

Daniel 05-11-06b

Let's continue our study now in Daniel chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar's second dream. Nebuchadnezzar is telling this story. I didn't point this out earlier, but you may have noticed we've had a shift in the narrator.

You know, this is one of the things you study in literature. Who is the narrator and what is his point of view? Is the story told from an omniscient point of view, where you move from situation to situation? A lot of the modern storytelling on television shows is from the omniscient. You know, the shows that like to weave several storylines together, West Wing, NYPD Blue, you know, where you've got several different little dramas all woven together.

Well, you're just like God, and you pop from situation to situation. You follow one character a while, and then they have an argument and go their separate ways. And then you see participant A over here fuming and talking to his friends.

And then you go to participant B, and she's off fuming, talking to her friends. And you're everywhere, and you know everything. And you empathize with the characters, and you yell at them at the TV.

And don't you know he's doing you wrong? And what are you thinking? Because you know everything. And many stories are told from this point of view. Well, point of view is an important element in studying the scripture because there's a reason for it.

Sometimes things are told from God's perspective. Other times they are told from the perspective of an individual or a group of individuals in the story. We have just had a shift of narrator in chapter 4, haven't we? Nebuchadnezzar the king is telling this story to all people's nations and languages that dwell on the earth.

Now, you know how this goes. He has the dream, Daniel interprets it, and Nebuchadnezzar says, well, okay. And about a year later, it comes true.

And then for seven years, Nebuchadnezzar is out there being insane. And then he comes to his senses afterward and acknowledges God. When do you think chapter 4 was written by Nebuchadnezzar? Do you think he set this down and proclaimed it to all peoples before he went nuts? No.

And this accounts, the fact that it is written after his restoration, he goes back and thinks about the significance of the dream and the significance of the interpretation. And this is why you have these elements where Nebuchadnezzar says, I thought it good to declare the signs and the wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. Has worked.

So he is going back and recounting. This is Nebuchadnezzar's personal testimony. If somebody was having a revival down at the Baptist church, they would say, Neb, we want you to come

down and tell us the story of your conversion.

And he would come down and say, well, let me tell you. This is how it happened. And that is what we have here in chapter 4. This is Nebuchadnezzar's personal testimony.

He could be so popular at camps and revivals and televangelist conferences and things. He would just be number one on the bill. Let's get King Nebuchadnezzar.

He is the head of gold. He doesn't get any better than this. He is the head of gold.

Massive Damascus Road experience, so to speak. Conversion to the God of Israel. What a story.

Well, it is here. And it has been in the Bible for how many hundreds of years. And that just tells you the power of personal testimony.

It is not that hot. It doesn't really convert anyone. What converts is the testimony and the witness of God's Holy Spirit in the heart and soul of individual believers.

People say, well, I wish I had a great testimony that I could tell people and just wow them with how bad I used to be and how great I am now and it is all due to the power of God. You don't need a great personal testimony. You can have a real humdrum testimony like mine.

Nobody ever asks me to give my testimony because I was saved at the age of three and I didn't have a great life of evil that I was rescued from. I hadn't perpetrated all kinds of bad crimes. The worst I had done was be mean to my brother Matt by not rocking his cradle enough or something.

I mean, he was still in diapers when I got saved and couldn't talk yet or eat anything other than Gerbers. I could go on on this subject for some time, but I won't. But I'm just telling you here that the only time a personal testimony has meaning is when God takes it and God uses it for His own glory.

We don't need to be running around trying to impress people with our personal testimony. If God's going to use it, He'll use it. And if not, He won't.

But the whole concept of celebrity confessions, oh, let me tell you what a bad person I used to be and let me tell you the depths of my depravity, that is just arrogance. Nobody wants to know how bad you used to be. Old things are passed away.

All things have become new. Forgetting those things which are behind. Now, how can you go around giving your testimony and forget those things which are behind? You're dwelling in the past.

You're making an issue out of old sins that God has separated as far as the East is from the West and it has no power to convert. Don't think that your story has any power to convert anybody. It's meaningful to us.

