

Daniel 05-11-13b

Let's pick up our study now in Daniel chapter four. We're looking at the dream of Nebuchadnezzar about the great tree that is chopped down. We understand that this is a divinely ordained, a divinely decreed judgment on Nebuchadnezzar as an individual.

We ask ourselves the question, why Nebuchadnezzar? Have there not been untold numbers of pagan or Gentile dictators who were arrogant, who lifted themselves up, who committed all kinds of heinous acts? Why would Nebuchadnezzar be singled out for this judgment and restoration cycle, this seven year period? The pharaohs of Egypt were certainly equally arrogant, equally full of themselves. You could argue possibly that the pharaoh of the Exodus got some personal discipline through the cycle of plagues, three times three, and then the Passover. But Nebuchadnezzar seems unique in the annals of Gentile leadership for being singled out for divine revelation through these dreams and then divine judgment.

He is given Daniel as his advisor. I mean, think about it. It's sort of the unique story of the Old Testament that this great world leader is gifted with the wisest man who ever lived to be in his cabinet and to ensure the success of his kingdom and to create a situation where Nebuchadnezzar is going to reign for 40 years after the elevation of Daniel and his three friends.

He's going to have a 40 year unparalleled reign. Of course, seven of those years are going to be times of great distress. And as we have so often seen, you have a 40 year period.

Of course, Nebuchadnezzar's complete reign was 43 years. But it was in his third year that he elevates Daniel. And so there are 40 years there.

But out of those 40, there are seven in which Nebuchadnezzar is out of the picture. The stump is banded with iron and bronze and he goes out and is driven from among men. So 33 plus 7 makes up the 40 years of his reign.

The lifetime of the Lord Jesus Christ measured on the clock of Israel is 33 plus 7. We note with interest that Nebuchadnezzar is a symbolic figure. The image with the head of gold represents Nebuchadnezzar and his empire. The tree here represents Nebuchadnezzar personally.

We see the switch in verse 16. Let his heart be changed from that of a man. Let him be given the heart of a beast.

So the tree does not represent his kingdom. It represents him personally. And you have birds of the air roosting in his branches.

We've seen this in other contexts, such as the parables of the Lord Jesus, where he talks about the mustard seed that grows and becomes a great plant and the birds of the air nest in the branches. Well, the birds of the air are kind of like leaven in the Bible. Anytime you see the birds

of the air, it is with a negative connotation.

Well, I shouldn't say every time. You have every sparrow that falls and God keeps his eye on the sparrow. But when you have that phrase, birds of the air, they are usually viewed as sort of parasitic.

Goliath tells David, I will feed your flesh to the fowl of the air. When Jesus says that these birds of the air are going to come roost in the branches, these are the same kind of birds that come and snatch away the good seed when it falls on hard ground. The birds of the air come and snatch it away so that it can't take root.

And you get the idea that Nebuchadnezzar, through his personal achievements and his grandeur and his station as the emperor of this tremendous kingdom, has under his umbrella these wise men, these Chaldeans, who are the ones conspiring against Daniel's three friends, who will later conspire against Daniel himself to try to have them removed. And they exist under this umbrella of Nebuchadnezzar's authority and they serve him and they're roosting in this tree, depositing what birds deposit on everything that's underneath. And that's kind of what you have here.

But you also have animals who live in the shade of that tree and are driven out from under it. And so you're going to find that Daniel and Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah are going to be part of the means by which this kingdom is preserved during the seven years of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity. Daniel is the head advisor.

He is going to be like Joseph was to the Pharaoh in Egypt during the famine. How long did that famine in Egypt last, by the way? Seven years. And so we have a seven year time of trial here in the nation of Babylon.

And once again, God has stationed a believer in a position to preserve the kingdom and its citizens through this time of difficulty. So after Daniel explains this and says in verse 26, they give the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree. Your kingdom shall be assured to you after you come to know that heaven rules.

