

Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).

We sang:

Hallelujah, hallelujah  
For the Lord God almighty reigns  
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For the Lord God almighty reigns

Do you believe that? That's a profound statement. The Lord God Almighty reigns, and that is a reason to shout his praise.

Believers in Scripture talk about this:

- Abram called God: O Sovereign Lord. (Gen. 15) Later, God tested Abraham to see if he really believed that and at the end of the test God said, "[N]ow I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." (Gen 22:12b)
- Moses said the Lord reigns by his power: "O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?" (Deut. 3:24)
- The Lord is engaged with people: Gideon exclaimed, "Ah, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!" But the LORD said to him, "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." (Jud 6:22-23)
- God rules his people: King David said, "There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like your people Israel-- the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt?" (2 Samuel 7:21-23)
- God reigns over the nations. (Psalm 47:8a)
- Isaiah says the Sovereign Lord is just: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line." (28:16-17a)
- Jesus called God "Father, Lord of heaven and earth." (Matt. 11:25)
- Finally, John says in Revelation, "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! (19:6-7a)

Do you think of God as ruling the earth?

Nebuchadnezzar did not. He was back and forth with his gods. He goes with the wind. Like shifting shadows he has no real understanding or commitment. He thinks, 'if you want this, worship this god; if you want that, worship that god.' He goes with what's popular. He has dealt with Daniel and his God before but he won't even call God "God," saying instead: *the spirit of the holy gods*.

Nebuchadnezzar's full of himself. 'I say who lives and who dies. I control people's lives.' He threatened the magicians with death over the first dream if they could not interpret it, and even

recounts that he told them the dream when actually he did not. All the king's servants feared and hated him. He set it up that way.

None of us are kings, but we do rule our own homes. How have we set up our homes? Are we fair? Do we arbitrarily control those we love? Do they fear or even hate us? Are we approachable or unreasonable?

Trying to control God and others does not work with God. God has sovereignty. That means God is in control; God has the authority. We live in an authority-resistant culture. A BIG problem.

In 1985, Robert Bellah, a sociologist, and his associates, coined a phrase for the loss in America of the authority of God through Scripture. This was discovered by interviewing people about their basic beliefs about life. A woman named Sheila said her system of belief was determined by "listening to my own little voice." It's the creation of a religion that is not connected to a sacred text or an involved Deity. Instead, it is private, unpublished, and individual; the creation of my own reality based on a personal determination of ethics. Sheila said she just does anything she wants or that feels "right" to serve her own desires. These sociologists named it "Sheilatism."

This creates the possibility in America of 320 million religions. This destroys unity and creates the perfect environment for dissension and violence.

This is not acceptable to the God of Daniel, Isaiah, King David, Gideon, Moses, Abraham, John, or Jesus, or any other believer in the Bible.

Nebuchadnezzar believed "Sheilatism." God was bringing this king down. He would bring his nation down right along with him, unless Nebuchadnezzar changed.

And, if we push God aside for our own "Sheilatism" religion where we are the center, we might find ourselves living with the same tough consequences.

*"In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, 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.'" (v. 13-14)*

So Daniel was shaking in his boots to share this with the king. Who likes to be the bearer of bad news? I don't!

But Daniel stepped up because God came first. He had learned that even though terrified, it's the best policy to trust God. With each challenging situation, Daniel leaned on God, the Rock. After all, perhaps he reasoned, "Is there any God besides [the Lord?]. No, there is no other Rock; I know not one." (Isaiah 44:8b)

Daniel's fear took a back seat to obeying God and delivering the message. Who do you fear?

So what was God calling Nebuchadnezzar to do?

*“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 the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.” (v. 17)*

Nebuchadnezzar needed to realize who was in charge. It is not you or me, or what seems right in our own eyes or revolving all your life around yourself—stuck on yourself and unsure of God. You can be quite sure of God because God is, well, uh, *GOD!*

*Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. (v. 25)*

God demands that Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge God’s authority. He must turn to God and only God, humbling himself. He must exercise righteousness and have mercy for the oppressed.

What would God be calling you and me to do through this story? Let’s read it:

*“Therefore, O king, 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.” (v. 27)*

Nebuchadnezzar’s city was all about him. Why should he care about his people? We can fall into that same trap, ignoring those who are having a hard time by being consumed with ourselves, thinking that “others are not my concern,” or finding a thousand other excuses not to help.

Who is God? God is a helper. And God gives hope. God has helped you. Be God’s tool, then, and bless others. Nebuchadnezzar chose not to. He remained consumed with himself and paid the heavy price of mental illness for seven long years.

This is a hard story. But, it is a story filled with mercy because Nebuchadnezzar was given the truth. Bad as it was, Daniel added:

*“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.” (v. 26)*

This is a gift from the good authority of God. Give heed to the warnings of God. They are good. Hallelujah! The Lord Almighty reigns!

AMEN