



Un nō eēt ī morte ymānū h' rēfūctū

“It is doubtful that God can use anyone greatly until He has hurt him deeply.” ~ A. W. Tozer

“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” ~ James

Daniel chapter 4—what can we title it? How about...

- The rise, fall, and rise of a king
- The humbling and exaltation of Nebuchadnezzar
- The king's bad dream

Ok...but do those really capture the main point of the chapter? Remember—*always remember*—the audience that Daniel is writing for: the Jews living in exile, trying to figure out how to remain faithful to God while immersed in a pagan culture.

So—what is the main point of the chapter? What was the thing Daniel wanted to communicate to his people?

Here's the main thing: "the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will." ~ 4:17, 25, 32.

So let's ask two questions:

1. Why do you think the Jews in exile in Babylon in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC needed this message?
2. Why do you think we—in the 21<sup>st</sup> century AD—need this message? If we didn't need it, it wouldn't be in the Bible.

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 2<sup>nd</sup> dream described* – v. 1-18
- *Nebuchadnezzar's 2<sup>nd</sup> dream interpreted* – v. 19-27
- *Nebuchadnezzar's 2<sup>nd</sup> dream fulfilled* – v. 28-37
  - His humiliation – v. 28-33
  - His exaltation – v. 34-37

The Most High rules the kingdom of men ~ Dan. 4

A couple of observations first...

- It appears that this entire chapter is a document written by the king, later incorporated by Daniel into his book of encouragement for his people.
- At the very least v. 1-18 and 34-37 were written by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel may have inserted v. 19-33, but that's really neither here nor there.
- The king starts out in v. 1-3 with the end of the story. He wrote a letter to his subjects in praise of God; notice that his letter went out to the same people mentioned in 3:4...the ones who were commanded to bow down to his image in 3:7.

The Most High rules the kingdom of men ~ Dan. 4

What is this writer's point?

“One of the most common ways people misread the OT is through a ‘moral of the story’ lens. When people read the OT using this methodology, they’re looking for ways to stand with resolve like Joseph, lead like Moses or Nehemiah, be a more committed individual like Ruth, or become more fearless like Esther. Reading the OT as a collection of stories designed to teach one how to do right and avoid wrong misses the redemptive story of the Bible. There’s more to those stories than this!” ~ Chris Hulshof

The Most High rules the kingdom of men ~ Dan. 4

Another quote, and another question:

“In his book, *The Big Story: How the Bible Makes Sense of Life*, Justin Buzzard argues the Bible is made up of five themes or acts as it moves from Genesis to Revelation. Buzzard identifies these as: God, creation, rebellion, rescue, and home. Each of these themes can function as a hook to hang an Old Testament story on.”

- Think: what about Numbers? Or the tabernacle instructions in Exodus? Or Esther?
- So where does Daniel's book fit in with these five major Bible themes?

The Most High rules the kingdom of men – Dan. 4

Ok, now where were we? Oh yes...

Nebuchadnezzar's dream described – v. 1-18

Seems a little odd to see this warlike conqueror, the most powerful king on earth at the time, desire this for his subjects: "Peace be multiplied to you!"

Compare v. 2 with 3:28. What changed?

- The big change is this: "...signs and wonders that the Most High God *has done for me.*"
- Notice that the dream interpretation of ch. 2 and the fiery furnace incident of ch. 3 didn't change his heart. What did?

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Nebuchadnezzar's dream described – v. 1-18

The signs of the Most High God are “great,” and the wonders He performs are “mighty.”

- Two questions: first, what was the impact of these signs and wonders on Nebuchadnezzar?
- And second—more generally—what is the point of the signs and wonders God has performed that we see recorded in Scripture?

Take a look through these passages in John—what are His signs and wonders intended to accomplish?

- 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:53-54; 6:2, 14; 7:31; 11:47-48; 12:11, 18; 20:30-31.

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Nebuchadnezzar's dream described – v. 1-18

“His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endures from generation to generation.”

- God's kingdom apparently has no need whatsoever for Nebuchadnezzar's help—it can endure just fine without him.
- If “His dominion endures from generation to generation,” then it is not increased by man, or diminished by man, or threatened by man.
- God's existence is independent of this world, and independent of anything in His creation—He is *transcendent* (above and outside of creation), yet *immanent* (everywhere present within creation).

