A person's hands are shown holding a globe of the Earth. The hands are positioned at the top and sides of the globe, with fingers gently gripping it. The background is dark, making the hands and the globe stand out. The text is overlaid on this image.

Question: What do you think about the sovereignty of God?

A few key Scriptures: Gen. 18:14; Deut. 10:14, 29:29; Ps. 103:19, 115:3, 135:6-12; Is. 45:5, 46:8-11; Acts 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 6:10

Another question: Why do you think that the sovereignty of God is—to humans—a source of controversy, when in Scripture it is a source of wonder and praise?

Perspectives on the sovereignty of God –
“Whether person, family, tribe, or nation, God alone determines whether we will accomplish what we have planned.” ~ Jerry Bridges

Perspectives on the sovereignty of God ~

“The sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which the Christian rests his head.” ~ Charles Spurgeon

“Some Christians live in such fear: they act as if they believe in the sovereignty of Satan rather than the sovereignty of God.” ~ Steven Lawson

“People ask me, ‘Why pray if God is sovereign?’ I respond, ‘Why pray if He isn’t?’” ~ Michael Horton

“If it were possible for me to alter any part of His plan, I could only spoil it.” ~ John Newton

“The sovereign Lord has spared you ten thousand more losses than He has sent you. Let every moment be a thousand thanks.” ~ John Piper

Why are we talking about the sovereignty of God?

This: take a look at Daniel 1:2, 9, 17. What do you notice about those verses?

- “the Lord gave Jehoiakim...into his hand.” – v. 2
- “and God gave Daniel favor...” – v. 9
- “God gave them learning and skill...” – v. 17

In these verses we see God acting according to His will on both a national and a personal level. So before we get any further into Daniel's book, and before we even look at Daniel himself, we need to look at the One who is the primary focus in the book: the sovereign King of the nations. So, let's see if we can know what is unknowable.

Why are we talking about the sovereignty of God?

Ok—more verses to look up. But we *have* to start here...what do these verses tell you?

- Ps. 139:6, 145:3, 147:5
- Job 26:14
- Isaiah 55:8-9
- Rom. 11:33-34
- 1 Tim. 6:15-16

Every attribute of God's is *way* beyond our limited human ability to know: "Not only can we never know everything there is to know about God, we can never know everything there is to know about even one aspect of God's character or work."