This is the same thing that the Watcher said in verse 17, isn't it? In order that the living may know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men. I mentioned this last time. How often have we seen this phrase in Ezekiel? Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

Then they shall know that I am the Lord. What does it mean that God is the Lord? That he rules in the kingdom of men, that he rules in the kingdom of heaven, that you have to adjust to God and his character and his standards or you are going to be in trouble as a believer. You will be disciplined as an unbeliever.

You will be destroyed. There is no alternative. God is the Lord.

And woe unto any of us who forgets that. So in verse 28, well, actually in verse 27, Daniel gives

Nebuchadnezzar a piece of advice. This is a prediction.

It has not yet happened. So after interpreting the dream, Daniel says, therefore, O King, let my advice be acceptable for you. Break off your sins by being righteous.

Break off your sins by being righteous. This is a P-A-L stem. P-A-L is intensive.

In Hebrew, this would be P-I-E-L. In Aramaic, it's P-E-A-L. But the P-A-L here in Aramaic is the intensive stem.

You have got to take drastic measures. And the verb here, P-E-R-A-Q, means to shatter, to smash. You have got to smash intensively your sins by righteousness.

You have got to make a radical change. Now, this tells us something about Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar, in spite of two direct manifestations of the presence and power of God, Nebuchadnezzar has persisted and become worse in the area of sin.

As a ruler, as a leader in the government, he is perpetuating sinful behavior. God has manifested himself to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar has not responded in faith and obedience.

He has acknowledged God, he believes in God, but he has not done anything about it. And he is worsening in the area of sin. And Daniel says, if you want to forestall this, you have got to radically, dramatically shatter your pattern of sin with righteousness.

Then he gives a specific, break off, shatter your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. One of the things that tends to happen when a nation becomes great, when an empire becomes rich and wealthy, is, oddly enough, as the rich prosper and become richer, the poor tend to get poorer. Nebuchadnezzar has it within his means.

He is the richest king in the world. He has got enough gold to build this big statue out there in the plain of Dura. And yet, there are oppressed people, there are poor people, and Nebuchadnezzar isn't doing anything about it.

Throughout scripture, you find that God pays attention to believers' attitude toward the poor, the widow and the orphan. What does God require of you, oh man? What are the three things? To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. Nebuchadnezzar is violating all three of these.

It's a simple requirement. Do justice, not sin. Love mercy, instead of oppressing the poor, and walk humbly, instead of being arrogant.

Nebuchadnezzar has swung and missed on doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly. And on that third strike, he's out. It is equally important for us.

Now, we've talked a lot about being intelligent in charity. It is, in my view, a mistake to hand a

\$5 bill out the window to some guy with a cardboard sign. That is unintelligent charity.

If you are sponsoring someone's drug habit, or someone's alcoholism, or someone's scam, where they go jump into their late model Chevy and drive away at the end of the day having panhandled, and made more money begging under false pretenses than earning it through a job, that is not charity, and it doesn't honor God. You have to have facts. You have to know.

You have to have information. There are worthy ways that you can help the poor. We have a lot of great missions.

We have gospel missions. We have missionaries. We have ministries that are worthy, that are well-documented, that take the majority of the money that they get and turn it into help for the poor, and it's not just handouts.

It's not sponsoring idleness. It's not sponsoring apathy and indifference and indigence. They are genuine help to those who are in a time of need, and it is worthwhile to support that kind of charity, or to participate in that kind of charity.

We can look around in our own sphere of influence and find places where we can assist in a time of need. It's a worthy and worthwhile and God-honoring thing to do. Nebuchadnezzar isn't doing any of that, and Daniel points it out.

Now, notice Daniel has not gone in at previous occasions and said, hey, Neb, you know how you could really help yourself out here is by quit oppressing the poor, and you're really getting kind of arrogant and sinful here. Daniel doesn't make it his business to tell Nebuchadnezzar how to run his kingdom or live his life. God Himself has revealed this to Nebuchadnezzar, and it is not our place to preach.