And some of us have very incredible stories of the grace and the power of God to confront and to change and convert. Some of you have those stories. And I take nothing away from that.

I'm just telling you it is not an evangelistic tool. It reflects the glory of God in a lot of other ways, but you don't go find some unbeliever and say, hey, let me tell you what a nasty person I used to be and what a fine, upstanding Christian I am now because it's all due to the grace and glory of God. Nebuchadnezzar used to be the greatest man on the planet in terms of power.

He's the top dog. He's the emperor of the world at this point. And he is giving his personal testimony.

Now, let's think about the great wave of evangelism that hit Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar published this testimony. Let's think about all the chapters in the Bible that are devoted to those great Babylonian believers of the 5th century B.C., 6th century B.C. We don't hear of any great wave of conversion, do we? There wasn't like a Ninevite experience everybody went about and sat off in ashes. Well, if Nebuchadnezzar thinks he's the most high God... I mean, Nebuchadnezzar's been running around insensate, incognito.

They kept him in the garden of the palace for seven years because he was a raving loony bin. And so now he comes back and says, well, I believe in the most high God. How much weight is this going to carry in the Babylonian world? Oh, yes, my Lord.

Yes, my liege. Thumbs up on the God of Israel. Absolutely.

Let me see your fingernails. This personal testimony, even though it was proclaimed to the civilized world of the day, did not result in a wave of evangelism. So I say all that to remind us that the focus on trying to impact people in this life, in the Christian world, in this great focus and push and your purpose-driven life, your purpose is to go impact people like an infected wisdom tooth, is wrong.

The Bible doesn't teach it. The Bible doesn't teach it. And you don't find examples of where someone's, you know, the power of personal testimony does anything.

It didn't do it here. But it does get incorporated into the inspired word of God. Isn't it interesting that the story is told by Nebuchadnezzar? We say, well, the inspired authors of Scripture, well, hey, chapter four is inspired Scripture and guess who wrote it? Nebuchadnezzar, a Babylonian, wrote this chapter.

So, to the peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth. Would this include Israel? Is Israel a people or a nation? Do they dwell on the earth? Yes, they do. Yes, it is.

This is all-inclusive. Nobody's left out. Now he tells this story.

We've already seen the visions of his head on his bed. Kind of a nice little alliterative. It's actually not alliterative, but it rhymes.

Tree, lovely leaves, abundant fruit, food for all. Beasts under it, birds in it. The watchers come, chop it down.

Bind it with a band of iron and bronze. It's not two different bands. One band of both iron and bronze.

So then, in verse 19, having heard the dream that King Nebuchadnezzar recounts, Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar... Now, why is this information repeated here, in verse 19, when we already know it from the earlier chapters of the book? Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar. This chapter existed as an independent, stand-alone account, didn't it? And when it was floating around by itself, you didn't have chapters 1 through 3. And it has not been modified. It has not been edited.

It hasn't been changed. And so the explanation that Daniel and Belteshazzar are the same person is given here. This is a testimony, or a witness, to the fact that this is verbatim Nebuchadnezzar's words.

Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. And this was apparent, or evident, in the struggle in his face, because the king looks at him and says, Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you. Now, you could imagine that Daniel was probably a statesman by this time.

He's been in the realms of government. He knows how to play poker. You can't betray your emotions.

Never let him see you sweat. You've got to be impassive and sphinx-like. And yet, when Nebuchadnezzar tells his dream, Daniel's face starts working.

And he's obviously distressed. And Nebuchadnezzar can tell. And he says, look, it's a dream.

What are you worried about? Just tell me what it means. So, Belteshazzar answered and said, and this is the name by which Nebuchadnezzar knows Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar may or may not even know his Hebrew name.

He has come to the court and introduced his Belteshazzar and that's what he calls him. Answered and said, my lord, may the dream concern those who hate you and its interpretation concern your enemies. By the way, why did I bring up the thing about the names? We are, I mentioned earlier, we have a dual identity in this life.

