

What is His Name?
El Elyon – The Most High God
Daniel 4:34-35
(Grace – July 4, 2010)

I. Introduction

“For you, O Lord, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.”
(Psalm 97:9, NIV)

Most High - *El Elyon*.

The name “God Most High” stresses God's strength, sovereignty, and **supremacy**.

Let’s look at the story preceding what was read by our Scripture reader earlier:

“King Nebuchadnezzar sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: ‘Peace and prosperity to you! 2 I want you all to know about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God has performed for me. 3 How great are his signs, how powerful his wonders! His kingdom will last forever, his rule through all generations.’” (Daniel 4:1-3, NLT)

For Nebuchadnezzar to send out this message to everyone within his extensive empire, something extraordinary must have happened.

First, let me make it clear that Nebuchadnezzar was not a Jewish ruler. He did not worship YHWH, but worshipped many different gods with an emphasis on the goddess Ishtar, who was associated with sex, fertility, and war.

He was one of the great ancient kings, who conquered and then ruled a vast and mighty empire. He built the huge Ishtar gate and the hanging gardens, which are considered to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

And yet here he is writing a letter to all of his subjects describing the wonders of and giving praise to the Most High God.

In Daniel chapter four, we read that Nebuchadnezzar had a disturbing dream. When he called all of his magicians, enchanters, fortune tellers, and astrologers in, they could not interpret it.

Then he called in Daniel (a Jew who had been captured and brought to Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem), explained the dream to him, and asked for an interpretation.

I’ll pick up the story with Daniel’s interpretation.

*“Upon hearing this, Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar) was overcome for a time, frightened by the meaning of the dream. Then the king said to him, ‘Belteshazzar, don't be alarmed by the dream and what it means...’ 24 ‘This is what the dream means, Your Majesty, and what **the Most High** has declared will happen to my lord the king. 25 You will be driven from human society, and you will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like a cow, and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that **the Most High** rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses... 27 King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.’*

*28 “But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. 30 As he looked out across the city, he said, ‘Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.’ 31 While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. 32 You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that **the Most High** rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.’ 33 That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws.*

*34 “After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped **the Most High** and honored the one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal. 35 All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He does as he pleases among the angels of heaven and among the people of the earth. No one can stop him or say to him, ‘What do you mean by doing these things?’... 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud.” (Daniel 4:19, 24-25, 27-35, 37, NLT)*

Richard L. Strauss writes, “It should not be any problem for us to admit that God is the highest and greatest being there is. If He is the eternal, self-existent, self-sufficient, unchanging Spirit, all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere, it is obvious that He stands alone, above all. No one can equal Him. If anyone existed before Him or is more powerful than He is or knows more than He knows, if He needs anyone else to complete Him, then that one would be God rather than the One we know as God. But that idea is ridiculous. There is only one true and living God, and in order for Him to be God He must be the highest and greatest. The very name by which he revealed Himself to Nebuchadnezzar shows that He is. He called Himself the Most High God, that is, the exalted One, lifted far above all gods and men.”

It is in knowing God as the Most High God, El Elyon, that we acknowledge His strength, supremacy, and sovereignty over our own lives and the affairs of humanity.

New Unger's Bible Dictionary defines the Sovereignty of God: “He is under no external restraint whatsoever. He is the Supreme Dispenser of all events. All forms of existence are within the scope of His dominion. And yet this is not to be viewed in any such way as to abridge the reality of the moral freedom of God's responsible creatures or to make men anything else than the arbiters of their own eternal destinies. God has seen fit to create beings with the power of choice between good and evil. He rules over them in justice and wisdom and grace.”

This definition is critical in any discussion of God's sovereignty.

Too often in seeking to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, people slip into the *error* of fatalism – the idea that every choice we make and every choice made by others was predetermined by God.

That means that every abortion, rape, murder, abuse of a child, kidnapping, child being forced into the sex industry is a predetermined act of a sovereign God.

I do not believe this to be a biblical stance on the sovereignty of God, although there are many Christians who believe it is, and often I hear people speak of God in such fatalistic terms.

While it may be difficult for us to understand, I believe Scripture is clear that we, as those who have been made in the image of God, have been given a free will.

It also seems abundantly clear in Scripture that there are many things that happen and choices that are made that are *not* in accordance with God's will. If you have difficulty with this statement, please set up an appointment with me and we can look at this in Scripture together.

At the same time (and here is the mystery), God is sovereign over all of His creation.