It's not our place to browbeat. It's not our place to place expectations on others. We have our hands full organizing our own lives and our own efforts, and we don't need to be looking at others and deciding whether or not they are charitable, whether or not they are righteous, whether or not they are walking humbly.

It's not our job. It's not our business. God gives every human being a conscience.

God sends the ministry of God the Holy Spirit to every sentient human being, and it's not our job to elbow the Holy Spirit out of the way and tell others how charitable they ought to be, or how righteous they ought to be, or how humble they ought to be. We need to be telling ourselves that. So, Daniel doesn't say anything about this to Nebuchadnezzar until God tells him, and Daniel is the interpreter of this dream, and he is simply repeating to Nebuchadnezzar what God has already revealed to him in this dream.

O King, let my advice be acceptable to you. Break off. This is violent and radical.

You have got to do a complete 180 right here, right now. Shatter. Break in pieces.

Smash completely this pattern of sin and oppression that you have established. Smash it. Smash your iniquities.

Smash your sins. Smash your sins by righteousness and mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.

When we allow our ego to bloat and our pride to run up the pole like a giant flag, one of the first noticeable symptoms to the people around us is that we become insensitive. Insensitivity to the needs of others, insensitivity to the condition of others, is a manifestation of pride. We are all subject to pride.

We are all subject to this syndrome. Nebuchadnezzar has lapsed. He isn't doing any sort of public works.

He is not working on any benevolences to his population. He is crushing the poor under the feet of his great and mighty empire, and God is holding him to account. Well, verse 28 says, All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.

At the end of the twelve months, he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. Now, why does it say the twelve months? I don't know why the translators put it here. In your other English translations, the doesn't show up.

There is no extra word here in Hebrew or in Aramaic. Actually, to justify this, but at the end of twelve months, he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke saying, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty? Well, you wonder if this wasn't in Jesus' mind when he told the parable of the rich man who built the houses and barns and who then was making his plans.

And Jesus says, Thou fool, this night will your soul be required of you. While the words are still in his mouth, a voice fell from heaven. Now, this is not a dream and this is not a vision.

This is Nebuchadnezzar physically walking around, probably on the roof of his temple, surveying the great city of Babylon that he has built by taxation, by conscript, by oppression. He has built his empire on the backs of the poor. He has been sinful.

He has been iniquitous in the building of it. He has ignored the clear revelation of God from his first dream, from the testimony of the three friends of Daniel. And now, the voice falls from heaven and says, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken, the kingdom has departed 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. This is the third time we have had that point emphasized, isn't it? It's not difficult to derive the interpretation and application of this section of the book of Daniel.

What's the application? It is important for us to remember that God rules in the kingdom of men. Don't think it's people who wield the power. Don't think it's people who are pulling themselves by their own bootstraps, who are achieving their own success.

Any success that anyone enjoys is granted by God. Any oppression that is allowed to exist is allowed by God. God can elevate anyone to a position of power, and many times, they are the humblest of men.

God allows it. God orchestrates it. And if we are caught in the fallout of that, it is by the will and foreknowledge of God.

And it is silly to get wrapped around the axle over it. It is silly to chew on it like an old bone, and to worry, and fret, and stew, and fall apart under that kind of pressure. It's ridiculous.

It is all completely and totally under the control of God. And if we are embroiled in it, as Daniel was, as the three friends were, God has a purpose in it. And we ought to be looking confidently and expectantly to God to glorify Himself and demonstrate His power and His rulership in the kingdom of men, rather than worrying about some consequence to us.

You don't see Daniel saying, Oh, King, I'm a victim of your oppression. Now, look at me. You've made me a eunuch.

You've ripped me out of my homeland and taken away all my stuff. And now, I'm a stranger here in the court. You've got a bunch of guys here that don't like me and are plotting, trying to figure out how to get rid of me.

And look at all the bad things you've done to me, O King. Daniel doesn't insert himself into this at all, does he? Because he knows the principle that God is emphasizing to Nebuchadnezzar. The most high rules in the kingdom of men.