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Nebuchadnezzar's dream described ~ v. 1-18

"I...was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace." ~ v. 4

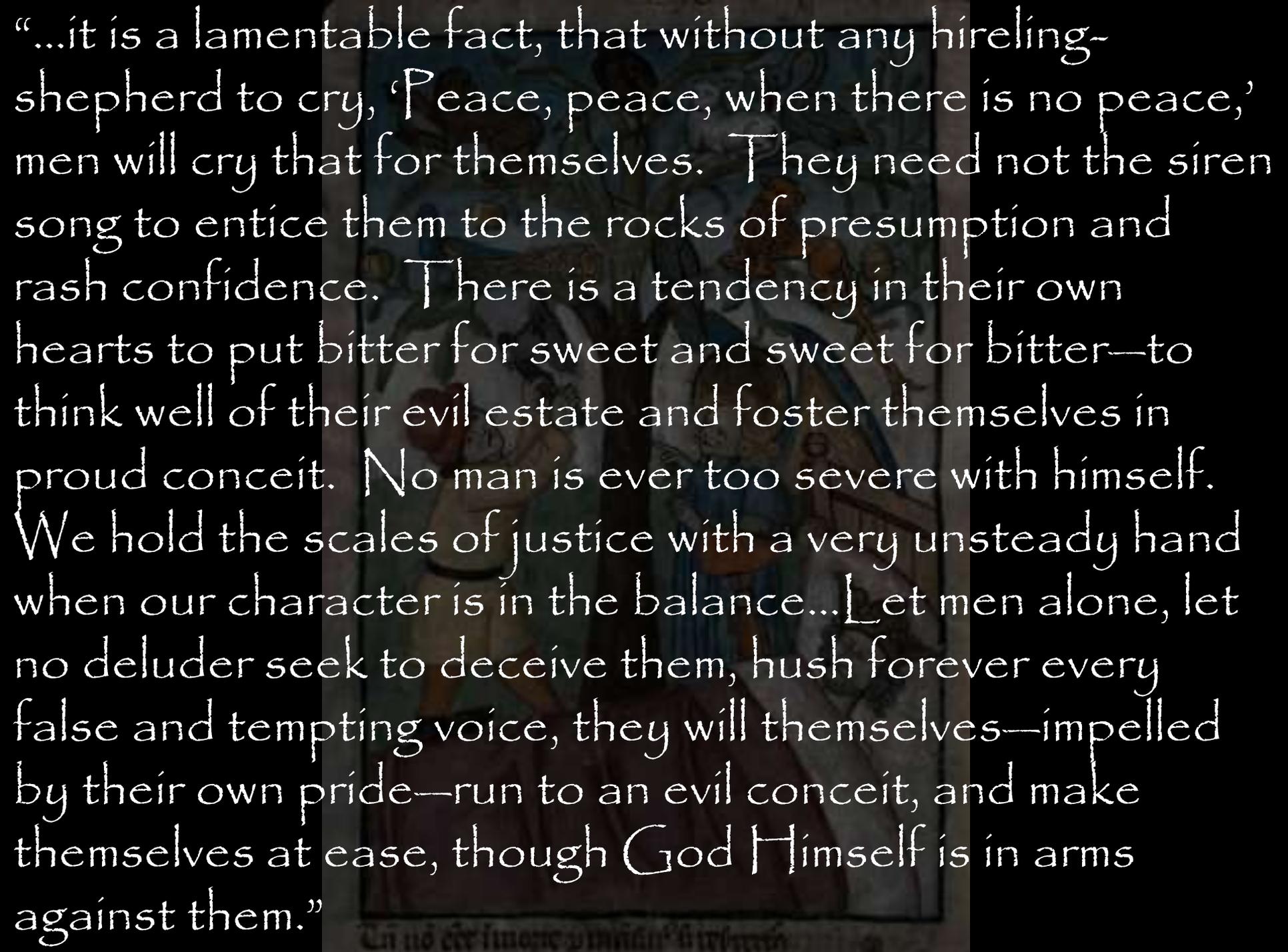
- The most powerful man in the world, conqueror of nations. Life was easy, all the riches of the world were at his disposal.

