

Daniel 05-11-20a

We continue our worship this morning by turning in our Bibles to the book of Daniel, chapter 5. This is the 20th day of November, 2005, and we are in the weekend before the Thanksgiving holiday. We recognize that the Christian principles upon which our nation was founded, even though there is the idea and the concept of the separation of church and state, it does not prevent the government from acknowledging that our roots and our heritage and our atmosphere in this country is Christian and Judeo-Christian, and that people of faith built this country or contributed to the progress of our country, and the concerted attempt to eradicate God from all aspects of our society continues. The spirit of Antichrist is already at work.

You can expect a day to come when it will eventually get, in God we trust, off our money and off the lentils of our court buildings and so on. Fortunately, we have lived up to this point in a nation that respects Christianity and the word of God, and one of the holidays that is a national holiday, a time of Thanksgiving, if there is no God, who are you thanking? Thank you, evolution. Thank you, happenstance.

Thank you, random accident, for the freedom and the prosperity that we enjoy. It doesn't really work, but Abraham Lincoln, back in the 1860s, declared the Thanksgiving holiday as a national holiday. We have observed it ever since, and boo on all the people that are trying to get rid of our Christian holidays and our Christian heritage.

What they fail to acknowledge is, and of course you have to take this with a grain of salt, but better than 85% of the people in this country claim to be Christians. Now, they may not know what a Christian is, and I think the actual percentage, if you look at the percentage who are what we would call conservative evangelical Christians, who believe like we do, is down below 10%, but most people think that they have a relationship with the God of the Bible in this country. More than 85%, the last time they took a survey.

So, you've got the noisy 10 or 15% aggravating, and even I saw a Muslim interviewed over in Florida where they were trying to get rid of the holidays in school, and the guy who's the head of the local chapter of Islam there said, we think these people are messed up trying to take the Christian holidays out of the school calendar. So, it's less than 10%, probably less than 5%, and it's just these noisy, goofy ones that are trying to make this happen. But, if we, the majority, remain silent, we will be silenced.

And so, it's important to support through our vote and through our influence those governmental leaders who preserve, protect, and defend our Christian values. It's one of the things we have to be thankful for this Thanksgiving season is that we yet live in what can be characterized a Christian nation. Most of the countries in Europe can no longer say that if they ever could.

Most of them are now Muslim nations. Most of the Middle East is Muslim. A lot of Africa is

Muslim.

And between the Muslims and the Hindus and the Chinese, you have most of the globe taken over by people who are not of Christian faith. Well, let's take a moment as we turn our attention to the Word of God to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and cultivate the ministry of God's Holy Spirit in our individual souls. Father, thank you for the provision that you have made for us.

We know that in our own strength we can do nothing, but through your power, through your grace, your presence with us, all things are possible. We thank you for the preservation of your Word. In it we find reflected the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, our Benefactor, our Intercessor, our Redeemer, and our Friend.

And we know that in a soon coming day he will return for us, take us to be with himself, and we will move into the next phase of your plan in history. We thank you that in this intervening time we have the opportunity to learn. We learn through example, we learn through study, and we also learn through experience as we face the challenges and difficulties of this life and as we face the blessings and prosperities.

In each case we know that our attention and our focus should be directed toward you and toward the principles and promises and doctrines of your Word. We thank you for this country in which we live, those who protect and defend it at home and abroad. We thank you for Christian leadership in our government.

We pray for our President and his cabinet and staff. We pray for those in the Senate and in the House of Representatives and in the judiciary who seek to honor you in the function of their governmental duties. We pray that you will protect them and defend them from attack, from the insidious forces of evil that seek to erode and undermine their efforts.

We pray that you will blight and scourge and eliminate all such detrimental activities so that we can continue to honor you and honor the Lord Jesus in our daily lives and in our national lives. We ask your blessing on us as we study your Word this morning. Illuminate it through the power of your Spirit.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Our scripture reading this morning is our passage.

We have a lot to cover, and I thought about going and looking elsewhere, but we're going to take a look at our passage in Daniel chapter 5. We have already seen the fate of Nebuchadnezzar in being chopped down and having his stump banded about with the iron and bronze band, going around with eagle feathers for hair and claws for fingernails, and then coming back to his senses and praising God. His reason returned to him, and he was restored to his kingdom, and his majesty increased, and he ended the last chapter by saying, I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and his ways justice. Those who walk in pride he is able to put down.