And many times, people are going to know you because you are your child's mother. Or you are the employee that fills thus and so slot in the company. Or you are the guy whose name is over the door.

Or you are, in some worldly context, you are known by the shelf that you occupy in someone else's view of the world. That's my sister. That's my brother.

That's my relative. That's my in-law. That's my employee.

That's my employer. That's my guy that fixes this or does that. Here's the lady that I work with, hither and yon, whatever it may be.

That's our earthly name. That's our Belteshazzar name. And yet, we really have another name.

We have a spiritual name that is Daniel. And it isn't Belteshazzar that gets the interpretation of this dream from Bell. It is Daniel who gets the interpretation from El, Elohim.

And it is the reality of Daniel's relationship with God that makes him who he is and that influences the course of history. It is not as Belteshazzar that anything gets done. It is Daniel through whom God works.

And so this interplay of names is not without significance. And it's not without application. We have to remember that people are going to see us and view us in a worldly context.

But at some point, if we have more than glancing acquaintance with people, it ought to become clear that there is a Daniel behind the Belteshazzar. There is a Hananiah behind Shadrach. There is a Mishaël behind Meshach.

And there is an Azariah behind Abednego. It ought to come out. It ought to make a difference.

If people only think of us by our Babylonian name, we are doing something wrong. It ought to be evident. Our light ought not to be under a bushel.

We don't have to flaunt it. We don't have to make an issue out of it. But what's the matter with us if there's not a difference in the way we live our life? If our hope is not evident, how is anyone going to ask us about it? Be ready always to give an answer to any man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.

What kind of a life are we living where there's no hope evident? What opportunity is there going to be for genuine evangelism, for genuine comfort and encouragement and speaking the truth to one another in love if our hope is never manifest because people never see behind our Belteshazzar name? My Lord, may the dream concern those who hate you and its interpretation concern your enemies. This is a euphemism for saying, O King, which do you want? The bad news or the bad news? Because this is all bad news. It would be better, you would like this better if it was a pronouncement about your enemies, but it's not.

Daniel says, King Sanam, I've got some bad news for you. 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. Notice again the repetition.

Is this not one of the more repetitious books of the Bible you've ever studied? Over and over we have things repeated. Why are these details repeated? Because they are important. Repetition in the Bible always, always, always signifies importance.

Why did I repeat the word always? Because it's important. Leaves are lovely and the fruit is abundant, food for all, beasts of the field, birds of the air. It is you, O King, who have grown and become strong.

Your greatness has grown and reached to the heavens and your dominion to the end of the earth. 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.

This is the interpretation, O King, and this is the decree of the Most High which has come upon my Lord the King. They shall drive you from men. Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field and they shall make you eat grass like oxen.

They shall wet you with the dew of heaven and seven times shall... Who is they? You say, well, it's men. They're going to realize that he's gone off his rocker and they're going to say, you know, you're not fit to live indoors anymore. You're not even paper trained.

We're going to put you outside. Who is they? Do the human members of Nebuchadnezzar's cabinet have the ability to make Nebuchadnezzar eat grass? Can they wet him with the dew of heaven? They can't, can they? Who are they? They are the watchers. They are the individuals mentioned in verse 17.

This decision is by the decree of the watchers. And the sentence, by the word of the holy ones. Give Joseph those books, please.

By the decree of the holy ones. The watchers. They are the angelic overseers.

This is Michael, your prince. These are the national angels. There is angelic involvement in human history clearly depicted here.

Nebuchadnezzar is a head of state. He is the object of attention of the watchers. These are simply angels.

Why are they called watchers and holy ones here? This is an area of commonality between the Israelite or Old Testament saint knowledge of God's intermediate agents and Babylonian mythology where there are also servants of the gods and intermediaries that carry out the wishes of Bel and Marduk and the other members of the Babylonian pantheon. Everyone understood the idea of master and servant and that many times the will of the master is carried out by servants. If you have a oikodomeo as it's called in Greek, a house steward, the head of the house.

