

God Rules

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[0:00] well the primary school class was asked to write what would happen if kids ruled the world and so on the next slide one child wrote everything would be free everyone would have a mansion we would not have school which i'm surprised lasted till point three i thought that would be point one all hunting would be abolished everyone would be vegan i'm not sure about that one i like my steak and disney world would be duplicated sounds like good fun if everything's free of course that kids don't rule the world um we know that uh although sometimes they rule some families we we do though know that there are presidents and prime ministers and so on who rule the world and so what do we do when we see our world's rulers ruling in ways that alarm us what do we do for example i i assume you've heard uh president trump's recent threats against north korea where he said and i quote at north korea best not make any more threats to the united states they will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen that's a leader of the most one of the most powerful countries in the world saying that and so now north korea has made another threat against them and said i quote that they we are seriously examining a plan uh and i'll cut the quote shorter to launch missiles and that it goes on to say uh they're targeting bases in guam where 6 000 troops are stationed as their warning to the us so they're seriously considering that plan now what are we to do about all this do we just cross our fingers and hope it doesn't end in nuclear war as some people suggest it could and if it does end nuclear war do we just hope that the fallout doesn't reach us here in australia that we're safe by being an island and melbourne because we're at the bottom of australia perhaps i don't know or closer to home what do we do if our ruling state parliament makes decisions that continue to take our state further and further away from god what if the state safe schools or respectful relationships program that's currently being reviewed it does become compulsory for every school including christian schools and what if our federal government after the postal vote which i'm sure you've heard about on same-sex marriage changes the law on marriage and what if the queensland government does decide to ban the name of jesus in schools as the australian reported a couple of weeks ago despite recent interviews by the education minister that are they inclusive of all religions what do we do if our rulers rule like that do we join the columnist andrew bolt in ranting about it uh do we march on parliament house and burn the australian flag do we become so anxious about changing our changing society that we withdraw from community into christian ghettos what do we do when we see our world's rulers ruling in ways that alarm us and perhaps even threaten us well the message of today's chapter is an antidote to such alarm and panic because the message of today's chapter is that it's actually god who rules so let me help you see it for yourselves from the text before we apply it to ourselves for today the chapter begins with a proclamation so point one in your outline verse one in your bible in those times you start with the person writing the letter so it says king nebuchadnezzar comma 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 he nebuchadnezzar is writing a public letter to the nations to people of every language it's his proclamation to the world if he was here today he'd be posting the

news on every website facebook snapchat twitter twitter twitter twitter twitter so that everyone knows about it and this public letter is his testimony about the signs and wonders god has performed for him which appear to have taught him something about god and in fact even changed him indeed you could even argue that what has happened here has finally converted him because he now wants everyone to hear the testimony about israel's god our god rather than the babylonian gods and i notice what he proclaims he proclaims the greatness of our god and in particular that god's rules so verse two he calls god the most high god verse three god signs are great wonders mighty verse three again god's kingdom in is eternal uh and his dominion his rule and kingdom endures from generation to generation in other words these signs and wonders have taught him that god is god that he is the greatest and rules over all and now he wants everyone to know what he knows so significant is this news a little while ago i picked up my girls from school and they had some news which they thought was so significant that they were fighting with each other to be the first to tell me an excuse it seems and this groundbreaking news at the canteen the school canteen was having a special so okay good that's fantastic congratulations of course nebuchadnezzar's news is much more significant than that isn't it and yet we have news that tops even his don't we news that is so significant that it has changed our lives and in fact impacts all people and the news is the gospel of jesus the message the news about jesus how he died for all people to offer them eternal life i mean that's pretty significant isn't it and that he rose again as lord or ruler over all people that impacts everyone whether they realize it or not doesn't it and it made me wonder whether i was always as keen to proclaim this news my testimony as nebuchadnezzar was his testimony of course as the king of the known world back then he had the opportunity to proclaim it to everyone and everyone basically had to listen because he was the king but nonetheless it's a good reminder that we have a testimony worth proclaiming when the opportunity arises as nebuchadnezzar does here but what exactly are these signs and wonders that god performed for him that that taught him about god well it begins with another dream so from verse four onwards he's retelling what happened to him in the past so at point to the dream and verse four in your bible 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 and 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 also called belteshazzar after the name of my god and the spirit of the holy gods is in him and so just like we saw back in chapter two nebuchadnezzar has had another dream that scares him and just like we saw back in chapter two the wise men are unable to interpret the dream but daniel can so there's another contrast drawn which reminds us that the gods of the wise men cannot give wisdom and they don't have access to those gods yet daniel has access to the true god who gives wisdom i suspect that's what nebuchadnezzar was getting at when he says that the spirit of the holy gods is in daniel i remember nebuchadnezzar believed in multiple gods and thought daniel must have had some spiritual connection you know some hotline to these gods which would give him wisdom and so nebuchadnezzar tells daniel his dream

