

Most High Rules Kingdom of Men

Daniel 4:13-23 “I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. He cried aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. Nevertheless, leave the stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times pass over him. ‘This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.’ “This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.” Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies! “The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home—it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth. “And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him.”

Heavenly Father, God, God of mercy and kindness and compassion, God that is good and righteous in all that He does. Father we do pray that You would meet with Your church that You would instruct her in righteousness and holiness and every way that is good for her. Father we do pray that You would help to constrain this sin in our lives, that You would help us to recognize more and more that You are the God that rules and reigns in heaven and there is none higher than You Father. We do pray that You would be with Mr. Horn now, that You would help him, that You would give him clarity of thought, that You would help him to bless Your church Father, that You would fill him with Your Spirit, that You would fill us with Your Spirit to hear him and the preaching. We pray Father that You would help us to be instructed Father. We pray that You would bless Your church through the preaching of Your Word. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

We’re in a narrative, but in the narrative God explicitly tells us what we are supposed to learn from it. In the narrative God tells Nebuchadnezzar in the midst of his dream what is going to happen to him until he learns a lesson. He’s writing this letter because he has learned the lesson, but the lesson was that all people understand that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men. It’s explicit in this passage that this is what we are supposed to take away from this, this is what we are supposed to understand and this is what all living are to understand; that the Most High rules in the kingdom of man. Nebuchadnezzar set up an idol and said there would be a penalty of death by fire if they did not worship as he commanded, whenever certain music was played he tried to say he was the supreme ruler, all living will obey me and

God said, "No, all living obey Me." Nebuchadnezzar wanted every tongue, every tribe, every nation to come and say "You are the supreme ruler." God, the Most High, said "No, I am the Supreme Ruler. I can make Nebuchadnezzar go eat grass like an ox." We weren't alive then, but it was written down so that we could know because all living is supposed to understand that God rules in the kingdom of men, that is the lesson that we need to understand. He's going to prove it to Nebuchadnezzar and Nebuchadnezzar is going to testify to the whole world that God rules, that He raises up who He wants to raise up and He brings down whoever He wants to bring down. He raised up Nebuchadnezzar and He brings him down. Paul interprets what this is supposed to mean for us, because it's one of the things that it means to us, but it's a significant thing, it means that we are supposed to treat rulers with certain respect, with certain honor. God appointed each one of them, He appointed them to be the avengers of His wrath. In response to the same concept, Paul says in **Romans 13:1-7**, "**Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves. For rules are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, custom to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.**"

Now Daniel understands this, Daniel doesn't go, "You're a wicked king that tried to kill my friends so what a great thing it is that you go and eat grass like an ox for seven years." Instead he actually mourns because of it, because he recognizes God set up Nebuchadnezzar. Every authority that God has appointed is for the good of the elect because God does work everything for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. Remember when Paul is writing the letter to the Romans, they were being persecuted, Nero was the emperor and Paul still wrote this because God placed Nero where he was to be a constraint on evil. We ended last week with this picture of a beautiful kingdom that Christ uses as a similar description in one of His parables and it's a description of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom and it's also a description of what God's kingdom looks like. It has fruit in abundance, the birds nest in its branches, the beasts of the field nest in its shade and it's a picture of the kingdom of heaven. But understand just like God does with so many types, He's going to do the same thing here, He is going to say that this is just a type and He does that by bringing down Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom, by crashing it to the ground in a very short time period because it's just the picture. The true kingdom of heaven is promised to never come crashing down, it will never fail, it's branches won't fall off, leaves won't collapse, and its fruit won't be scattered abroad. It is the tree that will grow. So as we see this we should also recognize that Nebuchadnezzar is a type of Christ, but he is far from Christ. His kingdom is a type of the kingdom of heaven, but it is very far from the kingdom of heaven. God set it up so that we could have a picture, so make sure we recognize it's just a picture. Every kingdom that God has set up, except for the kingdom of God, is a kingdom that will end. All nations, all kingdoms will be subject to the kingdom of heaven. America isn't the end all, be all, it's just another kingdom that will be brought low. One of the promises we have about the kingdom of God is from **Isaiah 9:7**, "**Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. Upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to order and establish it with judgement and justice, from that time forward even forever, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.**" That's not what happens to Nebuchadnezzar's

kingdom, it came crashing down. That will not happen with God's kingdom, the kingdom of judgement and peace, there will be no end.