This is the role that Joseph played in the house of Potiphar. This is the role that Joseph played later under the pharaoh of Egypt. Everything that happens has the imprimatur and the stamp and the approval of the house owner.

But the steward carries it out. The steward does the day-to-day functioning. He's the factotum.

He's the butler. He is the one who carries out the routine things with delegated authority from his master. This is the way human history works.

A lot of what goes on in the earth is implemented. It is the decree and the will of God, but it is implemented in and through angels and angels make subordinate decisions and implement subordinate decrees under the authority, the national authority that has been given to them by God. There's no way around it.

Look at what it says. This dream that Nebuchadnezzar has, the Watcher, Holy One, speaks in verse 14, 15, 16, and 17. Chop down the tree, leave the stump, bind it, let it be wet, and so on.

And he says in verse 17, this is the Watcher talking, this decision is by the decree of the Watchers. He doesn't say it's the decree of the Most High God. Why? Because it's not the decree of the Most High God, it's the decree of the Watchers.

They have delegated authority to make independent decisions about what happens in Babylon, what happens to Nebuchadnezzar. You remember the conversation in the first couple of chapters of Job when Satan and God discuss Job and God calls Job's name and says, well, Satan, have you seen my servant Job? He's a pretty upright man, faithful in all his ways. Satan says, well, he's only that way because you surround him with a hedge and you've blessed him and you've bought him off.

Take away what you've given him, he'll curse you. God says, do whatever you want within these limits. You can't touch his person, only his substance.

God does not specify what to take away or how to take it away. He just gives parameters and says, you do whatever you want to within these parameters. God's intermediate agents in human history, at least in the Old Testament, are angels.

Angels have limited authority to make decrees and to mete out destiny to individuals and nations. This is going to be a theme throughout the rest of the book and we see it here very explicitly. 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.

This tells us that they are intermediate agents. They are working on behalf of and in the interest of the Most High God. They are commissioned by Him.

Their authority comes from Him. And when they make this decree and implement it, it is going to communicate to the living that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men. Gives it to whomever he will and sets over it the lowest of men.

Not by might nor by power, by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. The wisdom of men is as foolishness with God and so

on.

So, as Daniel explains this, he says, Inasmuch, verse 23, the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, Notice there is one watcher who implements this, but the decree came from a council of watchers. There is more than one watcher that is involved in the decree, but there is a single watcher that comes down and implements it. Chop down the tree, destroy it, leave its stump, and he repeats the exact words of the council of watchers.

Leave the stump and the roots, bind it with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field, let it be wet with the dew of heaven, let him graze with the beasts of the field. And notice you switch pictures here because trees don't graze. Stumps don't graze, do they? And there is a key to the interpretation in the dream itself, both in its first and second statements.

When the decree is given, let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth, let his heart be changed from that of a man. That tells you that the tree represents a man. Right? Let him be given the heart of a beast, let seven times pass over him.

This is the interpretation, verse 24, O King, and this is the decree of the Most High which has come upon my Lord the King. The decree of the Council is the decree of the Most High because it is delegated authority. The decree of the Watchers is the decree of the Most High because the Most High says whatever the Council says goes.

Very same structure in heaven that you find with Daniel and the wise men on the earth. And you see this throughout the Bible. You remember clear back at the time of the Tower of Babel.

It is angels who come up and report to God that the imagination of men's hearts is only evil all the time and God says, I will come Myself and look and see if this is true. It reflects that delegated authority, that hierarchy where God does not, so to speak, personally deal with every niggling detail. He chooses to broker and to implement His rule of the earth through the angels.

They are actively involved in administering human history. For certain in the days of the Old Testament it is less clear what their involvement is in the age of the church. But there is no question in the Old Testament it is explicitly clear from Genesis on that angels are intimately and actively involved in human history.

So we say, well, this big splash that we had a few years ago about angels and should I be all caught up and worrying about the angels? No. That's the short answer. We don't focus on angels.

