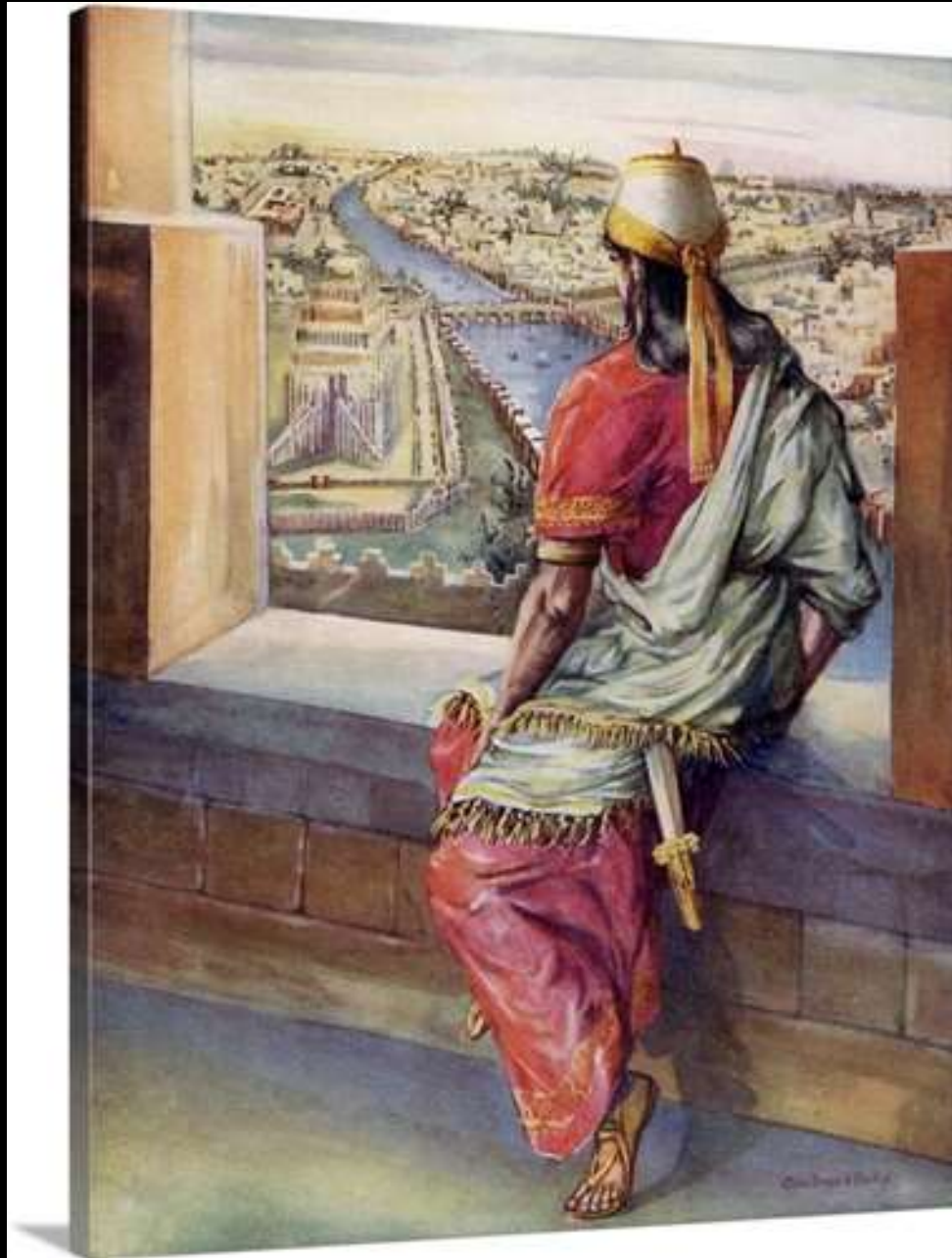


“Is not this great Babylon...”



“...which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence...”

