

Daniel 05-10-30a

As we continue our worship this morning, this is October 30, 2005. We're in the book of Daniel. Let's take a moment as we approach our study together in the word to ensure that the Holy Spirit is going to be able to teach us from the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God.

Shall we pray? Father, it is a privilege for us to open your Word and have it open to us by the ministry of your Spirit. We thank you for the truth that is contained therein. We know that it is alive and powerful, that it alone, of all forces in heaven and earth, is capable of transforming our souls, our hearts, our minds.

We thank you that because of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have been entered into a relationship with you and our transformation is possible. Our transfer from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light has been accomplished and we are now being molded and transformed into that for which you originally created us, your own image, the reflection of your glory. We thank you for the place in time and in history that we occupy, the consummation of the age is near, the return of the Lord Jesus for us is near, and we know that the time that is left to us is precious, and we thank you that you have given us the means to redeem it.

Although the days are evil, yet we find ourselves blessed, we find ourselves comforted and strengthened by that which you have supplied to us. We pray for those who are in authority over us. We pray for the branches of our government and those who serve in them, whose hearts are devoted to you.

We pray that you will comfort and strengthen and encourage them and give them the power to stay the course that they have set in the light of your word. We pray for their advisors, their staff, all those who work unseen and unknown in many ways to be pleasing in your sight as they perform those essential functions. We ask your blessing on us now as we fellowship together in your word.

May God the Holy Spirit find us teachable and impressionable, and may the things that we find from your word be a source of strength, guidance, and direction in the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Our scripture reading this morning comes from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 56. As we read this portion of God's word together, I think it will be clear how it impinges on our study of the first couple of chapters of the book of Daniel.

By way of introduction, I would like to point out that the law of Moses in Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 21, you don't need to turn there, I'm going to read it to you, but in the book of Leviticus chapter 21, you have the qualifications for worship. The Lord spoke to Moses, this is Leviticus 21.16 and following, speak to Aaron saying, or eczema, or scab, or is a eunuch. He has a defect.

He shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy, only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane my sanctuaries, for I the Lord sanctify them. Seems fairly clear.

Let's take a look now at our scripture reading in Isaiah chapter 56. Thus says the Lord, keep justice and do righteousness, for my salvation is about to come. And my righteousness to be revealed.

Blessed is the man who does this and the son of man who lays hold on it, who keeps from defiling the Sabbath and keeps his hand from doing any evil. That's what we just talked about, isn't it? In the category of priests, these with any sort of physical defect are forbidden from approaching. Many different categories, aren't there? And these are things that the man cannot help.

Right? These are things the man cannot help. You can't help being born a hunchback. You can't help being born a dwarf.

You can't help being born club-footed. These are unavoidable. Yet they disqualify a priest from coming near.

He is not cast out. He is not gone from among the people, but he is disqualified from offering the bread of his God. Why? God says, I have hallowed and sanctified that which is within the veil.

And these who are defective, and the Bible says those are defects. The Bible says if you've got these congenital problems, you are defective, and you cannot serve as a priest. It's pretty harsh.

Man says, hey, it wasn't my fault. I was born this way. God says there is a symbolic value in the wholeness and the completeness and the freedom from defect of these priests.

It's pretty severe and it's pretty harsh, and it's a well-known thing in Israel. And you will find if you study the Scriptures that we've talked about how Eunuchs served in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. Got a whole staff.

Got a whole complement of Eunuchs. Ashpenaz is the head of the Eunuchs. He runs the whole organization.

We know that other governments employed Eunuchs. Ethiopia. Queen Candace has this great and powerful Eunuch who is her treasurer, who comes up to Jerusalem to worship.

How close is he going to be able to get? Remember the four courts of the temple that we studied Friday night? Outermost court. Court of the Gentiles. Then you have the court of the women.

Then you have the court of the men. Then you have the court of the priests. How close is the

Ethiopian Eunuch going to be able to get? Court of the Gentiles.

Women in Israel can get closer to God than he can. But he makes the trip all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem just so he can stand as near as he can get to worship and to pick up a copy of this very book, the book of Isaiah, which he's going to read. It's a bible.