The Bible doesn't focus on angels except to mention that they are intermediaries. There is no prayer to angels. There is no cultivation of relationship with angels.

We don't converse with angels. We don't set up little monuments to angels. We don't buy and read books about angels.

That's not the point. That would be like a parent handing their child food with their hand and spanking their child with their hand and then the child gets obsessed with the hand and forgets about the parent. It's an intermediate agent.

It's a means to an end. Well, you know, they have this whole reason I bring that up. They have this idea you should never spank with your hand because you want the hand to be associated with comfort and stroking that.

No, the hand needs to be associated with you. It's your hand and it represents you. And sometimes you can be beneficent and sometimes you can be judgment in person.

And there's nothing wrong if that's the form of child correction that you choose. There's nothing wrong with spanking your child with your hand one moment and then caressing your head with it the next. I can testify to the fact that they will not surely die as the scripture tells us.

But angels are God's intermediaries and sometimes they're angels of destruction. My Lance, look at the book of Revelation. You've got angels releasing winds that are going to blow and destroy millions of people.

You've got angels that are going to release plagues. You've got angels coming up out of the bottomless pit. You've got angels like scorpions and like locusts going all over the place doing all kinds of things.

And yet you also have angels appearing to Mary and bringing sustenance to Jesus in the wilderness and that sort of thing. And nobody gets psychologically damaged by seeing that angels can be both ministers of mercy and ministers of judgment. Well, that's what they are here.

Ministers of judgment. And this is the decree of the most high intermediate agency, angels. This is the decree of the most high.

They, the angels, shall drive you from men. Guess what? Angels have power over Nebuchadnezzar's sanity. Angels can get inside his head.

Is this a surprise? If we've studied the New Testament and seen the influence of demons over the Gerasene demoniac or the boy at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration or any of the others that were afflicted by demons, it's not a surprise that angels have the ability to grab the controls of the human mind if they are allowed. In some cases, people cultivate this themselves. They, on purpose and with malice aforethought, disengage their own control over their mind and they seek contact with the supernatural through meditation, through drugs, through hypnosis, through other illicit means, pharmakeia, consulting the dead, necromancy and so forth.

This is why God prohibits it. He says, don't take your hands off the controls and give them to others. But if you flee the light and seek the darkness, you can put yourself in a position where

you have, by your own volition, made yourself susceptible to demon oppression or demon possession and it still happens today.

Antichrist himself is going to be demon-possessed, Satan-possessed and he's going to do it of his own volition. Judas ran from the light of the gospel of the kingdom into the darkness and Satan used him. Well, these angels are permitted in order to glorify God and fulfill his plan and purpose to take Nebuchadnezzar's sanity from him.

And they're going to. They shall drive you from men, the watchers. Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field and they shall make you eat grass like oxen.

This is control of human behavior by angelic means. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven. Angels control the weather as we know from Revelation, as we know from Ezekiel.

Seven times shall pass over you. Now, why does it say seven times instead of seven years? We know these are years because later on in the book of Daniel, a time, times and half a time are going to be three and a half years. And so the times are years.

But why don't they just say years? Are they just sort of being intentionally vague? Well, we'll come back to that. Until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses. This is something Nebuchadnezzar does not know, does not acknowledge.

And he will learn it even during the time of his reduction, even during the time of his diminishment. He is going to have diminished capacity. He's going to be humiliated.

And this enforced humility is going to bring about a genuine humility on the inside. This is what parents do with children. We sometimes have to humble our children.

Nothing more humiliating than being spanked or being told to sit in the corner or do time out or have your privileges taken away or the other means that parents legitimately use to discipline their children. It's humiliating. Especially as a child gets older and you have to take away their privileges and treat them like they're smaller than they are.

It's humiliating. And to have a man act like a beast, it's humiliating. But the principle stands that if there is a chance, if there is something that can turn a human heart, and some hearts, it doesn't matter what you do to them, it doesn't matter the level of discipline, it doesn't matter the level of humiliation, they are rebellious, they are hard, and they will not turn.