How easy it is to shatter that kind of peace...

"I saw a dream that made me afraid...the visions of my head alarmed me." ~ v. 5

- One little dream destroyed his false hope.

Some sobering words from Charles Spurgeon ~



“...it is a lamentable fact, that without any hireling-shepherd to cry, ‘Peace, peace, when there is no peace,’ men will cry that for themselves. They need not the siren song to entice them to the rocks of presumption and rash confidence. There is a tendency in their own hearts to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—to think well of their evil estate and foster themselves in proud conceit. No man is ever too severe with himself. We hold the scales of justice with a very unsteady hand when our character is in the balance... Let men alone, let no deluder seek to deceive them, hush forever every false and tempting voice, they will themselves—impelled by their own pride—run to an evil conceit, and make themselves at ease, though God Himself is in arms against them.”

The Most High rules the kingdom of men – Dan. 4

Nebuchadnezzar's dream described – v. 1-18

So the king woke up in the morning afraid and alarmed. Once again, he brings in his professional dream interpreters...

- ...all but Daniel, which is odd, because Daniel was “chief of the magicians” (v. 9; cf. 2:48, 5:11), and had a pretty good track record with the king.

Read v. 7 again—what's different about this compared with dream #1 back in ch. 2?

- Look at 2:4-7. This time (dream #2) the king just comes right out and tells them the dream.
- But it didn't help.

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Nebuchadnezzar's dream described – v. 1-18

King N. knows that there is something different about Daniel; he possesses something his other dream interpreters do not have (v. 8-9).

- Which makes one wonder all over again...why didn't he just call Daniel first?
- It just proves again that other religions and so-called gods are powerless.
- It's interesting too—what really happened to the king's heart through all of this? Was he really converted? Notice what he writes in v. 8-9 about his god and the spirit of the holy gods.

The Most High rules the kingdom of men – Dan. 4

Nebuchadnezzar's dream described – v. 1-18

The king writes down his description of his dream in v. 10-17. The vision itself is fairly straightforward:

- A massive tree (“its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth”). It was both beautiful and useful, it provided both food and shelter for all. While Neb. was looking at it, a heavenly being (“a watcher, a holy one”) came and ordered it to be cut down, stripped of everything.

The stump was to remain in the ground.

- Notice in v. 15 how the language changes from “it” to “him.”

The Most High rules the kingdom of men – Dan. 4

Nebuchadnezzar's dream described – v. 1-18

By v. 15-16, the king knows the vision is about a person, but until Daniel interprets the dream, he may not (or he may) have guessed that it's about him, or have a clue about what the implications are.

- But the main point of the dream was made crystal clear to the king by the watchers: “that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will and sets over it the lowliest of men” – v. 17.

“that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men...” What are the implications?

The Most High rules the kingdom of men – Dan. 4

What are the implications of Daniel 4:17?

Why does the watcher say, “that the living may know”? Why not just state the principle: “the Most High rules the kingdom of men”?

- Why “that the living may know”? Because the dead already know it. All questions and misunderstandings about human rule have been resolved for them. The dead know this well.
- Because the living forget this and make human rulers far too important. Take a look at Psalm 118:8-9, 146:3-4; Jer. 17:5. Remember these truths come election time.

The Most High rules the kingdom of men ~ Dan. 4

What are the implications of Daniel 4:17?