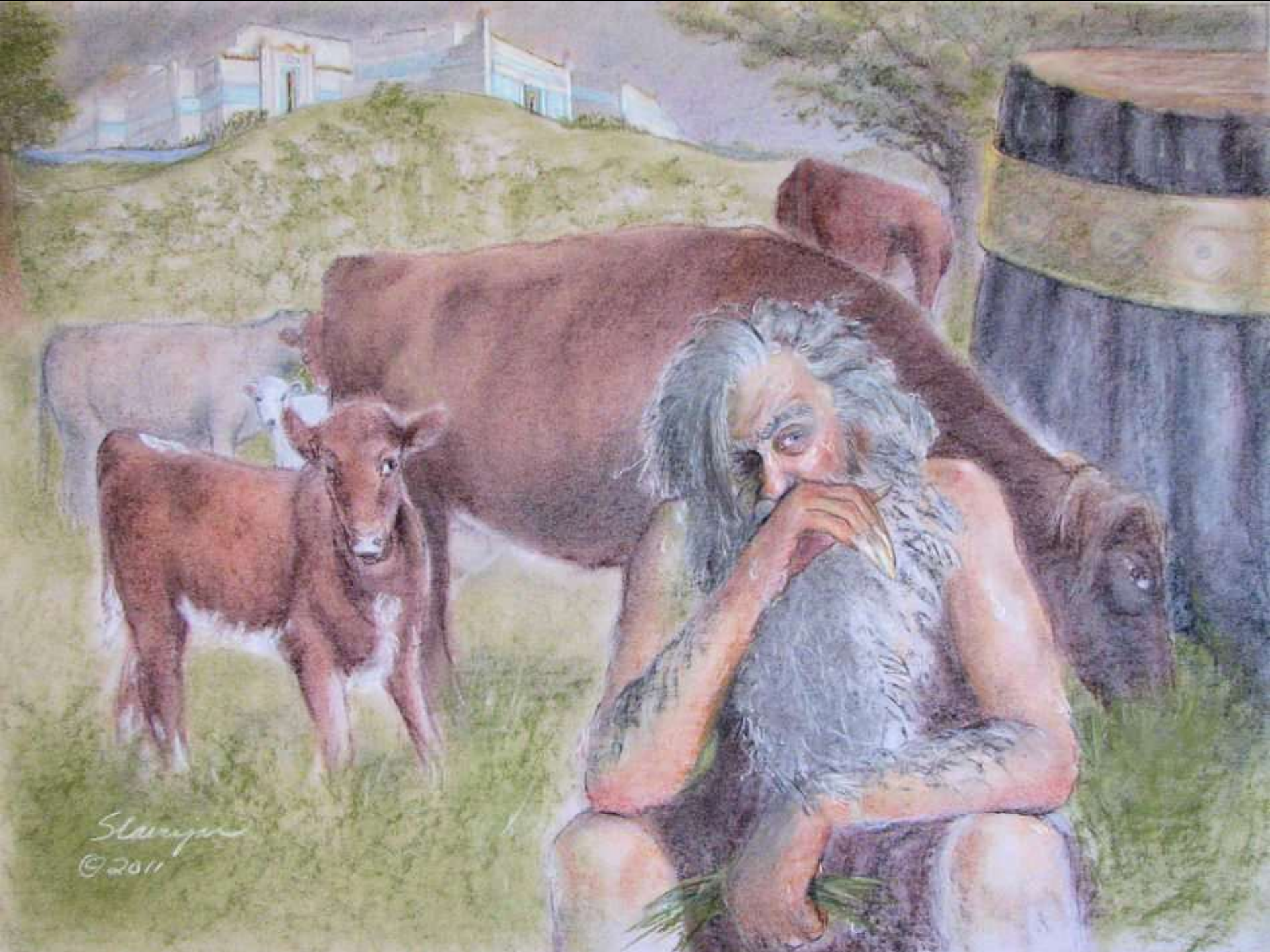


“...and for the glory of my majesty?”