Other hearts will turn when the proper amount of pressure is applied. Sometimes it's repetitive, momentary pressure to the backside. Other times it is psychological pressure.

But whatever it may be, a pliant heart, a willing heart, can be educated and can be changed and pointed in the right direction by discipline. This is God's work in the hearts of believers. Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.

And he scourges every son whom he receives. Why? To turn us. It is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all come to change of mind.

So, this is what's happening with Nebuchadnezzar. It is going to take, because he is in such a grand and exalted place, it's going to take a grand level of debasement to level him out. Inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you after you come to know that heaven rules.

Three times we have been now told the purpose of this seven-year program of enforced insanity. So that you will know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men. So that you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men.

After you come to know that heaven rules. That's the point. The question for us is, do we know this? At more than an academic level? If we truly know that God rules in the kingdom of men, it will make a profound difference in the way we approach our day-to-day chores, our daily life, won't it? We are not going to be unduly frustrated by the actions of people, or the comments of people, or the behavior of people, or the opposition of people.

Why? We know that heaven rules. Nothing happens without God's permission. Nothing happens that is not a part of God's plan.

All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. And if we understand our calling, and we know that our election is sure, we know that our eternal destiny is imminent, we are not going to be fazed by people. God rules in the kingdom of men, and He gives it to whomever He will.

What's going to happen in the kingdom? Who's going to rule? How many times did Jesus say, the last shall be first? It's easy to get frustrated, discouraged, and say, well, I'm the least. I'm the last. I'm the nobody.

I'm ineffective. Not so. Not so.

You are in prime position to take over the kingdom of God when you know that heaven rules, and God gives the kingdom to whoever He wills. What's important is, does God look at us with pleasure, with approval? Does He say, well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in a few things.

I will make you master over many things. Have to take the long view. It's not the tall spirit, Solomon says in Ecclesiastes.

It's the enduring spirit. It's the one that endures to the end that is delivered. How many different places in the Bible do we find that principle? He who endures to the end will be delivered.

Therefore, O King, verse 27, let my advice be acceptable to you. Break off your sins. Snap it off.

Call a halt. Be righteous in your iniquities and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Notice, in the Old Testament economy, in the law of Moses, as elsewhere, attitude toward the poor is a defining trait.

You can tell what someone is like by their attitude toward the poor. How do we know Boaz is the great man that he turns out to be? He is sympathetic to the poor. He looks out for Ruth.

He looks out for Naomi. He lets the poor, even before he meets them, the way he meets them is that he lets the poor come in and glean the corners of his field. In a day of famine, in a day when other lands, like Moab, are in dire straits, Boaz opens up his field.

Attitude toward the poor. Looking out for widows and orphans in their affliction, the Scripture says, is a sign of righteousness. So, break off your sins and your iniquities by being righteous and showing mercy to the poor.

No one is in a better position to show mercy to the poor than Nebuchadnezzar. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity. Notice Daniel doesn't say perhaps there may be a cancelling of the decree.

He says, the only way you can stave this off is to break off your sins and display righteousness. But it's not really a very hopeful outlook. He says, perhaps you can lengthen your prosperity a little.

But there's no doubt in Daniel's mind it's going to happen. Well, Nebuchadnezzar continues to tell this story. All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.

At the end of 12 months, he has a year of grace period, grace before judgment. He's warned a year ahead of time. He's walking about the royal palace of Babylon.

You know, this was David's moment of downfall. You get the idea that if we ever get to be any kind of a ruler or personage in the Millennial Kingdom, stay off the roof. The roof of the palace is a bad place to be.

You're already ruling and you're in the palace, then you stand up on the roof and strut about. This is what caused David's downfall with Bathsheba and this is where Nebuchadnezzar is going to get struck. He's walking around the royal palace of Babylon.

The king spoke saying, it's not this great Babylon. He's up on the roof looking out over the city. Look at this thing I built.