If we belong to God and we are citizens of His heavenly kingdom, we don't have to bow our heads and cower or sulk or slink at all. If people do not recognize the authority and the rulership of God in life and in the kingdom of men, that's their problem. They are going to be the ones suffering like Nebuchadnezzar, not us.

It's only when we buy into their view that we end up suffering the kinds of slings and arrows that Nebuchadnezzar is about to suffer here. That very hour, verse 33, was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar. Now, everybody in the kingdom of Babylon, what do they think about Nebuchadnezzar? This is kind of like Saddam Hussein over in Iraq.

What if people fought for a decade and more in Iraq? All through the 90s, what did people think about Saddam? He's invincible. He's all-powerful. You can't resist him.

You can't get around him. Look at what he does. He massacres.

He murders. He incarcerates. He abuses.

He oppresses. Nobody can beat this guy. Well, guess what? He's sitting in a little cell staring at the walls now, waiting for his death sentence.

God rules in the kingdom of men, and anybody that prevails only prevails at God's behest. There's a reason why God allowed Saddam Hussein to slaughter his own people, to invade other countries, to pursue his agenda of violence. We don't fully understand all of that.

We have to defer to God's omniscience, to God's foreknowledge, to the outworking of God's plan, specifically in the Middle East, nationally speaking, gearing up and organizing for the end times. But does a believer have anything to fear from the Saddam Husseins and the Muammar Gaddafis and the Pol Pots of this world? All they can do is go after the flesh. They can't touch the spirit.

They can't affect the future. We're going to live eternally blessed, rewarded, provisioned, glorified by God and reflecting God's glory. All they can do is get us there sooner.

All they can do is give us occasions to store up even more righteousness by faith. We should look at our opposition as opportunities. Here's an opportunity to vindicate the power of God.

You remember Bob Thieme's Advocation Complex? It's a description of the mature believer's soul, oriented to grace, mastering the details of life. People and circumstances are details, they're excuses for the application of the Word of God. Relaxed mental attitude.

What's the matter? Where's the problem if we are not oriented to grace? Where's the problem if we are not coping with the details of life? Where's the problem if our attitude is not relaxed? Has the power of God failed? Are the promises of God insufficient in our particular case? Look at the people in Babylon. There's nobody more powerful than Nebuchadnezzar. Look at the latter day Babylon.

Very same area, very same country. A man who stamped his face on top of Nebuchadnezzar's on coins. Saddam Hussein.

And look at him. He's humiliated at the moment. What I think would be extremely interesting is if Saddam survives his trials and comes back to power and is like one of those heads of the beast that is slain and then miraculously comes back to life.

Would that not be poetic? The man that we think is down. Wouldn't it be interesting if the man who has linked his own image to Nebuchadnezzar on coins turns out to play a role in the end time history of the Middle East? You can't dismiss the possibility until that guy is dead and buried. There is an awful lot of foreshadowing in the word of God.

Nebuchadnezzar looked like he was out of the picture for seven years. When did Saddam get arrested and taken out of power? When will seven years be from that? It's interesting to speculate on. Nevertheless, here's Nebuchadnezzar.

And at the end of 12 months, speaking great swelling words of pride, he is struck down. The kingdom departs from him. He's driven from men.

His dwelling is with the beasts of the field. He's humiliated. He is not even allowed converse with mankind.

He eats grass like the oxen. Seven times pass over him until he knows that the most high rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he chooses. Anybody that's putting pressure on us right now, God gave them the power to do so.

God orchestrated it. It's a part of the plan of God. We shouldn't fear it.

We should welcome it. We should look at it as a story problem. Here is my chance to apply the word of God.

God has brought me to the kingdom for such a time as this, as Mordecai tells Esther. That's why we're here. We're here to be in opposition and in conflict with this bad power.

That very hour, verse 33, the word was fulfilled. He was driven from men, ate grass like oxen, his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagle's feathers. You get out there, all of his careful manicuring, all the servants that had clipped his nails and trimmed his hair and made him look... Evidently, Nebuchadnezzar was a pretty handsome and impressive guy.