which we heard in our reading and as i said it's a long chapter so i'm not going to reread what we've already heard this time let me just quickly summarize it for you verse 9 to 12 there was a great tree so huge it touched the sky and could be seen to the ends of the earth so on the next slide is an artist's impression of it so there's nebuchadnezzar down the bottom sleeping and there's this massive tree that can be seen at to the ends of the earth and this tree is impressive and it provides food and shelter for every creature but in verses 13 to 15 we learn that the tree will be cut down yet not completely its stump will remain and then pick it up in verse 15 on page 886 halfway through verse 15 here we see that this tree is actually a man because it goes from talking about a tree to halfway through verse 15 saying 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 and so the picture that he has in this dream is of a man who will lose his great glory be cut down to size so to speak and become like an animal and notice the purpose of what will happen according to this dream verse 17 the decision is announced by messengers the holy ones declare the verdict so that here's the purpose the living may know that the most high is sovereign or literally rules over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people see god signs and wonders to nebuchadnezzar were to teach him and everyone that god rules over the kingdoms of the earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and he sets over them the lowliest or most humble of people and this purpose statement is repeated again and again throughout the chapter so we see it again in the interpretation of the dream so point three on your outline verse 19 in your bibles now we didn't hear these verses read to us in the bible reading and so i'm going to read them for us now because the best way to get to know the bible is um to read it funnily enough uh so let's have a look verse 19 then daniel also called belshazzar was greatly perplexed for a time and his thoughts terrified him so the king said belshazzar do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you belshazzar answered my lord if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries which is quite loving of daniel actually and the tree you saw which grew large and strong with its top touching the sky visible to the whole earth with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit 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 grown 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 well this is the interpretation your majesty of this part of the dream 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 will eat grass like an 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 or rules over the kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes the command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will not sorry 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 renounce your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed it may be that then your prosperity will continue so the interpretation is reasonably clear isn't it nebuchadnezzar is the tree his glory was impressive and his kingdom stretched all over the known world everyone in fact knew who nebuchadnezzar was and people depended on him for food and shelter he was great and strong so much so that when saddam hussein was ruling iraq where babylon used to be he actually put his face with the face of nebuchadnezzar on a few printed images including a coin so the next slide is a coin that um saddam hussein actually had minted and there is his face and the face of nebuchadnezzar which we know from other images from the period of babylon i notice saddam's face is on top to show that he's even greater but nebuchadnezzar picks sorry saddam hussein picks nebuchadnezzar for his greatness you see he is great and yet this great man will become like an animal driven from his people unless we think this is too far-fetched there are reported cases in medical journals of a mental illness like this which causes people to act like animals the disease is apparently called zoanthropy apparently george the third of great britain had it so it seems nebuchadnezzar will be struck by mental illness driven from his people until seven times pass and most people think that refers to seven years but his stump will remain he won't lose his kingdom presumably someone will rule it uh in his stead uh they often had a vice regent um as we'll see next week but until the seven years pass and until he acknowledges that god rules he will be like an animal and notice daniel's concern for the king at this point in verse 19 daniel wishes this would happen to the king's enemies in verse 27 daniel pleads for the king to repent to submit to god's rule by doing what is right rather than what he likes and that's remarkable given that this is the same king who destroyed daniel's city of jerusalem and yet daniel still shows respect and even love such that he wants to see this king saved again perhaps a lesson for us but the big point is highlighted by that repeated purpose statement you see verse 25 again halfway through verse 25 seven times will pass for you until you acknowledge that the most high is sovereign or literally rules over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes you see these signs and wonders from god are to teach him and everyone that god rules and nebuchadnezzar needed to learn this lesson in particular because he thought he ruled and so despite daniel's plea for him to repent nebuchadnezzar doesn't not yet anyway which brings us to the fulfillment of the dream point four in your outline verse 28 in your bible so follow along all this happened to king nebuchadnezzar 12 months later as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of babylon he said ah is not this great babylon i have built as the royal residence by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty and 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'll 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 that the most high is sovereign or rules 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 it's the first recorded dreadlocks in the bible and the nails like the claws of a bird now before we uh look at the fulfillment in particular notice god's grace again see not only has nebuchadnezzar had a dream to warn him not only has he had daniel pleading with him to repent but verse 29 god gives him 12 months to do it in and yet he doesn't instead verse 30 he boasts in his rule do you notice the pronouns in verse 30 is this not great babylon i have built by my mighty power for the glory of my majesty now no doubt he was great he was the king who made babylon great he had three different palaces built the hanging gardens of babylon were listed as one of the seven ancient wonders of the world historians estimate that nebuchadnezzar made 15 million bricks uh just to build uh buildings with so he had an extraordinary building program and yet he wasn't humble about it i mean those 15 million bricks he had his name stamped on almost every one of them so on the next slide is a brick from babylon in the british museum and in the middle you can see this rectangular impression and the little thing down the bottom says that this is nebuchadnezzar's name and title stamped on the brick in fact there's a stone tablet found in 1803 in iraq which was where babylon was and it's now also in the british museum but it started off in a museum in india and so it's called the east india house inscription that's it on the slide there and this stone tablet was like nebuchadnezzar's facebook page you know how everyone kind of talks up states and what they're doing and who they are and so on well this is what he said about himself on the next slide so on the next slide he says i am nebuchadnezzar this is what the inscription says king of babylon the exalted prince the favorite of the god maduk the beloved of the god nabu the arbiter the possessor of wisdom the untiring governor the wise the pious the son of nebuchadnezzar king of babylon i am the prince and the favorite not exactly humble is he he was proud he thought he ruled the world and so after 12 months of refusing to repent god's words came true he was struck with a mental illness became like an animal but did you notice again the purpose statement for all this do you see verse 32 again verse 32 seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the most high is sovereign or rules over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes it's exactly the same as verse 25 verse 17 and so now that's what happens seven times pass and he does acknowledge that heaven rules you see verse 34 at the end of that time i nebuchadnezzar raised my eyes towards heaven symbolically saying okay you rule and what happens his sanity was restored and then i praise the most high i honored and glorified him who lives forever his dominion is 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 no one can hold back his hand or say to him what have you done so great is his rule and at the time that my sanity was restored my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom my advisors and nobles sought me out and i was restored to my throne and became even greater than before and 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 like i