Those who walk in pride he is able to put down. A lot of the problems in this world are caused by those who walk in pride, in self-centered arrogance, in the pursuit of their own happiness and their own gratification, and many times we have no real control over this kind of people, whether they're in the workplace, whether they're in our families, whether they're in our school system, whether they're in our community, whether they're in our media, influencing and shaping the gullible minds of the naive. We have a difficult time exercising any personal influence or opposition to such people, but God is able to put them down, and he will put them down in his time and in his way.

In the meantime, we have to endure, we have to cope, we have to do what we can do. We have that Sabbath principle we've seen so many times since studying the Ten Commandments in Exodus. Six days thou shalt labor and do all thy work.

We don't do each other's work and we can't do God's work, we do our work. On the seventh day we rest in what God does and what God has done, and in our lives we don't wait for Saturday and then sit around for a day as the Old Testament saints did. We look around in our lives and we find out what is my six-day task, what is my assignment, what is it I can do, what do I have control of.

I can't control others, I can't control the national policy, I have very limited influence even in my community, much less my state or my nation or foreign policy and such. What do I have control of? What can I influence? And ultimately, what difference will it make? Suppose you had a red phone and you could call up the leadership of the world and say, Look, France, this is what you should be doing. Look, Germany, this is what you ought to be doing.

Look here, Prime Minister Tony Blair or President George Bush or whoever. Suppose you could actually make a difference and swerve national destinies in a different direction. What is the eternal benefit of that? What is that going to get you in the millennial kingdom? How is that going to reflect the glory of God in the kingdom of the Father? We have a much greater, grander opportunity as we control our own lives, our own decisions, our own thinking and our own destiny and those for whom we are responsible.

If we're an employer, we can influence the way our company runs, the way our job is done. If we're in school, we can be an example, we can be steady, we can be diligent, we can be taking advantage of every opportunity. Whatever it is we do at home, in the workplace, in our personal lives, our relationships, as we look outside to those around us, we have the opportunity to do the six days of work that will glorify God both now and in the kingdoms to come.

And it transcends what happens in Iraq. It transcends what happens in France. It transcends what happens in Washington, D.C. or Austin, Texas because it makes an eternal difference.

There is an eternal weight of glory attached. The difficult thing is the media doesn't come on every 27 minutes saying, well, now let me tell you how important your personal life is. The media comes on and tells us, oh, wring your hands, look at what's happening in the world.

And we are constantly being distracted. This is the work of the Spirit of Antichrist. We saw this in our Revelation study.

What is Satan ever trying to do? Deceive the elect. That's his mission. If he can deceive us and deflect us and keep us off of God's program, he has won and we have lost.

You can have a strategic victory. You can go back and look at warfare. I won't give examples, but you can look at warfare, whether it's Napoleon versus Wellington on land and Nelson on the sea, whether it's the Civil War, whether it's World War I, World War II.

So many times a strategic victory is won, and yet there are still tactical battles that are lost afterward. Our strategic victory has been won on the cross, and what a crime and what a shame and what a tragedy for us to lose tactical battles when the war is won. We're just in a cleanup.

We're in a mopping up action. The enemy is defeated. It's really a shame when we let the enemy defeat us, even though he's, as Martin Luther says, for lo, his doom is sure.

It's nothing worse than being licked by a doomed man or a doomed angel. So all of this brings us to, he is able to put down those who walk in pride. Leave the proud to God.

God will resist the proud. God will give grace to the humble, and we want to be the humble. We saw that example even in the archangel Michael, who did not dare to bring a reviling accusation against Satan the first time he fought over the body of Moses, but he said, The Lord rebuke you.

God will take care of you, O proud one. That's Michael's attitude, and it ought to be ours. Rest in that seventh-day work of God.

Well, this brings us now to chapter 5, but we notice a change going from 4.37 to 5.1, because Nebuchadnezzar is the king in the last verse of the fourth chapter, and Belshazzar is king in the first verse of the fifth chapter. What has happened? Well, Nebuchadnezzar, you remember, comes to the throne of Babylon in the wake of his father Nabopolassar, who pretty well put the Babylonian Empire together through his military genius and conquests. And Nebuchadnezzar follows in his wake, and in 606 B.C., he goes around and just thumps everything in sight.

He conquers this, he conquers that, he conquers something else. He whips up on the Egyptians, he whips up on the Assyrians, he comes in and whips up on Israel, and Judah in particular. And in 603, he brings Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to Babylon.