It's a bible he's going to read in his chariot on the way back home. Philip's going to stop him and give him some words that goes beyond what's written in the scroll. Well, here we find ourselves in that great book of Isaiah, chapter 56.

With this as background, thus says the Lord, keep justice and do righteousness for my salvation is about to come. Blessed is the man who does this and the son of man who lays hold on it, who keeps from defiling the Sabbath and keeps his hand from doing any evil. Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak saying, the Lord has utterly separated me from his people.

Nor let the eunuchs say, here I am a dry tree. For thus says the Lord, to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths and choose what pleases me and hold fast my covenant, even to them I will give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath and holds fast my covenant, even them I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. Does that ring a bell at all? The Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel says, yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him.

What a great prophetic passage. Well, this brings us back now to our study in the book of Daniel. I think if you muse on the substance of that first half of Isaiah chapter 56, it becomes relatively clear what's going on here in Daniel chapter 2 and into chapter 3 where we go this morning.

Last time we looked at the vision of Nebuchadnezzar as it outlines the future in human history. How many kingdoms are pictured in this vision? Be careful before you answer. This is what I've been trying to teach my girls when they take tests at school.

Pay attention to the question and think carefully before you answer. How many kingdoms are pictured in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar? Time's up. The head of gold, Babylon.

Shoulders and arms of silver, Medo-Persia. Belly and thighs of brass, Greece. Legs of iron, Rome.

Feet of iron mixed with clay, revived Roman Empire. And the great stone which crushes them all

and swells to become a mountain. Six.

Pictured in the vision. You've got to pay attention to the question. Six kingdoms.

Now, how many kingdoms are there in the earth, major kingdoms, before that great stone comes and crushes all others, supplants and replaces them? Well, we are in a point in time here at the vision of Nebuchadnezzar. And God does not revisit ancient history. The first great world empire was Egypt.

Egypt dominated the known world in its day. What was the second great empire? The one that snuffed out the northern kingdom of Israel. Assyria.

The Assyrian Empire. Then you have Babylon. Then you have Medo-Persia.

Then you have Greece. Then you have Rome. Six kingdoms in the first 6,000 years of history.

And a revival of that Roman Empire. The iron mixed with clay. They are kings who have a hegemony and a power like unto the Roman Empire, but the glue that holds them together is brittle.

The clay that unites them into shape is not strong. And when you throw a rock at clay and any of these other materials, the clay is the weakest of all of them. And we know that the revived Roman Empire, I think someone asked me last week, is that a biblical term or anything? It is a coined term.

It is based on an analysis of these legs and these feet and the things that the prophetic books have to say about the confederation that the Antichrist is going to create to impose a false peace on the earth. There will be a time of peace. People will be saying peace and safety.

They will be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage as it was in the days before the flood. And then Jesus said in Matthew 24, destruction is going to come on them. There will be signs and there will be all kinds of things such as we are studying in the book of Revelation.

Well, that stone made without hands comes and crushes. It lands on the feet. That is the point of impact.

But it crushes to powder all of the previous kingdoms. How can you crush a historic kingdom that is no longer in existence? How can you crush the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar or the kingdom of Darius the Mede or Cyrus the Persian or Alexander the Great in Greece or the Roman Caesars? When that stone strikes at the end of human history as we know it, it is going to supersede and supplant and take the place of every other kind of power that has ever existed. And if you add them up, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the revived Roman Empire, the Achilles heel, if you will, of the whole human system of government, Jesus strikes the heel of the statue and the whole thing comes tumbling down.

And in the vision, something that we've only seen happen one other time, which is gold turning

to powder. When's the last time you saw gold turn to powder? Exodus. Golden calf.

And scholars have debated, well now, what kind of alchemy is this? How could Moses take the golden calf and grind it to powder and mix it with the drinking water and make all of Israel to drink it? How do you get gold to create a solution? Well, the Bible says it happened. It happened. We can ask Moses one of these days, Moshe, how did you do that? And he can let us know.

He was certainly trained in the latest technology that was available in that first great empire of Egypt, and if anybody could do it, he could. And he did. Anyway, these are all going to be crushed and the dust of them is going to blow away.