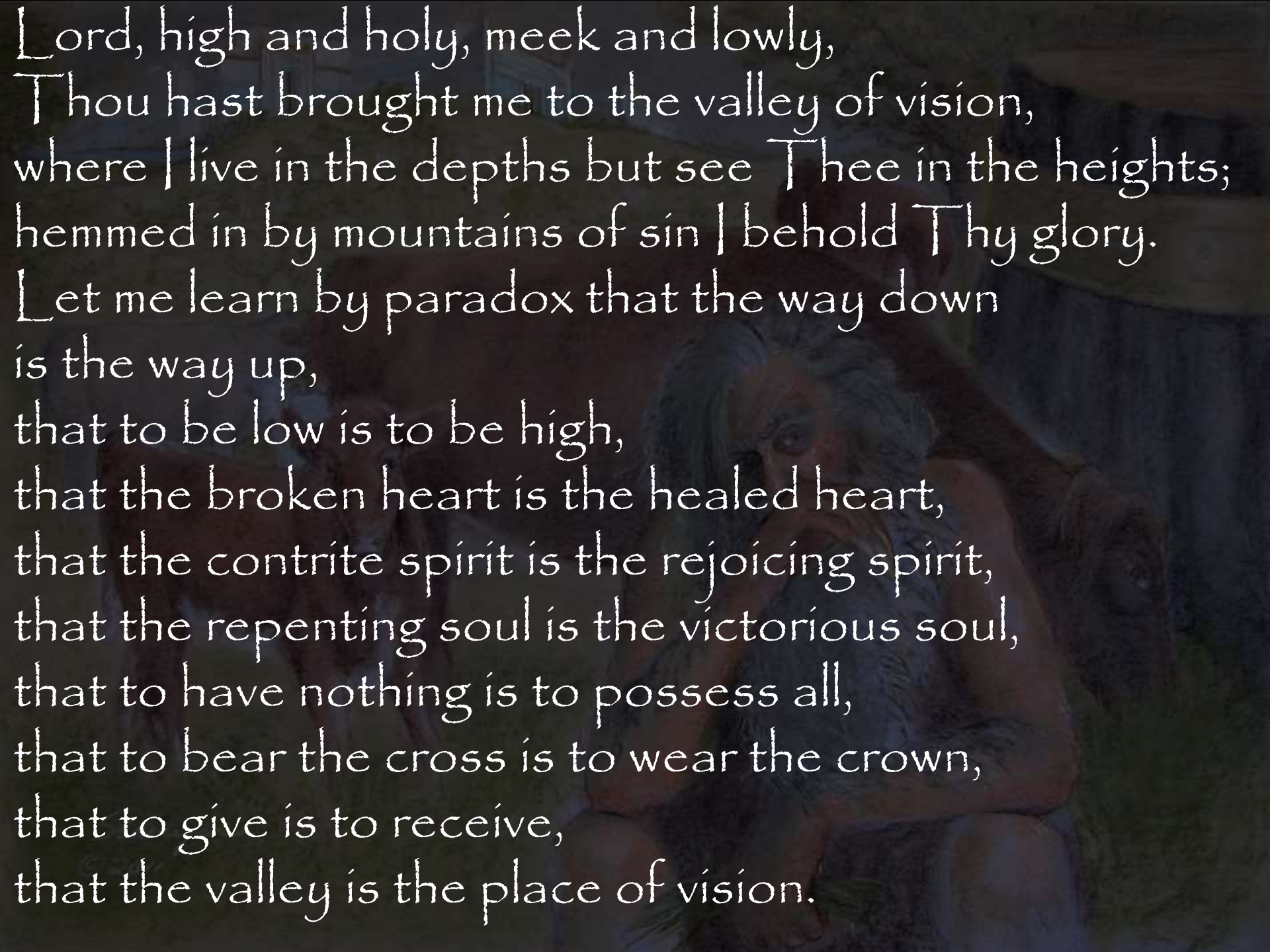






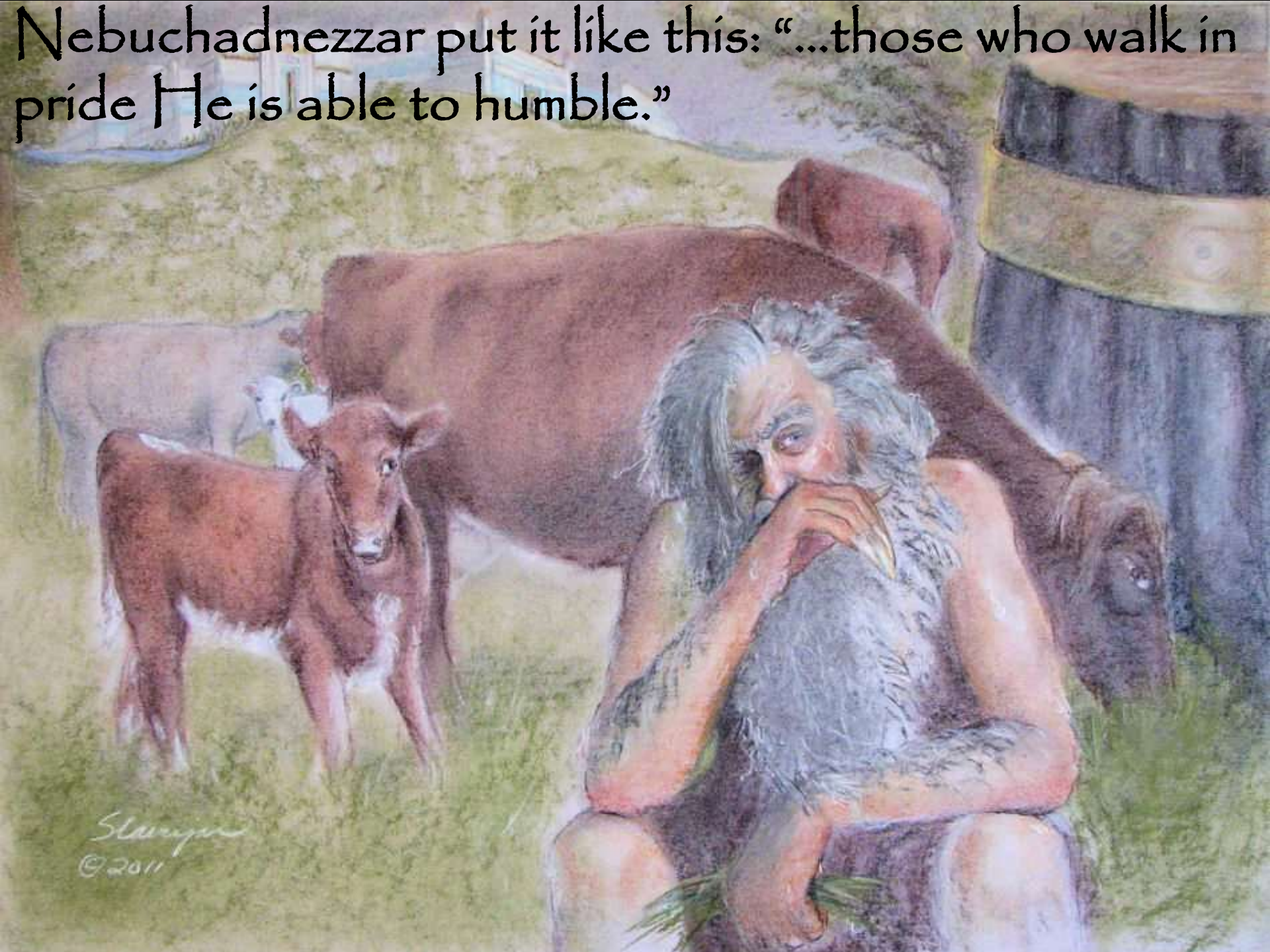


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Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly,
Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision,
where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights;
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory.
Let me learn by paradox that the way down
is the way up,
that to be low is to be high,
that the broken heart is the healed heart,
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
that to have nothing is to possess all,
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
that to give is to receive,
that the valley is the place of vision.

Nebuchadnezzar put it like this: "...those who walk in pride He is able to humble."



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Here's the title we're using for the book:

The King of the Nations

Our key verse for the book is 4:34b—"His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation."

The book divides naturally into two halves...

- Daniel in the King's courts – chs. 1-6
- Daniel and the King's visions – chs. 7-12

Daniel 4—The Most High rules the kingdom of men

- Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd dream described – v. 1-18
- Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd dream interpreted – v. 19-27
- Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd dream fulfilled – v. 28-37

Daniel's immediate reaction to the king's dream – v. 19
King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream (4:4), and the dream is revealed to Daniel (4:8).