Verses 13-16 **"I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. He cried aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. Nevertheless, leave the stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times pass over him."** So he starts the same thing that he started when he talked about the dream of the tree, he repeats that here. I think he is probably repeating it just to demonstrate what a dramatic change it is as in the dream. It was like as dramatic as when he started having this dream of this big tree, now he has this dream of these watchers coming. So it's the change in direction of the dream. The dream was showing his great success, the way that everything in the world was looking up to him, how he was blessing and strengthening everyone. But those things, instead of causing him to cry out to God, even though he had the testimony of the fiery pit, even though he had the testimony of Daniel interpreting the dream, even though he has these testimonies that God is sovereign, he doesn't believe it. And even as these things cause him, we will find out in the rest of the chapter, cause him to blaspheme the name of God and cause all the things in the dream to happen to him, Daniel warns him but he won't hear the warning. He recognizes that this dream has real significance and real meaning. It's interesting the translation of that word "watcher" because it means "to lay bare". The idea is that this is someone who knows all things, sees all things, and things aren't hidden from him. So Nebuchadnezzar sees this watcher and the word that he uses to describe it is not a description of what it looks like, it's a description of what it does. He knows everything that is happening in the affairs of men. **"A holy one"**, when we think of the word "holy", here it means like ceremonially clean, so that wouldn't mean that much to Nebuchadnezzar except maybe the food that Daniel refused to eat. He has a sense that this watcher is separate from this world, that he is clean, that he is pure, that he is not defiled by this earth. So he understands as he sees this watcher, this one that somehow looking at it, he understands that this watcher knows everything that is going on, this is someone that's separate from the earth and this is probably Nebuchadnezzar's way of describing an angel. He sees it coming down from heaven, again that's his other characteristic- everything is laid bare before it, it's holy, and it comes down from heaven. In the ancient time, most of the religions saw a god far off or saw a god that was like a human made into a god like Baal, and instead this is a thing like a god coming down from heaven to the earth. **"He cried aloud and said thus"**, so he cried and he gave commandments. That word "cried" there is like to proclaim like a crier would proclaim a message before there were newspapers. They would walk through the city and make a declaration and that's what this watcher is doing. That word "aloud" comes from an army, so the point is that he isn't just saying this without authority, but like he has the strength to make it come to pass. He is crying it out with strength and power. He says, **"Chop down the tree and cut off its branches"**, Nebuchadnezzar is represented by this great tree and it's being a blessing so that everyone is looking towards it, others were seeking its shade and finding places to rest. Notice what's said here, not just to cut down the tree, but to cut off its branches. The tree obviously represents Nebuchadnezzar, that he is to fall as low as is possible, but the branches are a picture of how Nebuchadnezzar's power is spreading throughout the earth. Just like he has all these rulers of the provinces come so they could worship how Nebuchadnezzar wanted them to worship. This was his branches, the way that he was controlling all the people in the earth. If you look at it, there have been rumors that this has happened in