It says in verse 44, the kingdom will not be left to other people, it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms. Break in pieces and consume. And that dust is just going to blow away like chaff.

It says in verse 35, the iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold were crushed together and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors. The wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. This is the idea.

The kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in the millennium is going to be so great and so good that it is going to virtually obliterate even the memory of any previous world empire. Well, once King Nebuchadnezzar hears that the dream is certain and its interpretation is sure, he falls on his face, prostrate before Daniel, commands that they should present an offering and incense to him. This, of course, is a gift.

Nevertheless, Nebuchadnezzar is not worshipping him. Nebuchadnezzar considers himself divine. And he's not going to bow down and worship Daniel.

But he's bowing down in acknowledgement of the greatness of this accomplishment. That Daniel has done what he said he would do. He said he would consult with his God and that his God would reveal both the dream and its interpretation.

That's exactly what has taken place. And Nebuchadnezzar says, I bow to the correctness of your statements. I bow to the power of your God.

And Daniel is the representative of that God. So Nebuchadnezzar bows and gives him gifts. The king answered and said, Truly, and Daniel has achieved his goal.

Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that this is the God of Daniel that has done it. Your God is the God of gods. The Lord of kings, reveal our secrets, since you could reveal the secret.

The king promoted Daniel, gave him many great gifts, made him the ruler. Now we are in chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold whose height was 60 cubits and its width 6 cubits. How long is a cubit? Foot and a half.

18 inches. So how many feet tall is this image? 90 feet. What is the height of a single story in a building? Roughly 12 feet.

If you've got floors, you have maybe 2 feet, 3 feet between each floor. If you've got concrete slab or whatever. Essentially you could say this is like about an 8 story building.

7, 8 story building. I mean the thing is no small accomplishment. Is it made of solid gold? Negative.

A 9 foot wide, 90 foot tall solid lump of gold would be immovable. They would still be chipping pieces off of it trying to carry it away today. You saw the statue of Saddam Hussein that they dragged down when they invaded Baghdad.

The thing was hollow. It was a hollow casting. This is probably constructed of wood overlaid with gold.

It was a common fabrication technique. That's the technique of the table and the ark within the tabernacle in Moses Day. Some 800 years before this.

This is how you do it. You can't cope with a solid lump of gold no matter how rich you are. You may suspect that perhaps not all of this is the figure itself because it needs a base.

It needs a platform to stand on to elevate it so that as you approach you can see all of it. You want to see the feet and the legs. It can't just stand on the ground on its little feet.

A little puff of wind comes along and you have to start all over. It has no doubt some sort of platform. You would figure maybe out of a 90 foot high statue you can deduce the height of the figure perhaps by looking at the width.

Of course this could be the width of the base as well. The thing could have its arms outstretched or one arm raised. We don't know what the shape of it was.

The thing is huge. It's colossal. It's imposing.

It's outside the city but you can see it kind of like the arch in St. Louis. You can see it from a great distance. You can't miss it.

Why is it so big and so high and why is it overlaid with gold? The gold part we can figure out. Nebuchadnezzar says, hey, I'm the head of gold. He can easily extrapolate and say as long as I'm the king anything representing me is going to be made of gold.

There may be an implication there that he doesn't want to be superseded. He doesn't want anybody of any lesser kingdom to supplant and follow after him. But the other thing is with this being so tall, if you're going to produce an edict like he does here, King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces.

This is every different kind of government official that you can have. Bring them all together. They have a massive government meeting.

It's a conference. Everybody gets together and Nebuchadnezzar says, look, there can't be any excuse. If this was military, this would be the division commanders, the regimental commanders, the battalion commanders, the company commanders, the platoon commanders, the squad leaders.

Everybody in a leadership position in the kingdom of Babylon is face to face with the king and the king says, look, I'm going to tell you something. You will come to the dedication of this image that I have set up. So in verse 3, the satraps, administrators, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image the king Nebuchadnezzar had set up and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then a herald cried aloud. Now, by the way, does it already seem like the verbiage in this book has become sort of repetitive? It seems like it just belabors things. I want you to remember, this section is Aramaic.

And it's going to be Aramaic all the way through chapter 6 and the first few verses of chapter 7. We're in Aramaic. What is Aramaic? This is the language of government and administration in the ancient world. It's the common language, the different kingdoms.

