

“I am the greatest!” Or Not.

Daniel 4



It was 1 evening in Late February 1964 @ the old Miami Convention Hall. There were 2 fighters in the boxing ring: The World Heavyweight Champion, Sonny Liston; & a 22-year old upstart fighter who was @ that time known as Cassius Clay (Mohammed Ali). In the 3rd round of that fight, Cassius Clay cut Sonny Liston under his right eye; & for 3 more rounds, Clay kept jabbing & jabbing & jabbing

@ Liston's eye. Also, Clay was leading on all the Judge's scorecards. This was NOT supposed to happen to Sonny Liston! After all, CC was a 7-1 underdog going into this fight & Sonny Liston was more than confident he would make short work of this relatively new fighter. As the bell rings for round 7, Liston does NOT arise from his chair. He just sits there, complaining of a separated shoulder. Then all the world watching in on this boxing match remembers CC'S reaction to his victory. CC/MA began to run around the ring @ shout these words to the television cameras: “I am the greatest! I am the greatest thing that ever lived! I'm the KING of the WORLD!!!”

We ALL know how athletes tend to exaggerate their importance. When athletes do what they tend to do, we smile a little bit at braggadocio driving them to do sometimes amazing feats. But when other powers, other forces, other circumstances scream out to us, “I'm the king of your world,” suddenly we smile no longer. God's people living in exile in Babylon certainly were not smiling; and neither are we! When someone or something claims, “I am the king over you,” we live with anxiety, fear, & dismay in our lives simply *because* someone or something else is claiming to be king over our lives / over our world.

What are the someones and somethings claiming to be king over our lives and over our world?

- **For some, it's the WORKPLACE.** Bosses make demands, subjecting us to an impossible workweek, week after week, sometimes w/ridiculous travel schedules taking us away from family, church, and any kind of “normalcy” in our schedules. The implication is, “If you refuse to do this, maybe someone else would be better fitted for this position.” Our WORKPLACES desire to rule over us. [I've seen people given a choice to move to another location to “climb the corporate ladder” or risk taking a lesser job where they are now. So they move away from everything familiar & stable, including church, and are miserable in their new location. All b/c their JOB would be their KING to rule over them!]

- **For others, it's our FAMILIES.** There's a fine line between serving your family and letting your family control your life. We've all been in homes where it was OBVIOUS who ruled the home, and it was NOT Mom & Dad! Every child we have has great potential to be a great tyrant. A lot of parents CAVE to the demands of their children and are ruled by those who SHOULD be under their authority. [Dennis Waitley story . . . "Ivan the Terrible" . . . "Oh, I would never do ANYTHING to upset the HEAD of the house!"]. Same thing can be said of a Wife who feels more like a underappreciated & overworked SLAVE than a wife; or a HUSBAND whose wife IS head of the house, wearing the pants & calling the shots. [KC ex, " . . . she was making demands of ME while just being lazy, and I got tired of it . . . "] Domestic disputes are 90% or more about WHO is in control!

- **For others, it's an ILLNESS.** A child (or an adult) is in the hospital, hooked up to tubes & wires & monitors. We hear the Doctor's diagnosis / prognosis. Our hearts sink. Fear / anxiety dominate our days & we begin to wonder is sickness & other ongoing physical issues are, in fact, the kings of our world.

- **For all of us, it's the DEVIL himself.** Our enemy stalks about accusing and opposing us – especially when we are striving by God's grace to "live out" our Christian convictions. What's more, the devil knows where your weaknesses are, the chinks in your armour; & his attacks against our weak points are relentless. As we are tempted, tried, and more often than not falling into the same sins, we begin to wonder if the devil is the true king of the world. ["the accuser of the brethren" . . . When was the last time you saw ANYTHING in the mainstream media portraying XNS acting in a XN way in a positive light?] Devil's winning the PR war, for sure!

- **For all of us, DEATH is the king of terrors.** From a purely observational point of view, what we see happening before us, what the Bible refers to as "the final enemy" is WINNING! All people eventually die. If the grave is the end, then death IS our final enemy. No matter what our age is. Death respects neither age nor position in life. The young & old, rich & poor, famous & obscure all die. [A hospital chaplain, "All the world's a hospital, and every person in it a terminal patient."

- **For all of us, it is US. WE want to be in CONTROL of our lives.** WE live under the illusion that I AM [in the words of William Ernest Henley, " . . . the Master of my fate, I AM the Captain of my soul . . . "] But as we learned last week, IDOLS rule us, and @ various degrees in ALL our lives, we serve the idols of Power, Control, Comfort, and Approval. Or if

you prefer, the idols of SELF – SEX – SHECKLES. Idolatry is alive and well as we are prone to take a GOOD thing & make it a GOD thing so that good thing becomes a BAD thing.

Are all those powers, forces, and circumstances king or is there Another outside of us Who is The True King Of The World? What is God's purpose for this *true* story, for King Nebuchadnezzar and for us? (4:1-3) TRUE STORY . . . So what about a King who eats grass, Vs 33? Come on . . . sounds like a fairy tale! Well, we know LSU Coach Miles eats grass, but anyway, there IS a very rare but observed medical condition resulting in deviant behavior, namely eating grass, called **bo-AN-thro-py**. It's where one imagines himself to be a cow or a bull and acts accordingly. This may not prove the Bible is TRUE, but it SHOULD keep critics of the Bible from impulsively saying the Bible is STUPID!

God's PURPOSE here is to show us WHO is in CONTROL of ALL our lives. And it's NOT us!