He had a lot of personal charisma. He was image conscious. He made the image of himself out there in the plain of Dura.

Obviously, he thought he was quite a good looking guy. Ought to be memorialized in statues and so on. Well, his whole team of handlers and makeup artists, manicurists, barbers and so on can't get near him.

He's out there like a wild beast. And so, his hair grows and it's baked in the sun and it's caked with mud and it's rained on. And he's wallowing around in the dirt and the grit and the grime out there, sleeping under the dew of heaven.

And so, his hair starts looking like a Rastafarian. It starts looking like eagle feathers. It's all matted and unkempt, uncombable.

And his nails grow out like bird's claws. He's completely unkempt. He's filthy.

He stinks. He's insane. Many have talked about the medical name for this.

Where you think you're a beast or you act like a beast. And this seems to be what Nebuchadnezzar is experiencing here. He spends seven years.

That's a long time. This is 2005. Seven years ago was what? 1998? Before 9-11? Before the turn

of the millennium? Before we got our current president? Way back.

A long time ago. Seven years. That's how long he wanders around in the garden of the palace.

By the way, you know the Hanging Gardens of Babylon? One of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World that the Greeks prized? You know who built those Hanging Gardens of Babylon? It's Nebuchadnezzar. He built them for his wife. Her name, something unpronounceable, starts with an A. But he put those gardens together for his wife.

And now he's out there sleeping in them. Going to the bathroom in them. Wallowing in them.

Running around like a wild animal for seven years. Everything is on hold. His family, his kingdom.

And what kind of story do they tell the people of the land? Who knows? Spin doctors are out there. The Chaldeans are making up excuses. Well, he's gone on a pilgrimage.

He's on a spiritual journey. Who knows what they said? But he's actually out there just living like a pig in a sty. But, you know, David had to feign madness when he went to Gath.

You heard, by the way, this last week that they found that potsherd with Goliath's name on it at Gath. Or a name very similar to Goliath. Dated to 950 B.C., within 50 years of David.

Well, Gath. David went back there dragging the sword of Goliath behind him when he was on the run from Saul. And no surprise to anybody, he was recognized.

And to escape being killed, he feigned madness. He let his spit drool down his beard. He scrabbled on the gate.

And nobody touched him. Why? In the ancient world, it was considered bad luck to fool with the insane. Why did they not just quietly, you know, call out the archers and say, let's just get rid of this Nebuchadnezzar.

He's an embarrassment to the empire. And if any of their enemies find out that he's non compos mentis, we're going to be attacked. They could have just gotten rid of him.

Put somebody else on the throne. But it's, you know, nobody messes with the insane. So, we have a very brief summary of that time.

One verse. That very hour the word was fulfilled. In verse 33.

Then in verse 34, Nebuchadnezzar continuing to tell this story. At the end of the time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven. And my understanding returned to me.

This also is an intensive stem. This is the pial stem again in Aramaic. When it says he lifted his eyes, it was a forceful, intensive act.

It took him seven years to figure this out. Now, do you remember many years ago when we were studying the gospel of Mark? And we talked about Herod's treatment of John the Baptist. How John the Baptist was out there preaching.

Preparing the way for the Messiah. And also talking about Herod taking his brother's life. And Herod incarcerated him.

And he sort of toyed with him. He would bring him in and listen to him. And he liked listening to him.

But he couldn't make up his mind. He would neither execute him or release him. He just kind of kept him in thrall there.

And he would listen to him from time to time. Until the dance of the seven veils in Salome. And you have the whole thing being brought to a head.

Where he winds up having to make a decision. And he chooses to kill John because of his pride. Because of the promise he had made in front of all these witnesses at the feast.

And at that time, we noted the principle that the king represents the people. And Herod is a parable of the people of Israel. Who like to listen to Jesus.

And who can't make up their mind about it until they are forced. And at the point that they're forced to decide, they say crucify him. And Herod embodies and sums up that attitude of the people of God in that generation.