American history sometimes where it's thought that this happened with Roosevelt, where there were times when he was incapacitated and Eleanor ruled, but the kingdom kept running the same way. It's easy to think that that's what happened with Babylon, but that's not what happened with Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, when he fell, the empire disintegrated, all the branches were cut off, Egypt that had been conquered, it stops being part of the Babylonian empire. We know when the Medes and Persians come, it's over a hundred different provinces and they are cut off. Nebuchadnezzar built this great kingdom by conquering all these people, they start eating grass like an ox and they all know about it, they all leave him, they all rebel against him. That's the picture of the branches being cut off. When he's restored, this isn't just like, "Well, no one knew he was gone and he takes over power again." Everybody knew he was gone, God is bringing him low to show His power and even though they know that he went out and ate grass like an ox, God restores the whole kingdom to him. It's a greater testimony to God's power than if everyone hid the fact the Nebuchadnezzar was insane. That's not what happened, the branches were cut off, he loses everything, stripped of any sign of growth. If you think about it, this is probably the picture of the power projecting. You have the branches which would be like the governors and the branches off of those would be the satraps, and the twigs at the end would be the counselors, and then you'd have the leaves at the very end, even the leaves abandon Nebuchadnezzar. All of it, everything he did to establish the kingdom, all of it will be taken from him, down to his leaves, down to the lowest level of magistrate, they will all abandon Nebuchadnezzar. **"Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit."** This is probably a picture of a way that the Babylonian empire by bringing peace, by bringing stability, that it had been a real blessing to the world and all that is scattered and disposed of. When you think of a tree that has fruit that gets scattered on the ground, it all rots and becomes worthless. That's what happens when fruit gets scattered on the ground, it gets rotten. **"Let the beasts get out from under it."** As the tree falls, the beasts are going to scatter. The people that Nebuchadnezzar was blessing, as causing to have shade, was under protection of Nebuchadnezzar, because of his power, because he was the emperor, there were people who were afraid to do things to the weak and who needed protection; now they will openly do it. It's the same for the birds of the air, **"and the birds from its branches."** There is not blessing to be close to Nebuchadnezzar anymore, no protection. **"Nevertheless, leave the stump and roots in the earth,"** it's a really interesting thing for the angel to say. Make sure that you keep the stump, make sure you keep the roots. If you cut off a tree but leave the roots there, it means that life sprouts out from them again. This is what happens, you cut off a tree and then the next year you will start to see these sprouts come out of the tree so the reason you leave the stump is for the tree to re-grow. If you want to kill a tree you have to dig up the roots, but the angel is very clear to not dig up the roots which means the tree will come back in some form. Recognize this is what Christ does as well. It had been prophesied before in **Isaiah 6:12-13, "The Lord has removed men far away and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return and be for consuming, as a terebinth tree or as an oak, whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the hold seed shall be its stump."** This is the picture of the kingdom of God, which looks like Israel and then it gets cut down and restored and grows so it's bigger than it was before, that's exactly what happens with the kingdom of God. Notice how going through Acts, Paul and Peter and others kept going to the Jews first, they would go to the Jews and then they would go to the Gentiles, that's exactly what this picture is in Isaiah 6, there's this tree that was cut down, but from what was established there, there will arise this next kingdom, the kingdom of God. They were able to add the Gentiles because the roots were still deep even though the tree was cut off, God had planted the synagogue, God had caused His Word to go through the world. So even though the tree was cut down, the strength of Judaism remained and was ready to be useful for the kingdom of God. **"Bound with a band of iron and bronze",** there are a lot of