So this is like a government publication. Did you ever read the instructions on your tax return? You want to talk about something that belabors the point and is just painfully explicit. That's Aramaic.

That's how Aramaic is. It's by nature administrative and conflated language. So, we get another list of these eight different kinds of government officials who stand before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

We've already been told he set it up three times. Now, verse 4. A herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages. We've seen this sort of categorization with the mighty angel who comes down in Revelation and stands with one foot on the land and one foot on the sea.

Peoples, nations, and languages. That at the time you hear the sound of, and now we get another list. They can't just blow a shofar, can they? When you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the harp, the lyre, and the psaltery in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down.

This is the opposite of some games that children play. You hear the music and fall down. Worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a

burning, fiery furnace. So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshipped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Why do we have all of this repetition? All of this manifold description? Why? It's comprehensive, isn't it? Everything, every kind of music, every kind of symphony, every kind of inference, every kind of people, every kind of government official has got to do one thing.

Think about this. The head of gold is trying to do the same thing that the feet of clay tries to do. From first to last, from head to foot, this system of government tries to do the same thing.

We're going to unite. We're going to bring together. We're going to have a comprehensive plan.

Everybody is going to be singing out of the same hymnal, reading out of the same sheet music here. Everybody, no exceptions. If you are an exception, bad things are going to happen to you.

What's going to happen in the tribulation period, during the time of the kingdom of the feet? What if you don't take the mark? Make the furnace seven times hotter, because if you don't conform, you will be destroyed. That's the message from government. The head is doing it here, and it reflects what the feet are going to do.

It's the same image from head to foot. That's why the whole thing gets crushed by the stone made without hands. And this is emphasized.

It's belabored. It is just clobbering us over the head. In my Bible, it's one entire column to tell me that Nebuchadnezzar set up an image and told everybody to worship it.

It's taken seven long, repetitive verses to tell us that. Why? Anytime the Bible belabors a point, anytime it repeats, you've got to slow down and say, what is this telling me? Why is God spending precious, inspired words to give me these seemingly idle historical facts? Well, they are not idle. You and I live in a time that is not directly spoken of by this image, but the principle is the same.

There is pressure from government. There is pressure from society. There is pressure from civilized thinking, quote, unquote, to conform.

If you are a non-conformist, you are considered a danger. You cannot believe the hate speech, the bigotry, the anger, the vituperation that is directed against Christianity in the world today. The newest ugly head that has reared itself and is chewing with lion's teeth on Christianity is Islam.

We are the great Satan in the United States. Why? Because we are the last bastion of Christianity. We are the missionary nation.

We are the Bible-publishing nation. We are the ubiquitous purveyors of the gospel. There are other nations where revivals are taking place.

There are a lot of wonderful things happening in the Orient, in Korea, and things like that. But when you think of Christianity in the world today, what do you think of? The U.S. of A. And sadly, it looks that way more from the outside than it does from within because our Christianity is tainted and corrupted and contaminated and barely resembles the real thing anymore. But all of this repetition is designed to reinforce and to remind us that if you follow God, if you pursue your relationship with Christ, in this world ye shall have tribulation.

Just get used to it. You are not going to be comfortable. You are not going to blend in.

You are not going to find yourself surrounded by a chorus of unanimous like minds. You are going to stick out. You are going to be odd.

You are going to be strange. You are going to be suspected of being something or doing something. People are going to look askance.

The kingdoms of this world, the powers of this age, try to get everybody under the same big umbrella. It's all one big tent. And we don't fit.

If we are doing what we are supposed to, we should not fit. We should not find ourselves walking down the broad road through the wide gate. It doesn't say it in Scripture, but in my mind, whenever I think about that passage, Jesus said, wide is the way and broad is the gate that leads to destruction.

I see that road going through this great big gateway and then there is a cliff there. And you walk and then you are down and at the bottom is like the open top of a volcano. You walk through the wide gate and you take a couple of steps and you just drop out of sight.

And nobody is paying attention to what is happening to the people ahead of them. They are just walking and talking and hail fellow well met. Let's buddy have a drink.