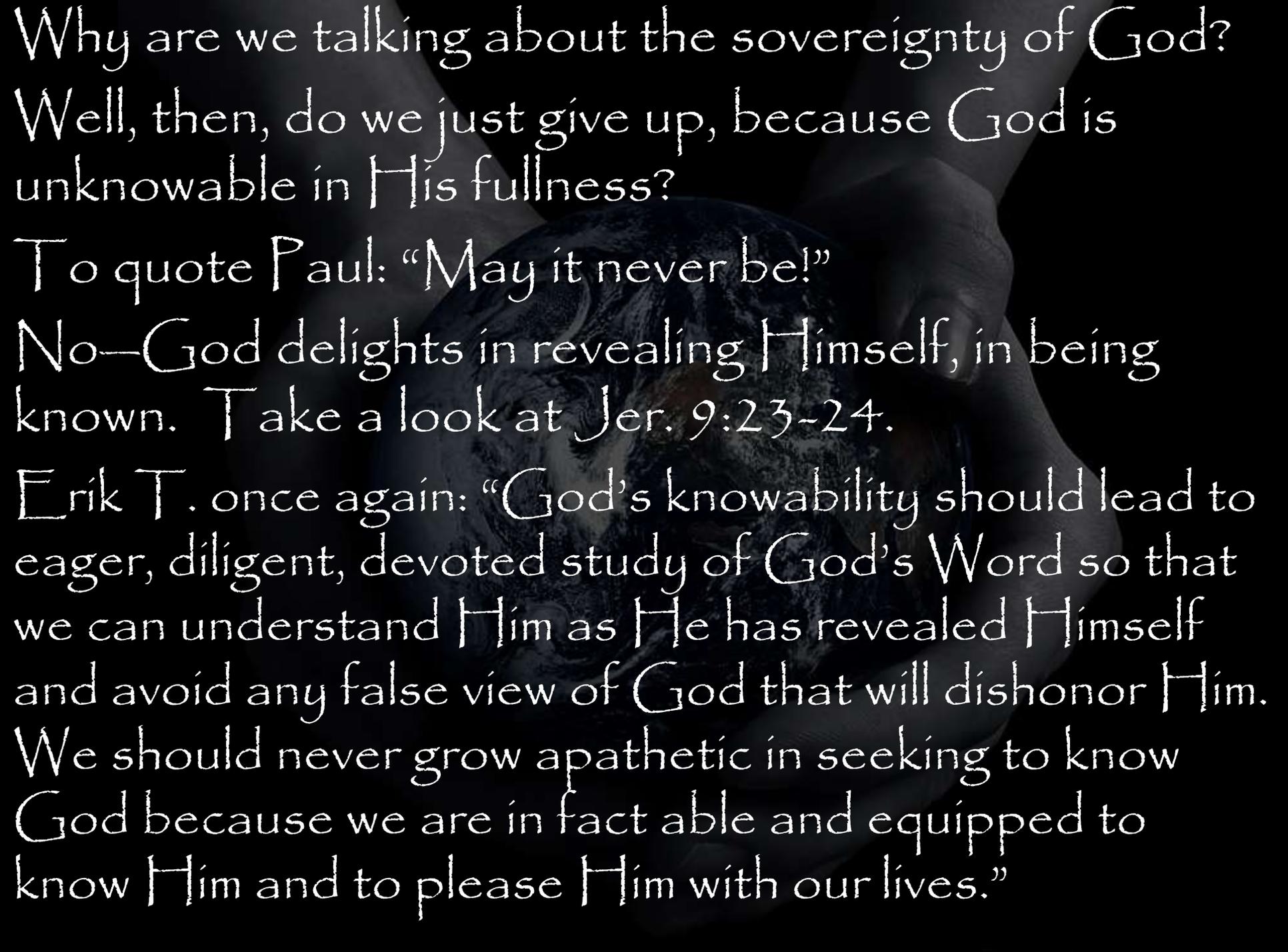
Why are we talking about the sovereignty of God?

So, this: we just have to be ok with the fact that we are unable to fully know God.

- We can know Him genuinely, but not fully.

It's like this: "God's incomprehensibility also means that beliefs can be held with firm convictions even though they may be filled with inexplicable mystery.

The Trinity, the divine and human natures of Christ, divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and many other core teachings of the Christian faith are profoundly mysterious; believing them requires a robust affirmation of the incomprehensibility of God." ~ Erik Thoennes

A person's hands are shown holding a globe of the Earth. The person's face is partially visible in profile, looking down at the globe. The background is dark, making the globe and the person's hands stand out.

Why are we talking about the sovereignty of God?
Well, then, do we just give up, because God is unknowable in His fullness?

To quote Paul: "May it never be!"

No—God delights in revealing Himself, in being known. Take a look at Jer. 9:23-24.

Erik T. once again: "God's knowability should lead to eager, diligent, devoted study of God's Word so that we can understand Him as He has revealed Himself and avoid any false view of God that will dishonor Him. We should never grow apathetic in seeking to know God because we are in fact able and equipped to know Him and to please Him with our lives."