theories what this refers to, it could be a protection that God puts on the stump because God has further plans for it, some say it could represent the chains that Nebuchadnezzar would experience because he was a mad man. I don't know why they bound it, but we see in the end that God has a purpose for the stump, but this isn't a normal thing that we do, to put iron and bronze around a tree so I'm not sure of the purpose of this. Maybe he put protection on it so the strength would remain and it could rejuvenate itself. The tree is **"in the tender grass of the field."** Now it kind of switches because up to this point the tree is a tree, but now we are going to see it starts to switch and the tree represents a man and it's pretty clear. So it talks about the tree being in the midst of the tender grass of the field. So this is that tender grass, which could be a grain field like sprouts. **"Let it be wet with the dew of heaven,"** so there is this picture of a tree that is then referred to as a man because it starts to graze in the next verse. Where Nebuchadnezzar had provided protection and shade, he is now completely unprotected. When we think of a fallen tree, the fact that it has dew on it, who would think of it? This is what happens if there is a tree laying there. We know that man usually has a form of shelter, but if you have lost your mind and become like an ox, then ox stand out in the middle of rainstorms, ox stand out when the dew comes, the shelter doesn't matter much to them. That's the point that Nebuchadnezzar was brought down to. **"And let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth."** Now it's really clear, this tree was representing a man because that man starts to graze, you don't see a tree grazing. **"Let his heart be changed from that of a man,"** this doesn't require any special interpretation, everybody understands this tree was really representing a man based on what the angel said. In English, we consider the heart to be the center of emotions and the mind to be the center of reason, but that's not how they put it in Hebrew and Greek. They would consider the heart to be center of reason in addition to being the center of emotions. So when it says to let his heart be changed, he would stop reasoning like a man. The person in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is going to stop being like a man and start being like a beast. It's interesting because in psychology they actually have a term for this, boanthropy where a man thinks he is a cow and interesting enough, it's thought that King George III who was the king of England at the time of the American Revolution suffered from this as well, where he thought he was a cow. This is the madness that God can put upon a king, the insanity. Notice that it's God doing this, it's not like a demon took possession of him, this is God saying He will take from him the mind of a man and I will give him the mind of a cow and that's what God does to Nebuchadnezzar. That should cause all of us to tremble because if He can do it to the most powerful man in the world, He can do it to you and me if He chooses. That should cause us to bow down and fear God. This is what He could do to Nebuchadnezzar, this is what He could do whenever He wants to do this to anyone. God takes from Nebuchadnezzar his ability to reason and makes him reason like an ox. Any intellect you have is because of the mercy of God, any ability to understand, any ability to make conclusions, this is all because of the mercy of God. People don't go insane because of their sin, although God usually causes it to be a punishment of sin, but they go insane first and foremost because God decided that they would lose their mind and God can do it to any of us. So fear God, He did it to Nebuchadnezzar. This isn't a demon doing this, this is God doing this and understand that with a demon He does it indirectly, here He is doing it directly. God can take Nebuchadnezzar who is the foremost among men, the most powerful man in the world and the next day He can have him eating grass like an ox, this is a God to be feared. **"Let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times pass over him."** The word for time literally means "a time period", and I do think it means a year. Some people think it could be seven months or seven seasons so it is possible that it's not seven years, but it seems like the most likely time frame. Remember he loses all of his kingdom and as big as his kingdom was, it would take time to spread out, so the most likely time frame is that for seven years God causes him to have the mind of the beast.

Verses 17-19 **“This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.”** This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.” Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, **“Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.”** Belteshazzar answered and said, **“My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!”** So it starts by saying the decision is by the decree of the watchers, now the way that this sentence is written, it sounds like this is the angels acting on their own, that they decided this is the right thing to do. When we think of God we know that He is the sovereign God and He does whatever pleases Him, but even in doing that, there are other places in Scripture that it talks about Him taking the advice of the angels. In **Psalm 80:1** it says, **“God stands in the congregation of the mighty, He judges among the gods.”** This is the picture of Him standing in the midst of the angels and all the angels say this is what you should do and then God says that’s what He will do. Or in Kings 22, where the lying spirit comes out of the midst of the angels advising God and in **1 Kings 22:19**, **“And Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left.”** And they’re meeting to discuss what should happen to Ahab. So just because God knows all things, just because He sees all things, just because He does everything according to how it pleases Him, He still gathers the angels together and has a council that advises Him. It’s interesting that He would do that because He doesn’t need that, but still it’s like the six days He labored and the seventh He rested, He didn’t do that for Himself, He didn’t need any rest, but He does it as a testimony to others. So here you have a picture of God taking council even though He doesn’t need council, but He knows we need council and so the decision is by the decree of the watchers. The idea here is that all the angels agree even though it was by God’s authority that they did it. They discussed it and agreed this was the thing to do. **“And the sentence by the word of the holy ones,”** again, Nebuchadnezzar in relaying it is that the angels do the same thing, they repeat the same thing over again. We see Nebuchadnezzar doing it, we see the angels doing it, we see Daniel doing it, obviously it’s a good way to express things that people don’t want to believe and don’t want to understand, because he says again that this was the sentence. He does the same thing where first he calls them a watcher, then he called them a holy one, then he calls them watchers again and now holy ones again. He is expressing the same thing, but using different words. Now here’s the center of it, this is the reason of chapter 4, **“in order that the living may know,”** this decree was being made known for a very specific reason. This has happened to Nebuchadnezzar so that all the living at the time could know, so that Nebuchadnezzar would write what is chapter 4 of Daniel and send it out to every tribe, tongue, and nation, so the whole world, all the living, would know this. There’s a reason why it’s been saved in our Bibles so that we can read it, it’s so that we can understand this, and so that we can know this, that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, He is the One that rules. When you see a Hitler rise up, Hitler was brought up into power by God, Stalin was brought into power by God, Obama was brought into power by God, Trump was brought into power by God. Every authority was put in that place by God and we are to know this. He has the most powerful person in the world go eat grass like an ox for seven years so that they could know it and that we could know it. I mentioned this over the last few weeks, I see so many Christian organizations saying that we need to persuade the government to do this or that, go to God first because He is the One who raised up that king or governor. There’s a valid place to petition the government, but if you think that the government is the solution to abortion, you are flat