We just all walk down the road and at the end they are just dropping off like lemmings into the sea of fire. And nobody is paying any attention. And just great hordes of people walk along.

Well, here you have the hordes. Everybody is listening to the lyre and the psaltery and the harp and the horn and the flute and the sack butt and whatever else they are playing. And it's all so that everybody will fall down at once.

It's a shame that they took that out of the New King James. That was a great old King James. I don't know what it is.

I assume it's some kind of cross between a mandolin and a bagpipe or something. I just don't know. It just has a great name.

So, verse 8. Therefore, at that time, when everybody of all peoples, languages, nations, etc. hears every kind of instrument, everybody kind of falls down. They all worship the beast.

Not the beast, the statue. Freudian slip there. Therefore, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews.

Certain Chaldeans. Are these the ethnic national Chaldeans? No, these are the wise men Chaldeans. Imagine the professional jealousy in the ranks of the Chaldeans when the upstart teenage rookies get promoted over their heads to be in charge of the province of Babylon.

And the roukiest rookie of them all is over everything. He's up in the palace. And guys that have been pining and whining and maneuvering and kissing everything in sight trying to get up to that point haven't made it.

And here are these guys that haven't even graduated yet get promoted over them. So naturally, they're watching and they're looking and they're trying to find some kind of way to get these guys out of the picture. And now they think they've found it.

So verse 9, they speak. And by the way, you and I can be the objects of this kind of attention. Deservedly or undeservedly, someone will look at you and say, you've got something that I deserve.

You bother me for some reason. And launch a wicked, scurrilous, underhanded attack. It just will happen.

And you don't necessarily have any recourse. You did what you were supposed to do. And you have this opposition.

It just forms. It just happens. And that's what happened to these guys.

They didn't ask to be dragged. You know, it's kind of strange if you think about it. You drag a guy out of his own country, away from his own temple, plant him in a foreign land, tell him, worship this statue.

And when he doesn't do it, surprise, surprise, now you've got to kill him for it. Well, quit dragging him away from his own temple, his own land. You won't be offended by seeing somebody that doesn't want to fall down in front of your own statue.

I mean, you know, this is sort of a self-created problem. You, O King, they say, Nebuchadnezzar, live forever. You have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the harp, the sound of the flute, the sound of the lyre, the sound of the horn, the sound of the psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image.

How many times do we have to get this inventory of the orchestra? Whoever does not fall down in worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Just in case you've forgotten, Nebuchadnezzar, let me just remind you, we'll just read you the decree. Verse 12, there are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon.

This is the sticking point, this is the motivation. You, O King, put these miscreants up in the

head of the government, in case you've forgotten their names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O King, have not paid due regard to you.

They do not serve your gods. They do not worship the gold image which you have set up. Well, Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, you get the idea that Nebuchadnezzar has a little bit of an emotional control problem because this is not the first time he's flown into a fury because somebody wasn't doing what he thought they ought to.

You have to keep yourself under some measure of control, especially if you're going to be in a leadership position. Rage and fury. Of course, these guys, these Chaldeans, they're Chaldeans, they're wise.

They know how to push Nebuchadnezzar's buttons. They know how to yank his chain. They know where his goat is tied.

How many different figures of speech do you need? They know how to get him riled. They know how to make him angry. They know what upsets his apple cart.

And they just put all of it into this little speech. O king, you goofed putting these guys in charge of Babylon because they don't worship your gods and they're not falling down in front of your image. You screwed up.

O king, live forever. So, Nebuchadnezzar is in a rage and in a fury for a lot of reasons. So, what does he do? Gives the command.

Bring them. He brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now, if you are ready, at the time you hear, oh my goodness, the sound of the horn, the flute, the harp, the lyre, the psaltery, and symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall and worship the image which I have made, then you have the word in your Bible there.

Good? Scratch it out. It's not there. It doesn't say good.

It doesn't say the Aramaic equivalent of Tov. You know why? Nebuchadnezzar is just purple. He doesn't finish his sentence.