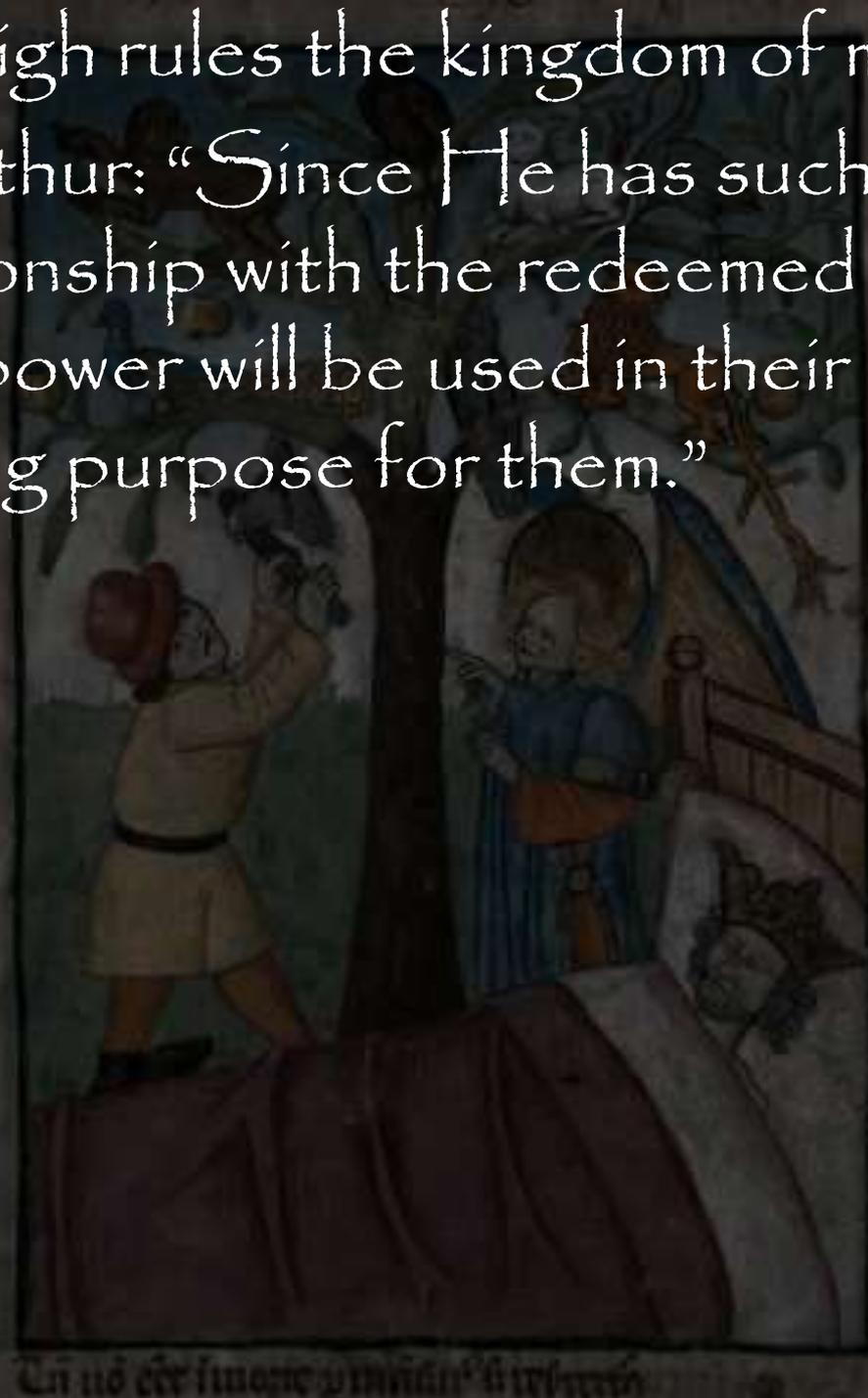
“the Most High rules the kingdom of men.”

- And therefore He controls who becomes a king, president, premier, dictator, prime minister, etc., etc. All of them are temporary. Dan. 1:21
- Jesus Christ is “the ruler of kings on earth” (Rev. 1:5). Therefore all kings answer to Him and rule only by His temporarily delegated authority. Matt. 28:18.
- Think about the massive implications of why Christ rules all kings on earth—it is for the good of His church ~ Eph. 1:22

The Most High rules the kingdom of men ~ Dan. 4

John MacArthur: "What great blessing we can have when we take time to set our own concerns and needs aside and simply focus on the Lord of glory, allowing the Holy Spirit to do in us what Paul asked Him to do in the Ephesians—give us deep understanding of the truth that our Lord is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come...the point here is that the power of Christ applied in the believer's behalf cannot be overthrown or negated or defeated, because it far surpasses that of the hosts of Satan who design to defeat it."

The Most High rules the kingdom of men ~ Dan. 4  
John MacArthur: "Since He has such a unique and intimate relationship with the redeemed whom He loves, all His power will be used in their behalf to fulfill His loving purpose for them."



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