out wrong. God raised up all seven of those Supreme Court judges that said America had the right to commit murder of their own children. God raised up all those Republican presidents who put those judges in office that would say that every American has the right to murder their baby. The solution to the problems in this country are recognizing the fact that God rules in the kingdom of men. As long as the church wants to look and act like the kingdom of man rules over God, we shouldn't expect repentance from these things as a nation. It has to start with people like us, it's not that God didn't reveal these things, He's made it crystal clear, but do you practice these things in your life? Do you act day by day that that authority, children, that your father is your father because that is who is good to be your father because God is good? Whether it's elders, whether it's the civil magistrate, God put authority in place, He raised up every one, He rules in the kingdom of men and they are all for the good of the church and for the good of the people of God, the true people of God. Most High rules in the kingdom of men, do we look at our lives that way? Do we consider the things that are happening around us that way? We're commanded to pray for those who rule over us, that's because they are ministers of God, why aren't we praying for them as we ought? They are not supreme; God is the One that directs them. God gives the kingdom of men to whomever He will, He is the One who appoints rulers and causes them to have success, He is the One who causes people to follow them. Who would have thought three years ago as Donald Trump went down that elevator that he would be negotiating with Putin? God raises up whomever He will. He causes people to follow them, whether it's Donald Trump or Bill Clinton, whether it's Barack Obama or Ronald Reagan, whether it's Nero or Alfred the Great, God raises up whoever He chooses. He does it for the good of the church, that doesn't mean that because God raised up Donald Trump that it's good that 80% of the people that profess to know Christ, that are Evangelical would elect a known adulterer, but understand, this is what God is doing and He's doing it to chastise, He's doing it to bless, but He is doing it for the goodness of His church. **"And sets over it the lowest of men."** Nebuchadnezzar will be literally become the lowest of men. When you're out in a field pretending like you are a cow, it's hard to get lower than that, and that's what God does with Nebuchadnezzar for seven years, so that everyone, all the living could know this is who God is, this is the level of His power, He can do this to whoever He wants, whenever He wants. **"This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen."** Nebuchadnezzar had related everything that he remembered about the dream and when you think about it, if you just take the outlines of what was just said, there's this wonderful tree that everybody in the world is looking to, but this tree really isn't a tree, it represents a man because when it is cut down it eats grass like an ox and loses its mind, the mind of a man. When Nebuchadnezzar says that he has seen this, understand God really couldn't be more explicit in this dream, it doesn't require a prophet to interpret this dream. There is really only one man in the world that qualifies and that's Nebuchadnezzar, there's no other man in the world that the whole earth is impacted by, that all living is looking to. **"Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation,"** he wants Daniel to say what it means, but remember that it's not rocket science, it doesn't require a revelation. If you eliminate who it couldn't be, then you are left with Nebuchadnezzar. It could be in the future, but I have a feeling even Nebuchadnezzar knows who it's talking about. **"Since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation."** It's important to note that this dream is not hard to interpret. Nebuchadnezzar is the one who fits the bill, so when the wise men say they can't make know the interpretation, it could be a couple reasons. It could be because they were potentially afraid that Daniel would come after them and correct them and that might be true, but it might be another explanation. It might be that there's only one explanation that makes sense for the dream, but if you're talking to Nebuchadnezzar, remember from chapter 3 where he finds out that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego won't bow down before him and he is filled with fury and wants to kill them. You can imagine that most of the Babylonians, even if