What must the living do (Vs 17; 30-33)? **** We need to KNOW and CONFESS that GOD ALONE, and nobody else, rules the lives of ALL PEOPLE. **** Know not just intellectually but with our hearts; we must INTERNALIZE this Truth in our lives. And EG is **4:17 ¹⁷ *The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end (for this purpose; here is God's "end game" in the craziness of King Nebby) that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and He gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'***

What Kind of sovereignty does God exercise? (from this Verse 17)

God's sovereignty is . . . 5 arrows, 5 characteristics of God's sovereignty here in Vs 17 and amplified all dia the Bible.

- **A PRESENT sovereignty.** We all realize and hope that God will rule over all things in the future; but the fact is, God rules over ALL things NOW. [RCS, "If there's even one maverick molecule in the universe, then God is NOT sovereign!"] In nature, in the circumstances of life, God is totally in control, directing all things according to His plan. [Slip Sliding Away, "God only knows . . . God makes His plans . . . the information's unavailable to the mortal man . . . "] In spite of how things appear, there is One who is ALWAYS in control, and HE is GOD. & there's never been 1 split second in YOUR life when God was not completely and totally sovereign. And There never WILL be one, either!
- **A CONCRETE sovereignty.** God's rule is DOWN HERE as well as UP THERE! Abraham Kuyper, "There is not one square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, Who is sovereign over all, does not cry, 'Mine . . . this is Mine!'" God even

rules over smelly, scheming, selfish, sinful KINGS. There's nothing more down in the dirt than that. God is not only sovereign in THEORY but in PRACTICE among the people on this earth. We are NOT the captains of our ships or the masters of our fates. GOD is.

- **A PARTICULAR and FREE sovereignty.** Kingdoms AND Kings are controlled by God. God APPOINTS Rulers. And wherever God wishes to, He appoints rulers. Obama is here by God's appointment. So is Putin. So was Napoleon. So was Hitler. All rulers are where they are B/C God put them there. And for HIS purposes. That doesn't negate OUR responsibility! We work and promote our candidates; and we should instead of ringing our hands and shaking our heads @ what we see going on around us politically. But ultimately, for His own reasons (maybe judging a country?), the next POTUS will be by God's appointment.
- **A FACINATING sovereignty.** Often times, people in low status rise up to be leaders. Humble beginnings is often God's way of showing how HE is in control. [parable of the mustard seed . . . How CHRIST came on the scene w/a borrowed animal feeder and a borrowed tomb bookending Christ's earthly existence, yet now Jesus is King of Kings & Lord of Lords. It's FASCINATING in the Bible to see how God sovereignly raises up leaders out of people living in low estates. & that story of God's sovereignty continues.
- **And EXCLUSIVE sovereignty.** THIS God gives and takes away kingdoms. Not other God's, but THIS God. This is a "dig" at the "gods" of other kingdoms. Nebby may have given the Babylonian god Marduk a little "I praise Allah for helping me win this football game," but when God wants to take down a king and raise Him up (He did both with Nebby), God does what HE wants, and no other pretender god can do anything about it! Do all the chants and spells and some and mirrors you want to, but THIS God is UNABLE to be manipulated and THIS God gives and takes @ HIS discretion!

3 Implications . . . what this means for US!

- **A PERSONAL implication.** We are NOT sovereign, but we ARE responsible to live our lives in light of the fact that God IS sovereign. Man proposes, God DISPOSES. No person, including yourself, is in control of your life. GOD is. [The funeral of King Louis 14th, the King had requested that for the service, all the cathedral Notre Dame would be dark EXCEPT for 1 solitary candle in the front of the assembly hall burning over the casket of King Louis 14th & giving light. When the Court preacher, a man by the name of Mah-SIL-lon, finished his funeral oration, the preacher walked over to the casket, snuffed out the candle, and said, "Only GOD is great!"] & friends, THAT is what we need to keep telling ourselves, many times a day, every day of our lives. WHY? B/C in the final analysis, WE

are ALL a bunch of Nebuchadnezzar clones, wanting to call our own shots, write our own life stories, then direct our stories. How seldom we experience a moment of Gospel-generated sanity in which we see clearly what a bunch of self-deifying people we really are, when it comes right down to it. We are NOT in control of us. Neither is anyone else. GOD is. The crushing circumstances of our lives should HUMBLE us, and it's at the place where we are HUMBLed – THAT'S where we meet God! In our PRIDE, we are OPPOSED to God; in our HUMILITY, God comes to us & meets w/us!

- **A POLITICAL implication.** If *Verse 17* is TRUE – and it is -- we MUST NOT BE overly impressed by human governments. Nor should we be awed by human rulers. Every human ruler, democratic or dictator and all over the political spectrum, is a mere person whose TENURE is determined by GOD ALONE, and ultimately for God's glory. Politics never has been nor will it ever be our Savior. Salvation is from the LORD, not from the White House, the Kremlin, or the Imperial Palace.

- **A CHRISTOLOGICAL implication.** The King of Kings & Lord of Lords, the One to whom God has given the Kingdoms of this world, Jesus is the one who 1st voluntarily HUMBLed Himself and became Obedient to God – even to the point of death. The incarnation of Jesus Christ proves that God intervenes and rescues His people from all who would even attempt to rule them. In His life and death, Jesus was humbled for our sake and now Jesus is EXALTED, for HIS PEOPLE = YOU. Jesus RULES. And 1 day, every knee will bow and ever tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father. Ultimately, JESUS is the ONLY ONE who can say “I Am The Greatest! I Am The King of the World!” And if you have Faith in Jesus, you agree! Jesus IS the greatest! Jesus IS the King of the world! And best of all, Jesus is MY King! Right? And all God's people said . . . AMEN!