

# Who is in charge of your house? James Barnett

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Date: 18 January 2014

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'd like to say that it's me that's in charge of my house. My wife would probably say that she's in charge. She might be, who knows. But I think actually my son, Isaac, I think he's in charge.

If any of you have children, you'd probably agree. Sure, he's only a two-year-old, but when he wakes up, he gets mum and dad out of bed. When he's hungry, his parents get him food. When he's tired, he gets put to bed. We know who's boss in his family. Our lives are structured around his sleep patterns.

And when we go outside of those, beware, he can be a bit scary. He's pretty flexible, but if he hasn't had his sleep, he can be scary.

So who's in charge? If you're a Christian, you may well have answered God. And I'm really hoping that a couple of you did. But this should be the answer, because if you're a Christian, you would believe that God is the king.

[ 1 : 04 ] He's the God almighty. But what does it actually mean when we use a term like king? What does it actually mean that God is in charge?

Is God like my son, who sets a very specific routine for us every day? And if we go outside of that, we're in trouble? Does he even care what we do? Today we're looking at the book of Daniel.

We're just going to take a brief look at Daniel chapter 5. And we're going to see the king of Babylon, Belshazzar, who thinks he's in charge of his kingdom and his house.

So please open your Bibles with me. If you've got them open, please keep them open at Daniel chapter 5. And let me just read from the first couple of verses.

King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

[ 2 : 16 ] So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem. And the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

It seems like a drunken party gotten out of hand. You know, there's Belshazzar and he's been drinking a lot of wine. And he has this great idea. Ah, remember those goblets that my dad, Nebuchadnezzar, got from the kingdom in Jerusalem?

Why don't we go get them and we'll drink wine out of them? Yes, it sounds like a great idea. Now this act alone by Belshazzar, it's a declaration that he thinks he's more powerful than the God of Israel.

Now you might be wondering, what's so important about these goblets? They're just gold and silver. Is God materialistic?

What's the deal with these? Well, does anybody here have any old china glasses or, you know, sorry, a china teacup or a crystal bowl?

[ 3 : 32 ] Anything like that? Anyone? Has it been passed down for generations? Maybe you've got something that survived both World War I and World War II. Now imagine you came home one day and you found your child or your grandchild playing in the backyard.

And at first glance you think, oh, that's cute. They're just playing in the backyard. And then you notice they've got your one crystal glass that has survived four generations, being passed down through the women.

And your child is out there making a mud castle out of it. And they're using it to see if they can break rocks. What would your response be? That's the kind of idea here.

It's using something precious for a very wrong purpose. These goblets that Belshazzar used to drink wine out of, they would have been used in God's temple.

Maybe they had blood, maybe they had oil. It's not specified. But everything that was used in the temple was used to worship God. They were holy.

[ 4 : 40 ] They may have had the blood of an animal sprinkled on them to set them apart, to make them holy for worship of God alone. So when Belshazzar takes these goblets and drinks out of them, praising foreign gods, he's spitting in the face of God, declaring how great he is and that the God of Israel is nothing.

He believed that the God of Israel had no power. And it's a direct challenge to God. He picks up the gauntlet and he throws it down in a direct challenge to God.

So we're left to think, is God in charge of the whole world? Is God in charge of just Israel? Does he have any power in Babylon?

Is he going to do anything about this little upstart and his sacrilegious deed? Will God do anything? Can he even do anything? And then we see the writing on the wall.

Have a look at verse 5. Suddenly, the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote.

[ 5 : 56 ] His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way. God responds immediately to this challenge.

He picks up the gauntlet that was thrown down. The challenge has been accepted. Now, before we have a look at how God responds, it's just important to stop and note that God does respond.

He does respond to this act. He's not going to let his name be dragged through the mud by some drunken upstart. He does value these gold and silver goblets, not because of what they're made out of, but because they were holy.

They were set apart for worshipping God alone. Any other use is sacrilegious. It deserves death. How much more, then, do you think that God cares about you?