they heard this dream, they would not turn around and say it was Nebuchadnezzar that was going to eat grass like an ox. That's a good way to die, so it's possible that they just wouldn't say it because the risk of saying it is so great. Another possibility is that God simply blinded them. For instance, with the seven fat cattle and the seven healthy ears of corn and the seven shriveled ears of corn, when Joseph's brothers heard the dream they knew exactly what it meant. This isn't a hard dream to interpret either. But the Pharaoh has all the wise men come to interpret, why can't they interpret it? Because God decided to blind them so that may be the case here. But let's be serious, as you read the prophesy, you don't need Daniel's interpretation. Anyone can read this and know what's going on, but He may have blinded them just so we know that God rules in the affairs of men which is the point we are to learn from this passage. God can blind the advisors, He can blind Nebuchadnezzar. **"But you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you."** He knows that Daniel can and it could be that he just also knows that Daniel isn't a "yes man" because Daniel recognizes that there is someone superior to him, superior to Nebuchadnezzar. We see later that he has true respect and true honor for Nebuchadnezzar, but Nebuchadnezzar even recognizes he has a greater loyalty to God than to Nebuchadnezzar because the Spirit of God is in him. So he might have gone to Daniel and basically said that he knew Daniel would tell him the truth and not be afraid, I know that your loyalty is to God above all else. Do people say that about you? This is one of our responsibilities, to be salt and light to the world, to be willing to say the things that other people won't say. Even what everybody knows it true, we need to be willing to speak. Nebuchadnezzar knew Daniel would be willing to speak. **"Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar,"** notice again when Nebuchadnezzar was quoting before he uses Belteshazzar, but when writing after having been restored his kingdom he calls him Daniel, but says that of course this is Belteshazzar. So you see him use not the pagan name, but Daniel's name after Jehovah. **"Was astonished for a time,"** the root word for "astonished" is "stunned". Daniel was stunned by this dream and I'm sure Daniel knew that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked through the fire without getting burned and that One like the Son of God joined them there, so I don't think that Daniel is stunned at the idea that God rules the affair of men, I think he is stunned that God would do this to Nebuchadnezzar. He is stunned that God would raise Nebuchadnezzar so he is ruling the whole world, and that it will all come crashing down like a tree that's cut down. I don't think Daniel is stunned that God can do it, I think he is stunned that God will do it. **"And his thoughts troubled him."** Again, Nebuchadnezzar is using the same description of Daniel where he says it one way and then says it a different way. He was astonished and then his thoughts troubled him. That word "troubled" means that he was "filled with terror", just like Nebuchadnezzar was terrorized when he saw them in the fire and One like the Son of God standing there. Nebuchadnezzar is looking at Daniel and is seeing that same response, he's looking at Daniel and Daniel is filled with fear that God would take Nebuchadnezzar, a man who God had given real glory on this earth and take him and bring him lower than any man. He was filled with fear, just as we should be. How much more should we be filled with fear at the thought of Christ because Christ had glory that was far higher than any glory or Nebuchadnezzar, He had glory in heaven where the angels were constantly surrounding Him saying "Holy, Holy, Holy", and yet God sent Him lower to any beast in the field, He sent Him to a grave. But He raised Him up and He gave Him a kingdom. Just like with Nebuchadnezzar, this is a picture of Christ except Christ is far greater than Nebuchadnezzar. His glory was far greater, His being brought low was far lower, and yet still God raised Him up and gives Him a greater kingdom than Nebuchadnezzar could ever hope to dream about. How much more should that fill us with fear that God would do that to His Perfect Son. When we walk out of here, let's make sure that we fear that God because He did that to Christ so that we could be saved from our sin. Make sure we see the significance of what God did to Christ. **"So the king spoke, and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you."**