Who is the king of the people of Israel in this day? In the book of Daniel? It's Nebuchadnezzar. He's the king. He has grown up from the ground as a tree.

And is a blessing and a place of refuge for others. But his pride has made him iniquitous, sinful, and insensitive to the things of God. And so he is cut off.

And he's got to undergo seven years of this abuse. Until he recognizes that it is God who rules in the kingdom of men. If you apply, if you think for the moment along the same lines as Herod.

Does Nebuchadnezzar picture here the course of the nation of Israel? That springs up and is a great tree. And almost immediately you have the evil birds roosting in the branches. And there comes a point where because of disobedience.

Because of apathy. Because of pride. God has to chop the tree of Israel down.

That's what God did after the Lord Jesus came. And was rejected by his own people. He came unto his own and his own received him not.

And that tree was chopped down. Jesus was here presenting, offering, making available the kingdom of God for 33 years. It didn't take.

It wasn't accepted. What happens to Israel? Exactly 40 years later, they're gone. The temple is destroyed.

The nation is destroyed. They are no more. That nation is going to come back for how long? On the Israel clock, seven years.

And what's going to happen to them? For three and a half of those years, they have a false peace. And for the last three and a half years, there is this terrible time of tribulation. What did Jesus tell the nation of Israel after he was rejected by them? You will not see me again until you say what? Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is he who comes to do what? To rule. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. So Israel, there's sort of an echo, there's a foreshadowing of the course of the nation of Israel.

It's going to take the seven year, the 70th week of Daniel to bring Israel, represented by that 144,000, that generation. It's going to take that seven years to show the world and Israel that there is a God who rules in heaven. All the nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues are going to be brought into submission in that 70th week.

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven and my understanding returned to me. Remember the new covenant that we saw in Ezekiel? I will take out your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. No longer will any man say no to the Lord.

Every man will know the Lord. You'll have your understanding. You'll have a heart of flesh.

My understanding returned to me. And what's the first thing Nebuchadnezzar does when his sanity is restored? I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever. It's the first thing he did.

Just like the demoniac who threw himself at Jesus' feet. I think I mentioned before, but it always comes to my mind when I look at this section of the chapter, that song, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus. In the verse portion of it, it says there's life for a look at the Savior.

There is life for a look. It doesn't take a work. There's no work of righteousness that we can do.

It's God's mercy that saves us. But you have to look. You have to turn your eyes toward God.

You have to turn your eyes toward the Savior. As soon as Nebuchadnezzar lifts his eyes to heaven, his reason returns. And he blesses God and praises and honors Him who lives forever.

Why? Now remember, think about this. You know how they say that the prophetic books of the Bible were written late, people in captivity just thinking up stuff, trying to make up a religion to unite the people and so on? What kind of a nut job would invent the story that the king of Babylon, the greatest king that ever lived, became a believer in the God of Israel and wrote a proclamation? Anybody that put this out would be laughed into oblivion if it weren't true. This would be the equivalent of Julius Caesar converting to Christianity.

Of course, he'd have to do it a few years before Christ came. But imagine the greatest emperors that have ever been converting. You know, you have a sort of a crude analogy in Constantine.

You can question Constantine's motives. He had a lot of good political and military reasons for choosing Christianity. But the fact remains that nobody who writes about Constantine, they don't say, oh, you just made that up.

There really wasn't a Constantine. He really didn't declare Christianity to be the state religion. I mean, how could you get away with that? It's ludicrous to think that somebody would just make that up.

Here we have a record of somebody as great as Constantine in his day, if not greater, converting to the God of Israel. Look at what he says. His dominion is an everlasting dominion.

His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. He does according to his will in the army of heaven.

What's the army of heaven? Those are the watchers. Those are the heavenly hosts that we saw earlier. And among the inhabitants of the earth, his will is done in heaven.