Because he's already got a deep suspicion that they're not going to fulfill the first half of his little statement. So, he says, Now, if you are ready, at the time you hear the music, to fall down and worship the image, but if you do not worship, and he just interrupts himself, because he's angry, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, and who is the God who will deliver you from my hands? Who is the God who will deliver you from my hands? Now, I want you to think for a moment about these men, about where they came from, and about what their parents named them. Hananiah.

Remember what his name means? Hanan, grace. Hanani, my grace. Yahweh, my grace is from the Lord.

Or, if the E portion there is not a possessive, it's just, the Lord is gracious. Hananiah. Hanani-yah.

Hanani-yah. It's the grace of God that is in view in that name. Azariah.

My help. Etzer. Here I raise my Ebenezer.

Ebenezer, stone of help. The Lord is my help. The Lord is gracious.

The Lord is my help. And what about the middle guy? What's his name? What's Meshach's given name? Mishaël. Me is who? In Hebrew, it's so great.

He is she. Me is who? Me is who? Sha is from Asher, which means which or whom, and El is God, short for Elohim. Who... It's not who is like God, that would be Mishaël.

This is Mishaël. And it means, who is there that is God? Who is the one... It basically says, who else is God? If you want to put it in the vernacular. Who else is God? Who else is God but God? Mishaël.

Who is there which is God? Who else is God? So, when Nebuchadnezzar asks this question and says, who is the God who can deliver you out of my hand? All three of their names answer his question. There is a God of grace. There is a God of help.

And there is no other God like Him. There is no other God that is Him. Who else? You know, just say the men's names and you got the answer to your question.

Who is the God that can deliver you out of my hand? Who else? The God of grace. The God of help. Who else? Who else is God? He has already had a demonstration.

He ought to know better. But, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered. And isn't it interesting that in the previous chapter they were referred to by their Hebrew names even after these Chaldean names were given to them.

Even after their Babylonian names. Daniel went back to Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah and said, let's pray about this vision thing. But in this chapter, they are referred to by their Babylonian names.

Why? It's an irony, isn't it? Because Shadrach, which may also be a form of Merodach is a reference to Babylonian deities. Meshach is a reference to the Shining One. And Abednego, servant of Nebo, it's all these false Babylonian gods.

And so the Babylonians have tried to make them servants of these false gods. Each of their names reflects worship in some form of the Babylonian pantheon. And that's not who they are.

And so they answered the king and said, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. Just say our names. Say our real names.

And you'll have the answer. You're trying to make us something we're not. Then you see in verse 17 it says, *If that is the case, scratch out is the case, it's in italics, it's not supposed to be there.*

If that our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, even he will deliver us from your hand. It's not and, it's even. There's a lot of different uses of the conjunctive particle in both Hebrew and Aramaic, the waw.

And what they say here is, *If that our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, even he will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up. We may, it may be that God delivers us, and he will.*

But if not, we're still not going to serve your image. So, no matter what you do here, if God delivers us, we're not going to serve your image. If God does not deliver us and you have to incinerate us, well, we're still not bound down to the image because now we're ashes.

And so, there is no means by which you can get us to comply. God will either deliver us and we're not going to serve your image, or he won't, you'll incinerate us, and we still haven't served your image. There's nothing you can do to make us bow down to the image.

God delivers us, we still don't serve. We burn up, we still don't serve. You, O king Nebuchadnezzar, great mighty, subject of the image of gold, you all-powerful ruler, don't have the power to make us worship.

You can't do it. That's essentially what they're saying. We have no need to answer you in this matter.

So, naturally, in verse 19, Nebuchadnezzar, if you thought he was mad before, he's just about to burst blood vessels in his head, full of fury. The expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

This, of course, is just superfluous. How much fire do you have to have to kill somebody? If it's a furnace that you get thrown into, the heat of it is irrelevant. But it's a reflection that his anger has gotten seven times hotter.

And he wants to make a point that if you think you've got some kind of trick up your sleeve, if you've got some sort of Chaldean magic you learned in the university, I saw this magician guy, he's the latest line of these magicians, coat himself in some kind of stuff and then run around on fire for a couple of minutes. So maybe Nebuchadnezzar thinks he might have something like that. He says, well, we'll make the furnace hot enough that you can't do it.

Well, we have to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see exactly what is going on in the original language here when this punishment is dealt out.