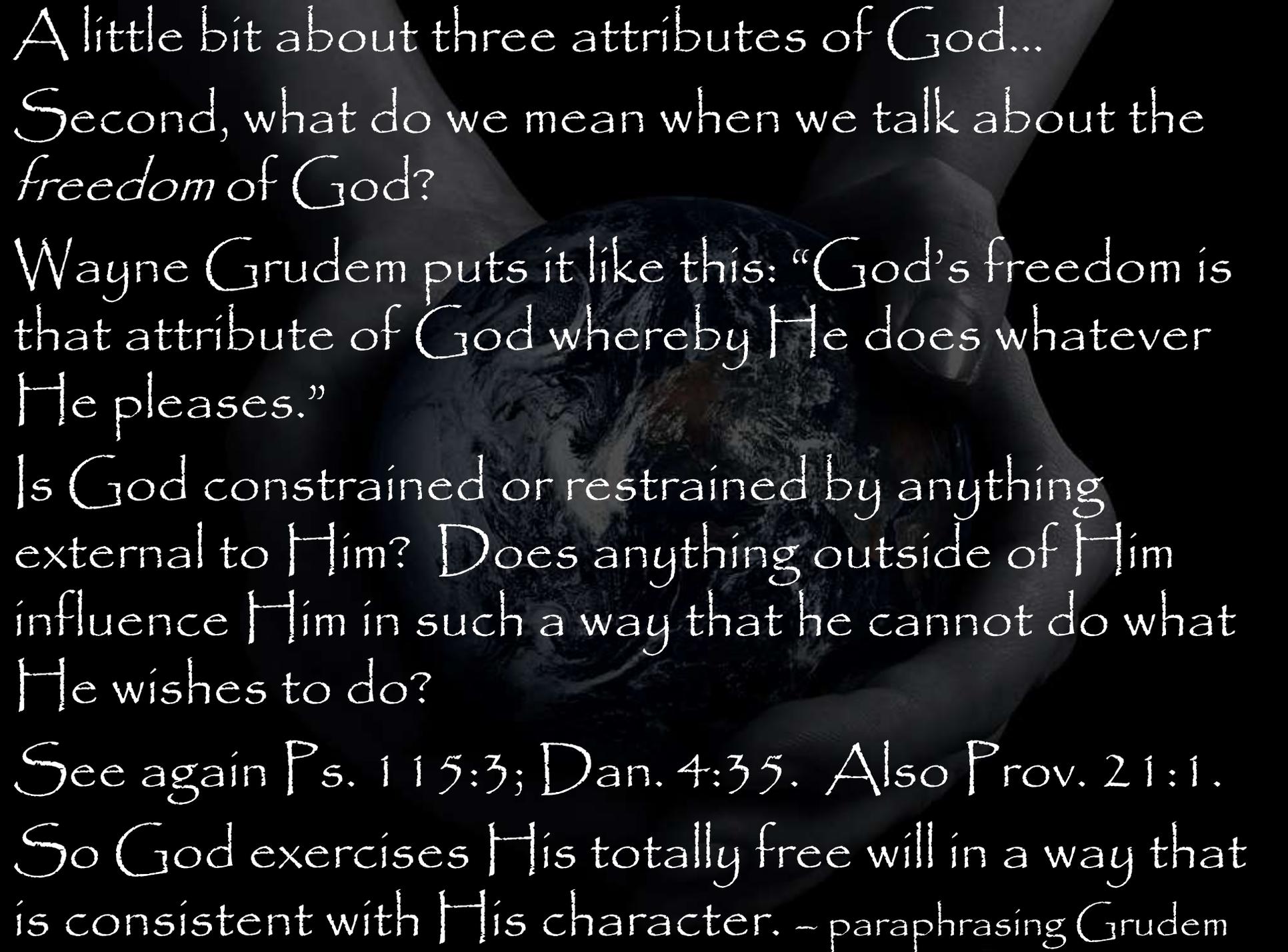
A little bit about three attributes of God...

First, God's will—do you know what God's will is?

The right answer is *yes and no* (Deut. 29:29). Some of God's will is revealed in Scripture...but not all.

So we say that some of God's will is *secret*—we cannot know it before God acts, and even then we cannot fully know it.

- Like Gal. 4:4. Why was *that* the right time?
- What is our response to James 4:15?
- How about Gen. 50:20?
- Or 1 Cor. 4:19?
- Or if you really want to dive deep, look at Rom. 9:18 and Acts 4:28.

