned is that God is the one who is in control.

We may have an illusion of control, but it is just an illusion. With our technology, we can harness the power of the wind, and we can harness that power of the sun, but we can’t make the wind blow, and we can’t make the sun shine. We are powerless over such things. We can’t prevent tornadoes. We may put a moratorium on fracking, but we can’t prevent earthquakes.

You know the old saying, “Everybody talks about the weather, but no one ever does anything about it.” We are powerless about so many things.

As in chapter 2, King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, and he doesn’t know what it means. Look at vv. 4-18. Although he isn’t clear about the meaning, the King knows it doesn’t sound good. He mentions “a watcher” singular and “watchers” plural. I don’t remember that term being used elsewhere in Scripture. I take it to mean “an angel” and “angels.” These angels are watching, and they are going to give God a report, and they will carry out His decrees.

One watcher, however, makes known the purpose of what is going to happen. Look at v. 17.

People are up in arms about the election. “Things will go to pot if this person is elected.” “I’m leaving the country if this person is elected.” I urge you to go to the polls and vote, but in the end, the final determination is made by God. That doesn’t mean that the one who wins is necessarily a God-fearing and God-honoring person. It does mean that God will accomplish His purpose regardless of who occupies the White House.

People are up in arms about foreign interference in our elections. I wonder what they think about divine interference.

Look at Romans 13:1-2.

1. **OUR MOST HIGH GOD DESERVES ALL OUR PRAISE.**

I think it is amazing that one of the most powerful Kings of antiquity and one of the most brutal is praising God and encouraging others to do the same. So far, in the Book of Daniel we have seen King Nebuchadnezzar as being petty, vain, and violent. Here he is much different. He seems genuinely interested in praising God.

We often talk about the goodness of God. Matt Chandler, a preacher in Texas, preached a sermon in which he focused on what he called, “the God-ness of God.” Listen to what he said in his message:

So, here’s where preaching goes bad. Preaching goes bad when we as the preachers aren’t continually saying, “Look how big he is; look how able he is; look how mighty he is.” It goes bad when instead we’re just saying, “Quit sleeping around; quite doing drugs; quit doing …” Now, don’t get me wrong. I think God has given us the law to lead us into life as he designed it to be where the fullness of joy exists in complete obedience to God Almighty. But people can’t get there without God’s God-ness. They can’t get there if you’re putting a weight on them that is crushing. They’ll be forced to pretend or to give up.

If we want holy people in your churches, in the workplace, and all around us to be transformed and be like Jesus, then we as preachers must perpetually point to God’s God-ness. We must always circle back around to what God has accomplished and what God has done, because we all stink at living holy lives. We need an alien righteousness that is much better than our own.

One of our biggest problems is that we don’t stand in awe of God. If we really did it would be a little scary, because the definition of majesty is an imposing grandeur. It involves a twinge in our gut that says, “I don’t want to take my eyes off of this, but if this goes bad, I could die.” But you want to talk about imposing grandeur, we need to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, whom for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame. We must constantly point people to what God has done.

In Daniel 4, the King learned about God’s God-ness, and it totally re-oriented his life. When you are convinced of God’s God-ness, you will yearn to praise Him.

1. **OUR MOST HIGH GOD WILL ALLOW NO RIVAL.**

King Nebuchadnezzar had long reign as the King of the Babylonian Empire. He assumed the throne in 605 BC and reigned until his death in 538 BC, which totals 43 years. In those four-plus decades, he had all sorts of accomplishments. He restored or renovated more than a dozen temples. He completed the Great Wall that surrounded Babylon. He built a new palace that included the famous Hanging Gardens which were regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. I have seen artist’s renditions of what it might have looked like. Many of those paintings included massive waterfalls coming out of the walls of the palace and trees growing from the roof of the palace.

One day, the King was strolling along in his glorious palace with its luxuriant garden, and he begins to congratulate himself. Look at what happens. We will begin with Daniel’s interpretation of the King’s dream, and then we will read its fulfillment. Let’s look at vv. 19-33.

In his exposition of Daniel 4, James Montgomery Boice entitled his study of this chapter, “The Sin God Will Not Tolerate.” There is no sin that God is okay with, but God has a particular aversion to pride and especially the kind of pride that robs God of the glory He is due.

God took strong action against the King. The story teaches us that when men take for themselves the glory that is due God, they become beastlike.

John Gerstner was a theologian who delivered a lecture on the depravity of man in which he compared men and women to rats. Afterward, someone voiced how offended he was claiming that it was insulting to compare men and women to rats. Humbly, Dr. Gerstner apologized. He said, “I do apologize. I apologize profusely. The comparison was terribly unfair . . . to the rats.” He explained that what rats do, they do because God has made them to be rats. When we behave like rats, however, it is worse because we have sunk far below what God made us to be.