As a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty. And the whole point is, it is God who rules in the kingdom of men. It is God who gives it to whom he wishes.

While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven. King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken. The kingdom has departed from you.

The voice from heaven, by the way, is speaking Aramaic. Just thought you ought to know. This whole section is in Aramaic.

God speaks the language of Nebuchadnezzar to Nebuchadnezzar. He doesn't speak in Hebrew and have Nebuchadnezzar call for a translator. King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken.

The kingdom has departed from you. It's a done deal. You have lost it even as you stand here crowing about it.

This is reminiscent of what Samuel tells Saul when he tears his mantle. See this ripped mantle? The kingdom has been torn from you. They shall drive you from men and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.

They shall make you eat grass like oxen and seven times shall pass over you until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses. This is the fourth statement of that principle. That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar.

He was driven from men and ate grass like oxen. His body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws. Nebuchadnezzar cannot even bring himself to speak in the first person about this.

He talks about himself in the third person. And you can tell it's still humiliating for him. And so he sort of separates himself as he tells the story.

At the end of that time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven and my understanding returned to me. And notice, it doesn't say my understanding returned and I lifted my eyes to heaven. This is the argument of Christian psychology and Christian pharmacology.

Let me give you a drug that will straighten out your head and then you can worship God. As we say in the Marine Corps, balderdash, poppycock, nonsense, horse feathers, eagle feathers, bird claws. Nebuchadnezzar, even in his diminished state, can turn his eyes to heaven.

And when he turns his eyes to heaven, his understanding is returned. Volition first, then restoration. The Gerasene demoniac did what when Jesus got out of the boat? Ran to him and fell at his feet.

Jesus didn't say, look at that raving lunatic up there on the hillside running naked amongst the graves. Watch this. Oh demons, go forth.

Oh look, he's running down and falling at my feet. That's not the order, is it? We are accountable. We are responsible.

We have the ability to choose. And Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes to heaven and at that point his understanding returned. And he blesses the Most High and prays to honor him who lives forever.

Well, we're going to have to finish our analysis of this next time. Let me leave you with one point of observation. This tree not only represents Nebuchadnezzar, this tree harks back to the first mention of trees in the Bible, which is where? Garden of Eden.

The inception of the human race. Nebuchadnezzar here stands for all men. He's the head of gold.

He represents the whole statue in a sense. And man was created by God, glorious and full and perfect and a benefactor to nature as Adam tended the garden and took care of it and gave names to the beasts and so on. And then what happened? He, Adam, became proud.

The initial sin, the original sin, is the sin of pride on the part of Satan. And Satan fosters that sin in Eve and through Eve in Adam. And Adam falls.

And the tree is chopped down. And the creatures flee. The earth is cursed.

And man now has to do what? Earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. He eats the grasses. We eat the oats and the wheat and the corn.

We eat the fruit of the field. Used to have fruit hanging in the trees. Fruit of the trees.

Fruitarians, if you want to say so, in the garden. That's gone. Fruit of the tree isn't there anymore.

Now, you have to subsist on the grass. This is a picture of mankind. Seven times pass over this stump that is bound with iron and bronze.

What do iron and bronze represent? Iron is force. Military force, Rome, the legs of iron, brass, bronze, judgment. There is force and judgment.

This is the decree that God gives Noah after the flood. Man is going to have to keep man in check. You shed blood.

By man will your blood be shed. You bind what's left of humanity and civilization and the image of God together by force and by judgment. Until these seven times pass over, at the end of the millennial kingdom, at the end of the 7,000 of human history, there will be a restoration.

Because at that time, all men who go forward into the eternal future are going to know that the Lord God rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he wills. Who inherits the kingdom? Who inherits the earth? The humble. The poor in spirit.

And that's who we ought to be. We'll pick up at this point next time. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the wonderful pictures and the fascinating ways that you communicate your word, your will, your plan and purpose in history through the scriptures. We pray that God

the Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts. May we see in our individual lives the application and the implementation of these truths.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.