His will is done on earth. No one can restrain his hand or say to him, what have you done? Remember Psalm 42? Why are you far from me, O God? What have you done? You have to get your soul under control. You've got to get a grip and say, my hope is in God.

He's my rock. I will wait. I will trust.

Who can say to him, what have you done? Who can say to you, where is your God? The only time someone's going to say that to us is when we lose our hope. Because we are either going to be notable for our hope, or we're going to be notable for the lack of it. Paul writes that letter and says, we go everywhere in Asia Minor and people are talking about your hope.

People everywhere ought to be asking us a reason for the hope that is in us. Nobody's going to be saying, where is your God, when they see that you've got an amazing and a supernatural hope. That you have grace orientation, mastery of the details of life, a relaxed mental attitude, capacity for life, regardless of your circumstances.

Look at that person. They're happy. I don't understand it.

If I was in their situation, I'd be miserable and they're happy. They're content. They're pleasant.

They're relaxed. I can't figure it out. What kind of a hope is this? Hey you, where do you get this hope? I would be miserable in your circumstances.

Why are you happy? That is the testimony. That is the light that we're supposed to be shining in the world. No one can restrain his hand.

No one can say to him, what have you done? Nebuchadnezzar goes on to say at the same time, my reason returned to me and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me. I was restored to my kingdom and excellent majesty was added to me.

Reminds you of Job. The latter end of Job was greater than the beginning. You get the idea that Nebuchadnezzar, far from being despised or laughed at for this period of discipline, when he comes back and his hat's screwed on straight, so to speak, about God, he winds up being an even greater monarch.

He is more respected. Counselors who he used to go to to advise are coming to him for advice. Nobles who used to advise him are coming to him and saying, Nebuchadnezzar, what do you recommend? Nobles and counselors resort to me.

Excellent majesty was added to me. This is what God's going to do for the nation of Israel. It has been great at times in the past under David, under Solomon, but nothing like it's going to be in the millennial kingdom.

After that seven years, once Israel as a nation recognizes that God is the Lord and says, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Israel is going to be high and lifted up. All of those great Zion passages, all of those millennial kingdom passages where the nations of the earth are humbled and bring their store and their treasure in to Israel. That's what's reflected here.

There is a band of iron and a band of bronze around the stump, the stump of Jesse, the root shoot is going to emerge. And that kingdom is going to be restored greater than it has ever been, larger than it has ever been under the Lord Jesus Christ. So in verse 37, Nebuchadnezzar says, Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth and his ways are justice.

You don't see Nebuchadnezzar shaking his fist and saying, I can't believe you stole seven years of my life. I can't believe you humiliated me. I can't believe you made me walk around with my hair looking like feathers, my fingernails grown out.

I can't believe I had to sleep out there in the dew of heaven in the mud, acting like an animal. Why did you do this to me, God? Does he rail? He's grateful. He is an enthusiastic worshiper of God at this point.

Praise, extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth and his ways are just. Nebuchadnezzar says, He was right to do to me what he did. Those who walk in pride, he is able to put down.

What do we need to remember? Pride goeth before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction. Sometimes we get arrogant about our problems. Sometimes we get prideful about our difficulties and we think this shouldn't be happening to me.

I don't deserve this. That's arrogance. That's pride.

What we should be looking at is, God is my rock. Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud and he will hear my voice. He keeps wisdom for the righteous and he preserves the way of his saints.

They who wait upon God will renew their strength. They will mount up with wings as eagles. They will run and not be weary.

They will walk and not faint. And when you remember the great gospel song that was made out of that verse, the final line says, Teach me, Lord, to wait. And if there's one thing to remember from this example of Nebuchadnezzar, as it reflects and foreshadows the history of Israel itself, we have to learn to wait on the Lord.

Wait on the Lord. Be of good cheer. He shall strengthen thy heart.

That's why we're here. That's why we're afflicted, so that we can be strengthened. All things work together for good.

Well, let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for this great example, these vivid images and histories in your word. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will impress them on our hearts, so that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight, so that we can reflect the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask it in his name. Amen.