Not long after that, in the 590s, he's going to bring Ezekiel and that crowd and stick them over by the river Kabar. Nebuchadnezzar has the dreams, Daniel interprets them, Nebuchadnezzar builds the image. Daniel doesn't seem to be present for that episode where the three Hebrew children are cast into the fire and the fourth man appears.

The fourth man was not Daniel, it was an emissary from God. But where was Daniel during that time? Well, hold that thought and we'll come back to it. But Nebuchadnezzar begins at the beginning and brings the four young men in, makes them eunuchs.

Chapter 2 is the vision of the image with the head of gold and so on. Chapter 3, you have the fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Chapter 4, we had the second dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the tree being chopped down and then the fulfillment.

And that seven-year lacuna, that seven-year hiatus, that seven-year gap in the sanity and therefore in the rule of Nebuchadnezzar. But he continues and rains all the way down until 562 or so. 563, 562, it's 40 years of rain from the time that Daniel first interprets his dream until he dies.

Well, that would be after chapter 4, verse 37, right? He is still there, he writes this autobiography chapter here, chapter 4. And then he evidently rained for some time after that. He did many great building projects in Babylon, the hanging gardens he built for his wife. He started a system of walls around Babylon and along the Euphrates River.

He didn't quite complete those walls before he died. But Daniel serves him all the way up until 563, 562 when he dies. Now, what happens after that? Well, Nebuchadnezzar leaves behind a son, one son.

And that son does not have any of the same attributes that Nebuchadnezzar had. His name in scripture is given as Evil Merodach. He is known to history as Amel Marduk.

The Merodach there is Marduk, which of course is another name for Bel. Bel and Marduk are essentially the same Babylonian deity. So Amel Marduk, or Evil Merodach, he takes over in 562 and he rules for about two years.

He is Nebuchadnezzar's only son and heir. Well, he doesn't do too well. And it was so awful under him, it sort of reminds you of Solomon's son coming to the throne and, well, if my little finger is thicker than his waist, and if he oppressed you, wait until you see me, and so on.

So he was such a bad piece of news that his brother-in-law assassinated him. Nebuchadnezzar only had one son, but he had several daughters. And so a son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar assassinates Evil Merodach, or Amel Marduk.

And this fellow's name was Neriglissar, N-E-R-I-G-L-I-S-S-A-R, Neriglissar. So he's a brother-in-law to Evil Merodach and he wipes him out and takes the throne. And he did a better job.

He rules for like four years or so. And things are a little better under him. But he dies after only four years, under circumstances we know not why.

But he rules four years and then he dies. Well, he has a son named Labashi Marduk. Well, Labashi Marduk, this would be sort of a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.

He reigns a grand total of nine months before he is assassinated. So there's a lot of turmoil in the kingdom. And so there's a Babylonian noble named Nabonidus.

He is also a son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar. He's married to another one of the sisters of Evil Merodach. Remember, Neriglissar was married to one of his sisters and Nabonidus is married to another.

So this is all a brother-in-law thing. And he wasn't from a very good family. Of course, neither was Nebuchadnezzar and Nabopolassar.

But he was not of royal blood. But he had married this other sister. Her name is Nitocris, N-I-T-O-C-R-I-S, or Nitocris.

And that was Nebuchadnezzar's second daughter. Neriglissar was married to the first daughter. He's married to the second daughter.

So he is a pretty good guy. Probably because he's not of noble blood. He's a little more practical.

So he is going to do a good job for quite some time. But during this time of turmoil, this 12 or 13 years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, because of these goofballs that were on the throne, well, the kingdom starts to kind of crumble around the edges. And so when Nabonidus comes to the throne, he has to immediately get the army and go out and start trying to reestablish Babylonian dominance.

So he's gone. He's away. And he's going to spend a lot of time off running the army.

And so he puts his son, Bel-sara-uzar, on the throne as the regent, as the reigning local administrator while he's off, so that nobody else will usurp the throne while he's gone. So he puts his own son on there and says, look, hold the fort until I get back. I've got to go whip up on all these nerdy wells that are trying to get out from under our rule.

So this, of course, is kind of complex, and there was a lot of turmoil. Records weren't real good. And for a long time, there was no historical record of Belshazzar, as we've come to know him, Bel-sara-uzar.