A person's hands are shown holding a globe of the Earth. The person's face is partially visible in profile, looking down at the globe. The background is dark, and the lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the globe and the person's skin.

A little bit about three attributes of God...

Second, what do we mean when we talk about the *freedom of God*?

Wayne Grudem puts it like this: "God's freedom is that attribute of God whereby He does whatever He pleases."

Is God constrained or restrained by anything external to Him? Does anything outside of Him influence Him in such a way that he cannot do what He wishes to do?

See again Ps. 115:3; Dan. 4:35. Also Prov. 21:1.

So God exercises His totally free will in a way that is consistent with His character. ~ paraphrasing Grudem

A little bit about three attributes of God...

And third, what do we mean by *omnipotence*?

This: "God is able to do all His holy will." ~ Grudem

Nothing in all creation constrains Him, and He has all of the power to do what He decides to do.

- See Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17, 27
- And Matt. 3:9; Luke 1:37; Eph. 3:20.

Can God do anything? See Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:13; James 1:13. He can do all His holy will, all that is consistent with His character.

God's freedom and ability to accomplish all His holy will, then, is the thing we call His *sovereignty*.

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

A glimpse of the sovereignty of God...

What is verse 1?

- History. This is how a historian would say it.

What is verse 2?

- Theology. This is how a theologian would say it.

Verse 2 is why—and how—verse 1 happened.

So answer this question: When Daniel and his friends were taken from their homes into captivity, what things did *not* change?

- Answer: God. God is in Babylon too. And He owns it too. The one constant over all the centuries through all the changes: God.

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

Judah's captivity begins at the hand of
Nebuchadnezzar ~ v. 1

- Manasseh's sins ~ 2 Kings 21
- Manasseh's legacy ~ 2 Kings 23:36-24:4
- Jehoiakim's legacy ~ 2 Chron. 36:5-8
- Jeremiah's prophecy ~ Jer. 25:1-14
- Jeremiah's death threat ~ Jer. 26:1-15
- Jehoiakim's arrogance ~ Jer. 36:1-8, 20-24

Jerusalem fell in stages—Daniel was taken in 605
BC. Here's how the timeline looks:

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

- 605 - Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylon
- 605 - The Babylonians invade Judah
- 605 - First wave of deportation of Jews to Babylon
- 601 - Judah decides to realign itself with Egypt
- 597 - Jehoiachin becomes king of Judah
- 597 - Babylonians capture Jerusalem
- 597 - Second wave of deportation to Babylon
- 597 - Ezekiel is taken captive to Babylon
- 597 - Zedekiah becomes king of Judah
- 586 - The Babylonians destroy Jerusalem & the Temple
- 586 - Jerusalem's walls and gates destroyed and burned
- 586 - Third wave of Jews deported to Babylon
- 586 - Babylonian Exile (Galut Bavel) begins
- 586 - The end of the monarchy in Judah

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

Judah's captivity explained by the sovereignty of God ~ v. 2

Here's where it gets hard to explain and hard to understand (for our little finite minds at least) ~

Why was it Jehoiakim (and not, say, Josiah, or another king) who fell to Nebuchadnezzar?

- “the Lord gave Jehoiakim...into his hand”

Why were vessels from the temple taken?

- “the Lord gave...some of the vessels”

When Judah fell, it was not because of the military might of Babylon, it was because she broke her covenant with God.

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

Judah's captivity explained by the sovereignty of God ~ v. 2

What do we see about the nature of our sovereign God in the giving of Judah to Nebuchadnezzar?

First, we see His sovereign power—in the most literal sense, He has the power, the free ability, to give nations (and individuals) as He pleases.

- Ps. 115:3
- Is. 46:8-11

The first thing we see about God in Daniel's book is that He is fully able to direct history as He wills.