Nebuchadnezzar sees Daniel's response to the dream and he recognizes the response is because of Daniel's care for him. He doesn't feel threatened by Daniel, when you think of the kings of Israel they were always concerned about who would stab them in the back because a lot of people would. Nebuchadnezzar isn't worried about Daniel stabbing him in the back, he sees that Daniel truly has his interest in his heart. When you speak to authorities over you, is that how they respond to you? They trust that you actually care for them and that your honor is not to just be eye-pleasing like it talks about in 1 Peter. Or is it that they truly think that you are trying to do what's best for them? That's what it looks like to honor, it's not just to put on this show. Nebuchadnezzar recognizes Daniel truly honors him. **"Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!"** You see that honor in Daniel's response, it's clear that he understands that the dream is about Nebuchadnezzar, he knows that it's not about those who hate Nebuchadnezzar and still he's saying it may be about your enemies. Let's be serious, Nebuchadnezzar wasn't that nice of a guy, he gets crossed and says he is going to put Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to death. He is the one who tries to get the whole world to worship a false god, but still Daniel has real sympathy and real care for Nebuchadnezzar, for the person that God put over him. None of our leaders are nearly as bad as Nebuchadnezzar, do we have the same care that Daniel had for Nebuchadnezzar? And just like Paul when he writes in Romans 13, he's ruled by Nero at the time, Nero! Yet he still says, show care for those who rule over you. Is this how we treat our leaders? Again, we should be more diligent to pray for the leaders God has placed over us. And then Daniel repeats it too, he is using the same idea of repetition, he's making it very clear what was troubling him.

Verses 20-23 "The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home—it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth. "And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him." So Daniel starts by recounting the positive description of Nebuchadnezzar, how he is this tree that is a blessing to the world, he is this tree that everyone looks up to and is able to see how he has an influence on every single person. Then he says, "That's you O king." Not that it was hard to figure out, there was only one person alive that fit the description, maybe Daniel was the only one willing to consider that this was Nebuchadnezzar, but Daniel is even clear after saying, "May it not be true", Daniel knew that this was true, that it was Nebuchadnezzar. Next week we will consider Daniel's response to the interpretation, his response is that Nebuchadnezzar must repent, but he talks about how Nebuchadnezzar has grown strong, God raised him up, He gave him that authority and if he is taking credit for it, then he shouldn't be surprised God takes it from him. People throughout the world could see the effects of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, not that he had conquered the whole world, but that the whole world had been given into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. Whoever came into Nebuchadnezzar's land, he would conquer them. Again, God put him in that position. **"And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him."** Just like he repeated the good things about Nebuchadnezzar, he

went back over the tree, he went back over the influence, now he also repeats the judgement that's going to come on Nebuchadnezzar. Can you imagine Nebuchadnezzar being confronted by this? Again, he's the one who said the dream had significance. He probably even immediately accepted the correctness of the interpretation whether God blinded him to the correct interpretation or he just didn't want to believe it, but how would you like to hear that you're going to go eat grass in the field for seven years? Understand that's still not enough to bring Nebuchadnezzar to repentance, he knew what was true but that's not enough to break the slavery to sin, not even that. We're going to talk more next week, but Daniel says what he needs to do, he just needs to repent, but Nebuchadnezzar couldn't repent of his pride, Nebuchadnezzar couldn't turn because God wanted people to know, God wanted us to know that He rules in the kingdom of men. He does grant Nebuchadnezzar repentance later I believe, but even being told "unless you do these things, you will go insane", and even believing that he was going to go insane, he still said "look how great I am" and God poured out His wrath on him. We can only be saved if God saves us. The slavery of sin is stronger than the bands of steel, it's stronger than knowledge, you can't talk anybody into heaven. Nebuchadnezzar knew what Daniel was saying was true, but that wasn't enough to give him repentance, it requires the work of God in your heart. God truly rules in the kingdom of men.