And his name takes several other forms. But nobody could figure this out. If you go back and read Kyle and Dalich, the great commentary on the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, it was 100-something, 110, 115 years ago.

He spends four and a half pages, and I mean the pages in that thing are dense. He's got four and a half pages talking about this problem where the Bible says Belshazzar is on the throne, and there's no historical evidence whatsoever. And all of these theories, well, is it really a second name for one of these other guys, like Nebuchadnezzar, or Nebuchadnezzar's son, Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in the

presence of the thousand.

While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, might drink from them. So they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God, which had been in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

In the same hour, the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. The king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened, and his knees knocked against one another. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers.

The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, Whoever reads this writing and tells me its interpretation shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck, and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king its interpretation. King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.

The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, O king, live forever. Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change.

There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy God, and in the days of your father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him. King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar.

Now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation. Okay, that's enough for now. So, we have this problem of the Bible saying that Belshazzar is, or has, Nebuchadnezzar as his father.

His father the king. It seems pretty emphatic that this is his father. Your father the king did this, that, and the other.

Well, how does this work? If you have a goofball for a dad and a legend for a grandfather, who are you going to call yourself? Who are you going to wrap yourself in? My father, evil Merodach, or my father, Nebuchadnezzar? As you know, in the ancient Near East, it was common practice to associate yourself with your most illustrious ancestor. Belshazzar, Belsharazar, is the grandson, through a daughter, of Nebuchadnezzar. Actually, he's a great grandson.

His father is Nabonidus, the son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar. His mother is Nitocris. Speaking of Cris, I can give you a local example of this.

Dr. Criswell, you know my association with the Criswell Foundation. Dr. Criswell had only one child. It was a daughter, Mabel Ann Criswell.

She had a very stormy and colorful life. She was married two or three times, none of them successful. From one marriage, she had a son named Cris.

In a later marriage, she had another son. But Cris was born to a father that I think was gone by the time he was born. Ann was single and didn't want to be a mother.

So she said to her folks, would you please take care of my son? I don't feel the normal maternal call. The domestic life doesn't charm me. So they took Cris into their home and raised him as their own.

Dr. Criswell adopted his grandson. So Cris today is Cris Criswell. When he talks about Dr. Criswell, he says, Dad did this, and Dad did that.

I only bring that up not as a matter of gossip, but as a matter of example, that this kind of thing can happen when you have a parental history that's not that stellar. You go back to grandparents. Many, many people in history have been raised by their grandparents for one reason or another.

And really consider them to be their real family. That's the case here. So Belshazzar wraps himself in Nebuchadnezzar and ignores evil Merodach, who didn't really last long or do well.

Belshazzar is not going to either. Because he is a real piece of work. His father, Nabopolassar, seems to be the kind of guy that likes to go out and get things done.

Probably he was that kind of father. He was busy out doing stuff and didn't pay attention to his son. And that's the way it is in the kingdom where Nabopolassar is off fighting these battles.

And he's gone for years. There's a 17-year reign. Nabonidus.

I'm sorry, Nabopolassar was Nebuchadnezzar's father. Nabonidus is off fighting these battles. So for this 17-year reign, he's gone for all but three years of it.

Generalizing the armies. This year that we're looking at in Daniel chapter 5 is 539. Remember, Nebuchadnezzar died in 562.

563. And you've had all of this history down to 539. That's how much time has passed.

Now remember Daniel. Let's say Daniel was 15 years old when he was taken in 603 B.C. So how old is he in 600 B.C.? 18. How old is he going to be in 539? You add another 61 years to that.

So he's how old? 79. 79. What a good number, 79.

He's 79 years old as Daniel chapter 5 begins. He's up there. He's elderly.

He's going to be 79 or 80, give or take. If he was 16 when he was taken, then he's 80. If he was 17, he's 81.

Somewhere in that range. He's circa 80 years old, you could imagine at this time. And it's an interesting symmetry here that Nebuchadnezzar reigns for 40 years after Daniel interprets his dream.

And Daniel seems to be exactly twice that when you get to this point. And he has fallen out of favor. He is not in charge anymore.

In the course of all of these palace intrigues, no one has assassinated Daniel, but he's been sidelined. He doesn't appear to be the leader of the Chaldeans or the astrologers anymore. Because when they come in to talk about the handwriting on the wall, Daniel is not among them.