- The king's reaction to his dream: "I saw a dream that made me afraid...the visions of my head alarmed me" (4:5).

Daniel had two immediate reactions to the king's dream (4:19):

- His first reaction: "Then Daniel...was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him."
- His second reaction: "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!"

Daniel's immediate reaction to the king's dream – v. 19

Daniel is apparently silent for a while after the king tells him his dream; the king has to prod him to give its interpretation: “Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.”

The king had a second dream—again, not just any old daily dream, but one that shook him to the core.

This king, Nebuchadnezzar...

- ...is ruthless
- ...crushes kings and kingdoms
- ...rips apart families and destroys homes and forcibly marches them to Babylon as his slaves
- ...was responsible for countless deaths

Daniel's immediate reaction to the king's dream – v. 19

...and how did Daniel respond? “My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!” Why in the world would Daniel show *any* compassion at all for him?

- Daniel doesn't fear for his own life—even though he knows the kingdom could likely be thrown into chaos when the dream is fulfilled—he fears for the welfare of this harsh and ruthless pagan king.
- Nebuchadnezzar fully deserved everything foretold in this dream, and Daniel knew it.
- It was the very judgment of God coming on the king—Daniel didn't rejoice, it was sobering and alarming to him.

Daniel's immediate reaction to the king's dream – v. 19

It is a severe message Daniel will give to the king, but he will not change the message.

- Daniel will speak truth to the king, but he will do so with a heart of compassion (Eph. 4:15, 25; 1 John 3:18).
- That is the spirit behind Matt. 18:10-14 and the passage we refer to as *church discipline*, v. 15-20.
- I love how Dale Davis puts it: “And that is the proper balance one meets in the Lord’s true servants: a love-driven sadness that cringes to speak the hard word of God, yet a God-honouring obedience that speaks it anyway.”

Daniel's immediate reaction to the king's dream – v. 19

So—how do you respond when someone brings you a hard word?

What about when Pastor David “lays bare the Word of God for your good week by week,” and he may say things that are hard for you to hear?

- I know of one couple who left the church after he was convinced that PD had preached a sermon directly at him. I told him to go talk to David, but he refused. So...they left.
- Recognize the great gift of the hard words of God, and the hard words that may on occasion come to you—see Prov. 20:30, 27:5-6.

The revealing of the king's dream ~ v. 20-23

Daniel begins to explain the dream to the king—the interpretation and its implications come a bit later.

For now, he simply explains a few pertinent details.

- He describes the massive tree of the dream (v. 20-21), and tells Neb. that “it is you, O king...”
- It seems that the sense here is that Neb. is the central, most powerful person on earth (v. 21-22); God was acknowledging the king's might...yet, all that he had was derived, given to him: 2:37-38.
- Notice in v. 23 the change in language we saw back in v. 15—from “it” to “him.” The tree represents a person—and the king knows it is him.

The interpretation of the king's dream – v. 24-26

The message was both clear and severe: everything, including his humanity, would be stripped away from Nebuchadnezzar.

- Everything that had been a source of self-glory would be taken away.
- He had once thought of himself as more powerful than any god—see 3:15—but now he would be made like an animal by the Most High God.

“Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” – C.S. Lewis

The interpretation of the king's dream ~ v. 24-26

When are we most often ready to examine our hearts and confront things and make changes?

- The “dis” words: discomfort, disaster, discontent, disruption, etc.
- Pray for those who are going through hardship “that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). The expectation that God will use this to do something important (2 Cor. 4:16-18).
- “It is precisely through the storms of life that God will show us who we really are and, even more importantly, who He really is.” ~ Iain Duguid

The interpretation of the king's dream – v. 24-26

Daniel's first comment in his interpretation of the dream is a critical point that Neb needs to grasp:

“O king: It is a decree of the Most High...” (v. 24). It is a fixed decision.

One wonders, don't one, how the king would be “driven from among men.”

- It looks like it will be a temporary madness—maybe when he lost his sense of humanity others pushed him away and out of the city.
- Can you imagine what this must have been like for the first couple of days in Neb's palace?
Everyone around him must have been shocked.