Applications

1. What are you blind to? Taking Nebuchadnezzar at his word, none of the Chaldeans could see it, Nebuchadnezzar couldn't see it, and we do this to ourselves, we deceive ourselves because of our unrighteousness. It's obvious what the dream means, but yet they couldn't see it. Let's not think about them, what about us? What are we the same about? It's really easy for us to have eyes, but not see. For us to have ears but not hear. According to Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians couldn't see the meaning of the dream that he had no idea, even though it's really obvious. What's obvious in your life that you refuse to see because it's too hard to see? Let's learn that lesson too. It didn't help Nebuchadnezzar, he still went and ate grass like an ox because he couldn't see it, but as Christians who walk in the light, we are supposed to be willing to see. Are there things in your life that you're going blind to even though God has shown them to you? Open your eyes, there's no blessing to darkness, there's no blessing to closing your eyes and thinking you can escape. That's not how it works.
2. Would people go to you for truth? This is if they all knew and they were just afraid to say it, Nebuchadnezzar knew who would say it, is that true for you? Do people go to you for light? Where everybody is afraid to say things, would you still say it or would you just say what they want to hear? We have no idea what this means and there's only one person in the whole world that's like this, but it can't be you. Are we people like that that don't speak truth that we know and speak of things that we understand because it's hard? Because it can be offensive? Because if you are in Nebuchadnezzar's position you can kill someone for that, but Daniel still walked in righteousness, is that the model we follow?
3. Do we show honor to whom honor is due? Not just those who are easy to honor, but those who God has put in authority over us. Everybody who is in authority, a father or a mother, they have a duty and responsibility to make it easy for those who are under their authority to honor them. Their failure to do that, does not change your duty to them. The civil magistrate who abuses authority, it doesn't mean that you don't have to show them honor, you still have to show them

honor. All those who are in authority are supposed to be just, are supposed to be in that place in order to be a blessing to the people under their authority, but it doesn't matter whether they do that or not, it doesn't change the responsibility of the person under that authority, they have the responsibility to honor that authority. Do you honor that authority that God has placed over you? That's what Daniel does with Nebuchadnezzar, this pagan king who tried to lead the whole world into idolatry and Daniel still is truly troubled at the thought that God is going to judge him. Do we show the same honor?

4. Do you apply knowing that God rules in the kingdom of men in the same way that Paul applied it? Even though their intentions are to ward evil deeds, they want to do what's wicked, do you trust that God gave them authority to be a blessing and to constrain evil? It's really easy to look at the evil that's not constrained by our ruler and forget the evil that is constrained. It doesn't make the ruler a good person, it's easy to look at Hitler and see that he put people in concentration camps, some I have been to, they are places that are filled with evil, but there was still real constraint even from Hitler, the Fuhrer of Germany. That's true for Stalin and any of our presidents, even those who are wicked, that God still used them to constrain evil. If Paul can say that about Nero, about the Roman empire that Daniel described as crushing and breaking everything and shattering it all into pieces. If Paul can say that about the Roman empire, surely we should be able to say that about the ruler that God has put over us. Let's make sure that we say God granting authority to men is a good thing and honor the authority that God has placed over to us. As Paul said, they are a terror, not to good works but to evil works. We should desire to submit to those who God has put in authority over us unless we can honestly and truthfully say we must obey God rather than man.

Oh Lord God, we do thank You for this passage. We pray that You convict us where we fall short, that once again You challenge us with the example of Daniel, a righteous man in the midst of a pagan society. Lord, let us testify of You as Daniel did, let us testify that You are the One who rules in heaven like Daniel did. Let us be a people that show the greatness of Your name. Lord we pray that you teach us the lessons from this passage and let us be a people that are more thankful to You for everything that You do in this world. Let us be a people that are more trusting in You because all things in this world and from Your hand. Let us be a people that live like that, by showing honor to whom honor is due. Lord we thank You for this passage, may we learn it's lesson, that You rule in the kingdom of men. Amen.