You who God has made holy through his son's blood. If you're a Christian, then Hebrews 10 says that we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus once for all.

[ 7 : 12 ] Jesus' own blood has been poured out to make you holy, to set you apart for God. How much more does God care for you than these goblets of gold and silver?

So what does it mean for you that God loves you? What does it mean that he cares about you? What does it mean that God wants to protect you? Surely, if the God of heaven loves you enough to set you apart through his son's blood, then he will continue to love you, regardless of the mistakes you make, regardless of the trouble you get into.

And if we believe this, then it should impact on our life. It should impact on something like our self-esteem. If I have the love and eternal protection of the God of heaven, isn't this more important than some petty things that we get caught up about?

About how popular we are at work or college or school? About the things in our life, whether we get caught up because our boss doesn't do everything we say?

Maybe if you're the boss, maybe you get caught up because the people at work don't listen to every word you say. Surely, if we have the love of God, then we shouldn't get caught up worrying about where our self-esteem comes from.

[ 8 : 41 ] It should come from God because he loves us. Even though we have nothing desirable of ourselves, we're not lovely people, just like the dog, the sheep and the chicken before.

They were not lovely of themselves, but God chose them and God chose us to make us holy. That is why God responds to Belshazzar's challenge.

That's why he picks up this gauntlet, because he protects those things that are holy to him, that are set apart for him. So God accepts this challenge.

Have a look again at verse 5. Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way. Belshazzar, who only moments ago had been gloating to everybody, declaring how great he is in front of his big drunken party, he is humiliated by the God of Israel.

[ 9 : 48 ] When it says that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way, it literally means that he lost control of his bladder. He literally wets himself in fear of God.

This toilet humour, we don't see a lot of it. Some people don't like it. But this toilet humour really shows up that Belshazzar is nothing. He wets himself at the sight of just the hand of God. While God is powerful and mighty, he's in control of not just Israel, but the whole world. So have a look at...

Belshazzar's got no idea what's going to happen now, so he calls in his experts. Have a look at verse 8. It's just like in the previous chapters of Daniel, if you've read them. You'll remember that King Nebuchadnezzar would ask for his experts to come in and they would have no idea what his dreams meant. Again, these people have no idea what God is communicating.

[11:01] He's stumped, he's confused, he's terrified, but thankfully Belshazzar has a wife. Like any good wife, she helps him out.

And so we see the queen come into focus and she gives Belshazzar some advice. Have a look at verse 12. This man Daniel, whom the king called Beltshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems.

Call for Daniel and he will tell you what the writing means. So Daniel is brought in and Daniel explains to Belshazzar that while his father Nebuchadnezzar was in charge, it was really God that was in charge.

Have a look at verse 18. O king, the most high God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. Then down to verse 20.

But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. God has always been in control of these kingdoms, even though it appears that these kings are.

[12:20] And when they get arrogant, God brings them low. Daniel continues in verse 22. But you, his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.

Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines, drank wine from them. You praise the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron and wooden stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honour the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. Therefore, he sent the hand that wrote the inscription. Then Daniel explains what the words mean. That his life has had his days numbered.

His reign has been brought to an end. He's been weighed on the scales, found wanting, and that his kingdom is going to be taken away. Belshazzar set himself up in opposition to God.

[13:24] He paraded around, showing what he thought was all his power and glory, thinking that God was powerless. But God has judged him and he has judged his kingdom, bringing to an end the kingdom of Babylon.

And it happens immediately. Have a look at verse 30. That very night, Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain. And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of 62.

Belshazzar thought he was in charge of the kingdom. He acted like he had total control. But it's only God who is in charge. He is the one responsible, not only for the kingdom of Israel, but the whole world.

This is the heart of our sin. Humans setting themselves up against God. Thinking that God either doesn't care or that he can't do anything about it.

Humans fool themselves into thinking that they are their own little kings in control of their world. And this is the reason that God had to send Jesus.

[14:37] To reveal that while we think we are in control, while we think we're in control of our homes, our jobs, our future, it is only God who is in charge.