It helps me to understand sovereignty in the light of a benevolent ruler (a sovereign) over His realm, or in God's case, His creation (which seems more Biblical to me), instead of one who is an *absolute* dictator who controls every detail and every decision of His creation (rooted in the Greek philosophical understanding of sovereignty).

"For the Lord Most High is awesome. He is the great King of all the earth." (Psalm 47:2, NLT)

"...so that everyone may know that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world. He gives them to anyone he chooses—even to the lowliest of people." (Daniel 4:17, NLT)

El Elyon is the Most High God. He is the eternal, self-existent, self-sufficient, unchanging Spirit, all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere, it is obvious that He stands alone, above all. No one can equal Him... There is only one true and living God, and in order for Him to be God He must be the highest and greatest.

So, what does this mean to you and me today?

II. El Elyon – The Most High God

I will come back to these in more detail next week, but let me introduce the following to you now. Because God is the Most High God, He rules over:

- A. All the inhabitants of heaven and earth
- B. Our past, our present, and our future
- C. The rise and fall of nations
- D. Life and death
- E. Blessing and disaster

The Most High God is over all the adverse and difficult circumstances of our lives. You may be going through an adverse experience right now.

How do you handle the difficult things in life? Why has God allowed these things to happen?

First, let's make sure we did not bring these problems or circumstances upon ourselves. We can not blame or hold God responsible when we are simply experiencing the natural consequences of our sin.

If you abuse alcohol for 30 years, it is ridiculous to get mad at God when you are suffering from liver cancer. If you show up late for work every day, you can't blame God for getting fired.

Second, some of our difficulties are not a direct result of our own sin, but are the result of the sin of others.

God clearly condemns those who would abuse a child in any way. He does not initiate that act.

As we know, the consequences of this horrendous sin are far-reaching, but is it God's fault?

You could say it is His fault for allowing it, and I certainly understand that in our pain we ask the question, "How could a God of love allow such a thing to happen?"

But this comes back to the fact that we were created in the image of God and the fundamental truth that to be human, and to be made in God's image, means that we have the ability to choose between right and wrong.

Without choice we are just robots, toys in the hands of capricious and fickle God.

Without choice there can be no love, and without love there is just emptiness. Can you imagine a world with no feeling? No joy, no genuine sense of companionship, no wonder or thrill?

Third, some of our difficulties are the result of sin in general.

"For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us." (Romans 8:22-23, NLT)

The Good News is that God is El Elyon, the Most High God over all of His creation. He is greater than your sin, the sin of others, and sin in general.

Because He is God Most High, *"...we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."* (Romans 8:28, NLT)

III. Closing Illustration

What does this mean? How can God Most High make something horrible work for my good and His glory?

Recently, I read an illustration that may help us understand.

The author asks us to look at our trials, pains, suffering, and difficulties as “Steinway experiences.”

If you had to name the most famous piano, the one that produced the most beautiful sound in the world which one would you name? Most people would say “Steinway.” The Steinway piano has been preferred by keyboard masters for good reason. It is a skillfully crafted instrument that produces a phenomenal sound. Steinway pianos are built today the same way they were 140 years ago when Henry Steinway started his business. 200 craftsmen and 12,000 parts are required to produce one of these magnificent instruments. Most crucial is the rim-bending process, where 18 layers of maple are bent around an iron press to create the shape of a Steinway grand. Five coats of lacquer are applied and then hand-rubbed to give the piano its outer glow. The instrument then goes into the “Pounder Room,” where each key is pounded 10,000 times to ensure quality and durability. Followers of Jesus Christ, much like the grand Steinway, are being “handcrafted” with all of the steps being watched over and directed by our Most High God, El Elyon, the One Who is overseeing this process often referred to as “sanctification.” We are being pressed and formed and shaped, all that we might “become conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29). We are being polished, sometimes with what seems like a great amount of what we could call the “rubbing of affliction,” until we “glow.” We are then being continually tested in the laboratory of everyday human experience. The process of sanctification is not always pleasant, but we can persevere with hope, knowing that our lives will increasingly reflect the beauty of holiness to the eternal praise of the Most High God.

Are you going through a Steinway Piano experience? Is the Most High God bending, shaping, or polishing you right now?

Will you trust El Elyon, who is over all demonic spirits, life/death, kings & nations?

Knowing the truth about His name El Elyon, can I thank Him even in the painful times?

If we surrender all of our pain, tragedy and circumstances to Him, He will use them to refine us, heal us, and make us more like Jesus for His glory.

Never forget the grand purpose for which He created you – to give Him glory.