And it takes the queen mother, this would be Nidicrus, who comes in here and says, Hey, I remember the stories that my father told, probably before she was born, about this man of wisdom. And she knew Daniel. She had grown up when Daniel was still the leader of the court of Nebuchadnezzar.

And Nebuchadnezzar held him in high esteem. And she says, Remember, umpteen years ago, I remember, when Daniel was the man full of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. So she comes in and tells Belshazzar, But look at Belshazzar.

What's he doing? Well, pops out fighting the battles and winning the wars, and all we have to do is just live it up. Break out the wine. Let's have a party.

The cat's away. The kittens will play. Sort of a thing.

And that's exactly what he's doing here. It's interesting to look at the later history. I can pull this up from Kyle and Dalich.

The later history of Nabonidus. And I think I may have called him Nabopolassar a couple of times. Nabonidus evidently gets defeated, but he is not killed.

Cyrus defeats him in battle. That's the reason these armies are going to come in. You know the last half of this chapter where they come in and the Persians take over the Babylonian Empire.

But the reason they are there and the reason Belshazzar doesn't have a clue is he figures, well, Pop's out there whipping up on them in some far off place. I don't have to concern myself with that. Let's have a party.

So Nabonidus is out there doing all the work and Belshazzar is drinking all the booze and entertaining his concubines and his friends. He's got a thousand nobles. None of the nobles are

concerned.

This is the degenerate elite in Babylon that never could get ahead in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. But in subsequent years, these ne'er-do-wells have all sort of come to prominence. So these nobles that are favorites and friends, this is the same kind of thing you saw in the latter years of the Roman Caesars where it was the profligates and the ne'er-do-wells and the dissipated ones who briefly had their moment in the sun before they were wilted and destroyed.

So Cyrus defeats Nabonidus and takes him prisoner and marches on Babylon. Now Nabonidus had been smart enough to finish the walls that Nebuchadnezzar had built around Babylon and so they couldn't storm the city directly. This is the source of Belshazzar's confidence.

Hey, nobody can get into this city. We've got provisions forever. We've got these big walls that my dad built.

So all is well. So they're in there eating and drinking and making merry. In the meantime, Cyrus has already defeated his father, taken him prisoner, has marched on Babylon, looked over the landscape and said, you know what? I know how we can beat this city.

The Euphrates flows through the river. So he sent his engineers and they dammed up the Euphrates and diverted it around the city. And so this big flooding river that used to go through the wall and make an impenetrable barrier, now there's this great wadi that's empty and he just marches in under the walls and takes the city without hardly a shot being fired in anger.

Very famous taking of Babylon and the archaeologists that have dug up the foundations of the ancient city of Babylon have found the ruins of these walls, Nabonidus' walls, hard bricks covered with asphalt. They waterproofed these bricks and they had the inscribed name of Nabonidus and he was the last king and that's why they couldn't figure out where Belshazzar came from and all the critics had a heyday in the 1800s and most of the last century saying the Bible is messed up. It says there's a Belshazzar and there's no historical record.

Look, we've got the bricks. Here's Nabonidus and he's the guy that Cyrus defeated. We've got the inscriptions of Cyrus saying look, I took Nabonidus prisoner.

Actually, Nabonidus survives and is set up sort of in exile kind of like after they defeated Napoleon and put him on Elba. Nabonidus is set up and lives and dies of old age in a little kingdom elsewhere. Cyrus respected him for his generalship and for his integrity and he was basically a pretty good guy and so Cyrus didn't kill him and set him up and let him live out his life in a villa somewhere.

He far outlives his son. But Herodotus tells this story and subsequent history and archaeology have confirmed it. Well, all of this brings us back to the situation where Daniel is once again by himself and you don't see Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

Perhaps they've died of old age. Daniel himself is very advanced in years. But it brings us back to this question that we raised when we saw the image on the plain of Dura and the three friends put into the fiery furnace and surviving.

Why was Daniel not there when the image worship issue came up and now the three friends are not here and here's Daniel with the handwriting on the wall. Well, my suggestion about this has to do with foreshadowing and it has to do with the principle that we saw long ago when we studied the Gospel of Mark and I mentioned this briefly before about how Herod as king pictures and represents the people of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar, as we saw in the last chapter goes away for seven full years.