God’s judgment is sure to fall upon those who attempt to rob God of His glory.

Look at what happened to King Herod in Acts 12:21-23. This is the Herod who had beheaded John the Baptist. He also killed the disciple James. James was the first disciple to become a martyr. God struck Herod down, not for committing murder, but for robbing God of His glory.

Listen to what Boice wrote:

The history of humanity is (1) the raising up of a nation by the blessing of God, (2) men and women taking glory to themselves, and (3) God tearing them down in order to show that He is the Most High God and not mankind. That will happen to America, I believe it is happening already. It will happen to a greater extent unless we repent.

Boice wrote those words more than 30 years ago. It has only gotten worse in that time, much worse.

1. **OUR MOST HIGH GOD WILL DRAW US TO HIMSELF.**

Look at how the story ended (vv. 34-37).

You might view what happened to King Nebuchadnezzar as a terrible judgment of God. The King, however, might say that it was the best thing to ever happen to him. Ironically, God used the King’s insanity to bring him to his senses.

The purpose of judgment can either be punitive or redemptive. When the goal is punitive, it is to make people pay for their sins. When it is redemptive, the goal is to draw them to God. The net effect of the King’s punishment is that it drew him to God.

It is a rather long story, but let me read to you a story told by pastor Bryan Chapell:

A few years ago, a young pastor, fresh out of seminary, was asked to visit a dying man in a Washington, D.C., hospital. An aggressive bone cancer was eating away the man’s life. He was not a Christian. On the few occasions when the pastor presented the gospel there was no spiritual response, but a friendship formed. Through a number of visits, the pastor learned that this dying patient was a remarkable, self-made man. He was raised in Spain by a loving mother who diligently taught her son the truths of faith. He only listened a little. The Franco regime killed his father, and because Spain’s official church supported Franco, the boy spurned Christianity. He fled his country as a young teenager and came to America knowing no English. He worked hard and studied hard. He eventually went to college, med school, and then began a highly successful medical career. Despite his early disadvantages, he became skilled, wealthy, and a respected leader in our nation’s most prestigious hospitals. He also became more convinced of his atheism. Then came the cancer.

In just a few months the cancer destroyed the accomplishments of a lifetime. His body, once kept in top shape by miles of daily swimming, was devastated. His skills also began to deteriorate with the advances of cancer. With his spirit broken and his body wracked with pain, the man ran out of pride and finally tired of his own answers. When the young pastor next visited, the despairing doctor confronted him: “I have treated depression all my life, but I have no answers for what I’m going through. If your God really has some answers, then you help me with the hell I am going through now. Give me some peace, if you can.” The young pastor could hardly begin to think of what to say. He hesitated, grasped for the right words, and then stumbled forward:

“You’ve gained everything a man could gain in every avenue of life. You have wealth, respect, achievement. These all may have to be put aside before you gain this last thing you want. In every sphere of life, you have succeeded, except the spiritual sphere, and to succeed there you must not follow any of the rules you have used before. You cannot conquer the spiritual world by your efforts. To gain spiritual success you must admit your helplessness and inability. You must confess you have nothing to stand on. To enter God’s kingdom and know his peace, you must not come as a self-sufficient man but as a helpless child—you must not come as a lion but as a lamb.”

Still there was no spiritual response. Little else was said that night. The man talked no more. A few days later the bone cancer progressed to the extent that the man’s leg broke spontaneously as he lay in bed. The doctors had to operate to repair the damage despite their patient’s weakened condition. On the eve of that operation, unbeknownst to his family, he wrote a note to the young pastor. In a labored scrawl he wrote in Spanish the words which he had memorized years ago at his mother’s knee: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord …”—the words of the Apostles’ Creed. The note concluded in English with these words: “Jesus, I hate all my sins. I have not served or worshiped you. Father, I know the only way to come into your kingdom is by the precious blood of Jesus. I know you stand at the door and will answer those who knock. I now want to be your lamb.”

The man who wrote those words never regained consciousness after his operation. His life was lost, but his soul was won. God can change the hardest hearts and wipe away the darkest sin. He must do it, for we cannot. Our God calls us to put aside all we trust, take pleasure in, or have used to make ourselves worthwhile. He urges us to come to him as a helpless child and then promises us his kingdom forever. When we call to him, without trying to stand on our accomplishments or goodness, but humbled by his mercy for sinners like us, he responds. His voice is gentle and loving. His words echo our desires. He says, “Forever you are mine. The kingdom of heaven is for humble ones such as you.”

You and I serve the Most High God. If He is anything less than Most High in our lives, we need to reorder our priorities.