The interpretation of the king's dream – v. 24-26

So the mighty king went out to live like an animal for “seven periods of time.” Meaning what?

- Many have assumed this means seven literal years, but the text doesn't say that. It just says “periods of time.” But it could be seven years. Or not.
- It is worth noting that it could just as accurately mean *a full and complete judgment*. Seven is the Hebrew number of completeness, and the meaning could be that God will thoroughly and completely accomplish His purpose in this unusual and severe judgment.
- Remember—the point of the judgment is not the specific time period, but the outcome: “till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men...”

The interpretation of the king's dream – v. 24–26

But God promised something incredibly gracious to this pagan king: “Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze...” (v. 23).

- In v. 26, Daniel explains this little detail: “And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you *from the time that you know that Heaven rules.*” Just to clarify, it's repeated again in v. 32: until you know that *heaven*, and not king N., rules.
- But once that lesson is learned—*really learned* this time—the king would be fully restored.

Daniel's final counsel to the king ~ v. 27

Ok—picture this: you're standing in front of the most powerful king on the planet, an absolute monarch, one known for his ruthlessness, who either kills or enslaves his enemies, and—to add one other little detail—you belong to him, you are his captive, and even though you work for him, you can't just up and leave when you feel like it. You belong to him.

There you are standing in front of him and you tell him this: “Um, king? You are wrong and you really need to change, like right now. Stop doing all the bad stuff you're doing, and do what I tell you is right. And you should do it sooner rather than later.”

Daniel's final counsel to the king ~ v. 27

How is that going to go over?

That is basically what Daniel does in v. 27. He offers his advice to the king, and appeals to him to repent of his pride. Suggesting what?

- That just possibly this severe judgment was not inevitable. If Neb would genuinely humble himself, there would be no need for God to humble him. It's like a warning shot across the bow.

Is this pagan king accountable to God for his rule?

- Notice Ps. 82:1-4; Prov. 31:1-9. Gentile rulers are responsible before God to protect their subjects from oppression and to do justice.

Daniel's final counsel to the king ~ v. 27

Daniel knew where the road would lead if there were no repentance. One pastor says this: "As a pastor, there is nothing more sobering to me than to see elders and ministers who have now made shipwreck of their lives. These men were friends and colleagues who once faithfully preached the gospel and encouraged the saints, but are now disqualified from ministry because of moral failure. It brings me up short and challenges my pride, for I know that I am no better than they were, and only God's grace will keep me from a similar fate."

Daniel's final counsel to the king ~ v. 27

Notice Jeremiah 18:5-10.

- If a nation heard of God's design to bring judgment and they turned from their evil, the judgment would be backed off.

Here's an interesting one—what if the repentance is kind of sketchy, or shaky? See 1 Kings 21:17-29.

- Ahab was no paragon of virtue even after his sketchy and temporary “repentance,” yet it must have been (at least to some degree) genuine judging by God's response.

And one more: 2 Kings 22:8-20. Promised judgment was mercifully postponed.

Daniel's final counsel to the king ~ v. 27

“The change was not with God but with humanity. When the conduct of humanity changed towards God, the conduct of God appeared to change toward humankind. Yet God was consistent in His behavior all along. When Scripture tells us about God relenting of what He said He would do, each instance is in regard to punishment. It is never a case of God promising to do something good and then changing His mind.” ~ Don Stewart

“God is free to alter His announced judgments when we repent. Despite His knowing whether we will trust Him before we do so, He still condescends to respond to our trust, and thus our actions are significant. Though we must not take this truth for granted, our Father will always freely forgive those who turn to Him.” ~ R.C. Sproul

“Grant, Almighty God, since Thou settest before us our sins, and at the same time announcest Thyself as our Judge, that we may not abuse Thy forbearance and lay up for ourselves a treasure of greater wrath through our sloth and torpor. Grant, also, that we may fear Thee reverently, and be anxiously cautious ourselves: may we be frightened by Thy threats, and enticed by Thy sweetness, and be willing and submissive to Thee: may we never desire more than to consecrate ourselves entirely to obey Thee, and to glorify Thy name through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” – John Calvin