[20:21] once did he's able to humble see what happens nebuchadnezzar looks to heaven as a way of acknowledging that god rules and he repents humbly and so god restores his sanity and his glory and in response nebuchadnezzar praises god do you notice what he says about god in verse 34 that god's dominion or kingdom and rule is eternal verse 35 his rule is so great that he can do whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth no one can hold back his hand so great is his rule god is the king of all rulers and kings you see he is the one who really rules so much so that he can humble anyone who walks in pride this is nebuchadnezzar's testimony which he proclaims and while there are many lessons for us from this chapter like taking opportunities to proclaim our testimony or loving our enemies like daniel did we always need to see what the text itself emphasizes and by repeating that purpose statement three times in each section you know in the dream the interpretation and the fulfillment the chapter itself makes it clear that the big lesson for us is that god rules he is the one who is in control of the kingdoms and gives them to whomever he pleases he is the one who sets over them the lowliest or most humble of people like nebuchadnezzar now was of course god has now set over his kingdom another even more lowly and humble person christ jesus was born in a stable and placed in a feeding trough that's pretty humble he humbled himself to death even death on a cross and yet god raised him from the dead for which we have evidence and by this sign and wonder he is proclaimed as lord or ruler of all so on the next slide we heard in our second reading that peter was preaching and he said that jesus was accredited by god to the people by miracles and notice signs and wonders and that includes actually his resurrection from the dead which he went on to speak about in the passage if you remember and so by this resurrection of the dead peter concludes that god has made this jesus whom you crucified both lord and messiah both ruler and king in other words god now rules in christ you see he is the one god has set over his kingdom and this world and so our first response from this chapter ought to be that of nebuchadnezzar where we repent and acknowledge christ's rule and that's what peter said in our second reading repent to be baptized every one of you in the name of christ and so we had to say sorry for our sins we had to trust in jesus as both our savior the one who died for us and our lord our ruler and when we do that god will forgive us and restore us to our place as his sons and daughters just like he forgave and restored nebuchadnezzar to his place as king so have you done that have you put your trust in jesus who rules and for us who have then do we continue to humbly live under god's rule in christ do we humbly submit to his rule revealed in his word or do we pick and choose what we like from the bible so that he rules in some parts of our life but not in others or do we say look you can have sunday as long as it's convenient for us and it doesn't interfere with us or our kids activities or you can have our money as long as it's the last bit in our budget whatever's left over or you can have my time as long as i've done everything else i want to do you can have my behavior and my speech as long as no one cuts me off from the road because then i want to say what i want to say to them you see if god rules in christ then that includes our lives and so do we humbly