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

Judah's captivity explained by the sovereignty of God ~ v. 2

Second, we see His sovereign faithfulness

- First, this: *faithfulness to His promises*—there are many we could look at, but we need to go back to the core, back to Leviticus 26. Why do we have to go there?
- In Lev. 26 we are looking at covenant stipulations, that is: if you do this, I will bless you; if you do not do this, I will curse you. This is common Ancient Near East covenant language, and Lev. 26:14-46 contains the covenant curses God promised to bring if the covenant was broken.

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

Judah's captivity explained by the sovereignty of God ~ v. 2

Second, we see His sovereign faithfulness—

- God was faithful to keep His promise—either to bless, or to curse. “We tend to think of God’s faithfulness in more positive terms. But sometimes it may be a negative faithfulness. Here we meet with a *severe* faithfulness...” ~ Dale Davis
- And then there’s this: *faithfulness to His covenant*—See Is. 44:24-28.
- Go back to Lev. 26 one more time, and look at v. 40-45. Notice which covenant it is that God promises to keep and not break.

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

Judah's captivity explained by the sovereignty of God ~ v. 2

Third, we see His sovereign humility—

Does this sound kind of strange? Where do we see God's humility in v. 2?

- He not only gives Jehoiakim to the Babylonians, He also gives “some of the vessels of the house of God”—some of the things dedicated, set apart, sanctified for the worship of God only, holy things, not common things.
- And they were taken to Babylon and placed in “the house of his god.” Why is that a big deal? Why does Daniel write this little fact in his book?

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

Judah's captivity explained by the sovereignty of God ~ v. 2

Third, we see His sovereign humility—

Dale Davis once again: “In the Ancient Near East the fortunes of a god and a people were viewed together. That Judah's king and temple vessels were taken simply meant that the Lord was not able to protect them. If the people were losers it meant the Lord was a loser.”

- God was allowing His holy Name to be profaned, an unthinkable thing to a faithful Jew.
- He was willing to suffer shame and the mocking of the Gentiles for the sake of His people.