And if you look at the stopping of the Israelite clock fifty days after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus and his resurrection you have the seven weeks and then on the fiftieth day you have the day of Pentecost and that's when the Israel clock stops and the church clock begins. That's in the thirty-third year of the Lord Jesus' life and it's the cutting off of Messiah at the end of the sixty-ninth week of Daniel which we're going to see in future chapters. There are seven years left to run in the national life of Israel and what is going to be the situation for Israel in that seventieth week? That's what we've been studying in Revelation.

It is a time of great woe. Woe to the city. Woe to Zion.

Woe to the inhabitants. It is the three-fold woe that we saw after the blowing of the seventh trumpet and so on. It's a time of great upheaval.

It is called the time of Jacob's trouble. That's one of the names for the tribulation period, right? And isn't it interesting that Nebuchadnezzar who is a believer in God and is the king of the Jews at this time goes through a time of tribulation for seven years and at the end of those seven years he is restored to a glory greater than what he had at the beginning. This is exactly what God has promised for the nation of Israel and it's odd that God would use King Nebuchadnezzar as a picture of his own people, but that seems to be what God is doing.

And before he acknowledges God, he's big on idolatry, as was the nation of Israel. And so you see a lot of similarities there. Well, what about Daniel and his three friends? Daniel comes and preaches the truth to Nebuchadnezzar.

Does he not? Nebuchadnezzar toys with it, gives sort of a superficial assent to it after he interprets the first dream, but it doesn't really take. And Nebuchadnezzar doesn't come to write chapter four of this book until after the seven years. You will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Israel has not yet fully recognized the Messiah, and they won't. There was a tiny remnant, but Israel as a nation will worship God through his Messiah, the Lord Jesus, after the seven year tribulation and once they go into that millennial kingdom. So in that picture, who does Daniel sort of represent and symbolize? It's the Lord Jesus.

Daniel is to the king as Jesus is to the nation of Israel. And who is it that is going to superintend during that seven years of tribulation for Israel? Who is standing in heaven with the seven sealed little scroll? Who is about to come and effect the restoration? Who do you think got Nebuchadnezzar back on his feet in the kingdom after his lycanthropy was over with, his little animal episode? Daniel. Daniel ran the kingdom in his absence.

Daniel integrated him back in. Daniel could easily have sponsored a coup or put someone else on the throne during those seven years, but he was loyal to Nebuchadnezzar. He preserved Nebuchadnezzar's interests.

Probably hid Nebuchadnezzar's condition from the bulk of the nation and certainly the surrounding nations and was certainly effectual in restoring him to his throne. And that's exactly what the Lord Jesus is going to do for Israel. Now, in that light, you have Daniel's three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

And they are his associates, his contingents, his disciples, if you will. And I think that they represent in this foreshadowing the role that the disciples play. And this makes it very interesting when you look at chapter 3 and you look at the image set up and you look at these three who have to bear witness in the absence of Daniel.

In reality, Daniel may have been on a foreign deputation. Daniel may have been ensconced in the palace and nobody expected him to be out there on the plain of Dora bowing and scraping. Nebuchadnezzar wasn't out there and Daniel is his right-hand man.

And maybe he was in the palace and they're in the middle of a conversation and the orchestra cranks up and no one says, Hey Daniel, why aren't you bowing? For whatever reason, he was not present out there. They are separate from him. And they are convicted and judged and sentenced and the sentence is carried out apart from him.

They are separated. This is the situation of Jesus' disciples after his departure. They are the ones who bear witness.

They are the ones who bear testimony to God. And when we come back from the break, we're going to see if this is just a fanciful idea or if there's some substance to a comparison of Daniel's three friends and the disciples of the Lord Jesus. But our conclusion that we draw as we look at this beginning of chapter 5 and the whole sweep of the book of Daniel is this.

God's word is accurate and faithful regardless of what science or archaeology or history says. You can trust the Bible. Believers at the end of the 1800s and through much of the 1900s were attacked.

And this is one of the things that was brought up as a contradiction and a fallacy and a fraud in the Bible that there was anybody named Nebuchadnezzar. And they said, look at this archaeological evidence. Here's the bricks of Nabonidus.

And we've got Herodotus and Josephus himself talking about this whole thing. And you're full of it. Your Bible has a mistake and therefore it's invalid and wrong.

And people had to put their faith in the word of God regardless of what science and archaeology said. We have to do the same thing. Let God be true and every man a liar, as it says.

Well, let's pause here and take our break. We'll come back and continue our study of the book of Daniel.