submit to his rule put differently which pronouns govern our life the before nebuchadnezzar where he says i and my or the after nebuchadnezzar who says his ways are just his dominion is eternal which pronouns rule our life i was encouraged by a couple of families i know one at our church and another family at a different church um they both have kids who are particularly good at their uh sport one does dancing the other one does basketball and in both cases there was opportunity for them to really excel and each uh to join a squad that did dance competitions and uh this other guy had basketball rep teams after him and nearest teams but because both of these competitions and um uh games were on a sunday both sets of parents said no because it would mean missing too much church he was a family who humbly submitted to god's rule in christ you see and if we haven't then we also need to remember that when we humble ourselves before god he will restore us three times the word restore comes up he will lift us up in forgiveness so as james says on the next slide from james chapter 4 uh no next one i think we'll come back to that one humble yourselves before the lord and he will lift you up and on the flip side if god does rule our lives which he does then we also don't need to panic or be anxious when our lives don't go the way we want for god is still ruling over them i know many people at our church are struggling with either illness or loneliness or unemployment or stress but since god rules in christ then we can keep trusting him knowing that he is in control and will help us through those difficult times until he restores us completely in heaven that's the first application for us the second one is for leaders uh and leaders as we've seen the cup of leader god wants are those who are humble leaders and so if you go back to that other slide that um with the magazine cover uh this is a magazine called the entrepreneur which is also online and it has an article online about the 22 qualities that make a great leader the first one is focus the second one is confidence i'm not going to go through the rest but none of the 22 has humility and yet that's the first quality god wants from a leader from a ruler and so for those of us who lead we need to lead humbly and for all of us who are to pray for our leaders as the bible says then pray they might lead humbly under god's rule after all if god can humble a leader like nebuchadnezzar then he can humble anyone and lastly uh for us uh since god rules then we need not panic or be alarmed uh this is the big point of the passage really god rules in christ and so despite what we see happening in the world there is no cause for alarm and panic i mean the israelites back then it would have appeared that nebuchadnezzar was ruling and they were stuck they were in trouble that was it and yet despite appearances here is the reminder that actually god rules a reminder given by the king himself who conquered them can you imagine being an israelite back then conquered by nebuchadnezzar to only hear later him confessing your god rules how encouraging must that have been but it's the same message for us and so when we hear president trump escalate tensions with north korea by making foolish comments uh we don't panic god in christ really rules when we see our country moving further from god and his truth don't panic for god in christ still rules when we hear of the recent census that the number of people who ticked no religion has grown and christianity seems to have shrunken

don't panic for god in christ still rules after all perhaps god is using this time in our country to sort out those who are really christian from those who are not and perhaps he will use this time in our country and the persecution of christians to grow the church as it often works and so do pray for our world do sign petitions and speak up lovingly and gently but don't panic for god in christ still rules let me finish i came across a picture that um one of my daughters particularly liked uh this was a little while ago and but it reminded me of it and she wanted to get it as a poster that's on the next slide keep calm because girls rule the world and it's even in pink um now i thought she sometimes thinks she rules our family at least the sign should really say keep calm because god in christ rules the world so we we need not panic but humbly trust and obey for god rules and restores the humble let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for this reminder this rather pertinent reminder from your word today that despite what we see in the world around us and the rulers that make decisions which alarm us we don't need to panic for you still rule through your son the lord jesus and so father we pray that you help us to keep trusting in you help us to be prayerful for our leaders may they rule with humility but help us not to panic but to humbly trust and obey you for you still rule we pray it in jesus name amen