And when it appeared that God was least in control, while his son was hanging on a tree, which ironically had the title above it, King of the Jews, this is when God triumphed.

Philippians 2 says, Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and

every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus did not grasp for control of his own little world. He obeyed God's desire for him for our benefit. And he has been exalted to the rule over all creation.

[16:13] Life is only found under the rule of this king, which is what Belshazzar found out, but it was too late. My story is somewhat like Belshazzar's.

I'm not royalty, don't worry. I haven't committed any sacrilegious deeds like Belshazzar, but I still thought of myself as king over my own little world.

I even had an invisible friend when I was young called King. I wanted to be king so much. I actually ended up marrying a king. That's Alyssa's maiden name, just for some trivia. I didn't want to have to face the consequences of my own sin.

I remember when I was about eight. Don't tell my mum this. I remember when I was about eight, my mum had this precious wooden cabinet. It was very beautiful, highly polished.

It was precious to her. She didn't have a lot when she was growing up, but she hung on to that. And my older brother's name is Luke. And for some reason, I scratched the word Luke into that.

[17:20] And my brother is convinced to this day that he did it because it's got the word Luke there. Why would I write Luke? Because I knew that I would get away with it. I knew I could just say, I know mum, I didn't do that.

It says Luke. And so I've actually gotten away with it for about 20 years. I really should call her later and confess. I didn't want to have to face the consequences of my own sin.

Also like Belshazzar, he had a father, Nebuchadnezzar, who he should have learnt of. He was a model who he should have learnt the ways of God. And my dad, he's an Anglican minister.

I grew up in the church. I've heard him preach about Jesus. I've seen him model Christ. And yet it didn't sink in. Until I was in youth group.

Praise Jesus for youth group. I, you know, preacher's kid, I'm sorry. I was one of those who just knew all the answers. If you're a Sunday school teacher, you would understand and I'm sorry about that.

[18:23] And this question was asked, who's in charge? Who's in charge? Am I in charge of my own little life with a crown on my head convinced that I'm ruling my life?

Or is God's king, Jesus, who has been given all power, reigning at God's right hand? Is he in charge?

It was this gospel presentation in two ways to live. Have any of you heard of the two ways to live presentation? It's a great presentation. I was faced with a choice. Am I in charge of my own little life facing death?

Or am I going to place myself under God's king, Jesus, and to have life forever? It seemed like an amazing decision 15 years ago and it still does today.

But that's only where the Christian walk starts. The problem for me is I keep convincing myself that I should listen to me. And I really shouldn't.

[19:24] I should listen to God. You know, when I'm driving, I convince myself that speed limits are for other people. I drive into a shopping centre and I say, yes, I can park in the pram parking.

I've got a pram at home. That's fine. And I'll park in there. You know, I can go and spend money on things and not tell Alyssa and just lie to her and think I can get away with it.

Think that I am in control of my life. Sure, I follow Jesus but I still want to hang on to some control of some of those things.

Did you decide years ago like I did that Jesus is your king? Have things gradually slipped since then? Or maybe there are still some things that you need to place under his feet.

Maybe you've decided that Jesus can be king of your finances and you'll give generously to the church. Maybe you'll even work for a Christian organisation. You know, God can have your finances as long as you can have control over another small part of your life.

[20:35] You know, God can be king over my life as long as I can be known as the best boss. You know, God can be king as long as I can be known as the best baker in my street.

What is it in your life that you are wanting to hang on to control over? So who is in charge? Can you really say that God is king of your whole life?

Or are you holding something back? We need to continue to place ourselves and our whole lives at the foot of the cross, admitting that Jesus is Lord and king who should be in charge.

It's not just a once-off thing, a conversion. It's a lifelong task of submitting ourselves to his authority and humbling ourselves before you. Why don't we pray?

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you are a God who is in control. Thank you that you love us, that you have made us holy, that we can worship and praise you.

[ 21 : 44 ] Help us to continually place ourselves at the foot of the cross, humbling us before your Son, our King, Lord. In his name we pray. Amen.