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

Judah's captivity explained by the sovereignty of God ~ v. 2

Fourth, we see His sovereign patience—

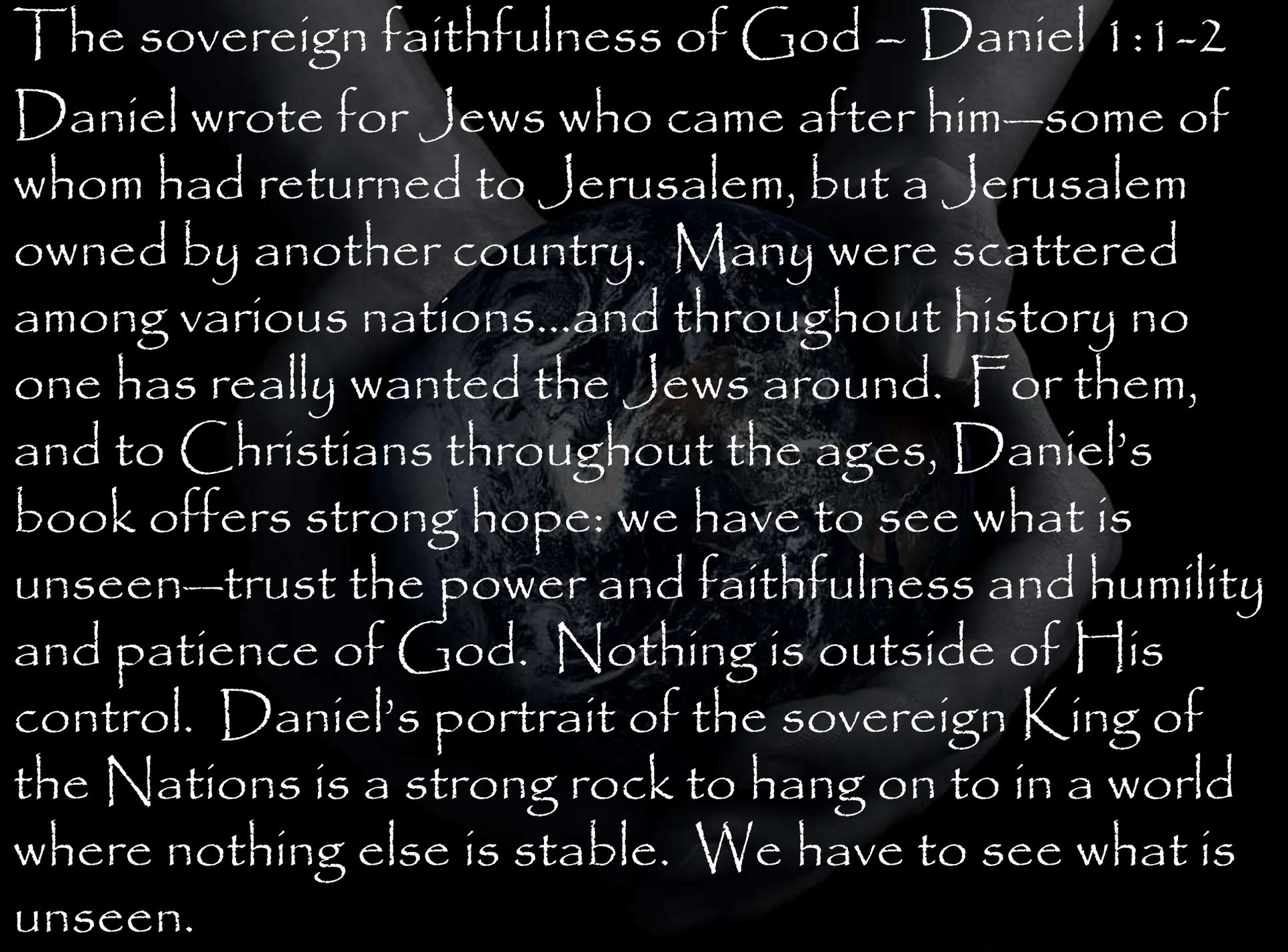
God is willing to wait. The captivity would be seventy years—2 Chron. 36:20-21.

- The temple would lay in ruins, the holy vessels in the house of foreign, false gods, the Gentiles would be allowed to mock, and the Jews to mourn.
- And when restoration did finally happen (the books of Ezra/Nehemiah), it was partial at best. Only a fraction of the Jews ever came back to the holy land. Some wept with sadness at the building of the 2nd temple ~ Ezra 3:12-13.

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

Only faithful believers would grasp Daniel 1:2; secular historians would never write that. The sovereignty of God is not visible to the world—it is everywhere, but rarely—if ever—acknowledged.

I say rarely—one short personal story: my dad worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Once in a while there would be a day when the weather was so bad that they could not work—in that case, the company called it an “act of God.” Just the lousy days of course, not the bright sunny days.

A person's hands are visible, holding a globe of the Earth. The globe is the central focus, showing continents and oceans. The person's hands are positioned at the top and bottom of the globe, suggesting they are holding it. The background is dark and out of focus.

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2
Daniel wrote for Jews who came after him—some of whom had returned to Jerusalem, but a Jerusalem owned by another country. Many were scattered among various nations...and throughout history no one has really wanted the Jews around. For them, and to Christians throughout the ages, Daniel's book offers strong hope: we have to see what is unseen—trust the power and faithfulness and humility and patience of God. Nothing is outside of His control. Daniel's portrait of the sovereign King of the Nations is a strong rock to hang on to in a world where nothing else is stable. We have to see what is unseen.

The sovereign faithfulness of God ~ Daniel 1:1-2

Michael Green: “The early Christians dated the deaths of their martyrs by the appropriate year and then added, *regnante Jesu Christo*, ‘in the reign of Jesus Christ.’ Sometimes that is the only glue that holds one’s sanity intact.”

To the watching world, it certainly did not look like “the reign of Jesus Christ,” but the early believers—who knew of the unseen sovereign reign and kingdom of God, saw the world far differently. See that as we work our way through Daniel.