

Daniel 05-12-04a

This is the 4th of December, 2005. We continue this morning our study in the book of Daniel. And we've already prayed and we have prepared ourselves for this study.

As has been my recent practice, I have a handout for you to help us get a grip on the events that are taking place here in the life of Daniel and particularly in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. We find ourselves in this section between chapter 4 and chapter 5. We have realized that there is a great gap between those two chapters before Belshazzar, the king, makes his feast. But I was thinking about Nebuchadnezzar and I was thinking about his lycanthropy, his reversion into animal characteristics and feeding on grass for seven times.

And as is sometimes the case, you know how every so often we'll cover something and then I find myself dissatisfied with the coverage and we just take a giant step backward and go take another look at it. And we're going to do that this morning, at least for a moment, because something's just been nagging at the edges of my brain or mind. I guess mind would be better.

Brain is more the physical. I don't think anything's actually eating my brain. But it's been nagging at my mind about this whole episode in the life of Nebuchadnezzar.

It's a big deal in the book of Daniel because Nebuchadnezzar has this dream in chapter 4 and details it in his own words, gives us a little autobiographical coverage of it. He gives this dream, Daniel explains it, and then Nebuchadnezzar, after a year, experiences everything that the dream prophesied. And I asked myself, we've covered the details, we know what the account says, we know how this goes, but it's a pretty big thing.

I can't remember any other time in history where God chose the Gentile ruler of a nation and drove him out of his mind for any period of time, particularly seven years. It just seems more significant than what we have noticed. So I asked myself, why would God do this? And we look in the scriptures, we look in chapter 4, and when Daniel interprets this dream for Nebuchadnezzar, and he says, This vision of the tree which you had, it grew and became strong, its height reached to the heavens, it could be seen by all the earth, its leaves were lovely, its fruit was abundant, there was food for all, under it the beasts of the field dwell, in its branches the birds of the heaven have their home.

It is you, O King, who have grown and become strong, for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth. Well, there's something the matter with this dominion. God raised up Nebuchadnezzar.

No one rules unless it is given to them by God. So the nature, the root of the problem here, why would God strike down Nebuchadnezzar when it is God who has enabled him to prosper? God could have done this back when the image was standing in the plain of Dura, and the three friends go through the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar seems to be chastened by that experience, and by seeing the fourth man, and by his explicit acknowledgement that the God of

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, or Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, is the one true God.

And you think, well, he is not struck down because he makes that acknowledgement. And I think that is indeed the case, but it doesn't stick. It doesn't last.

Why is God dealing with Nebuchadnezzar at all? And this is a principle I think we need to review. We've touched on it in times past. We've touched on it in our Gospel studies in both Mark and Luke.

In Old Testament days, all the way up to the time of Christ, what is the focus of God's plan and purpose? It is the people of faith. And in the latter 1,500 years of the age of Israel, it is the nation of Israel. Everything revolves around Israel.

And we're beginning to see in our studies that look ahead to the millennial kingdom, in Ezekiel as we look at the millennial temple, in the book of Revelation, as we look forward to the conditions that will pertain in the kingdom, who is in, who is out, who is allowed, as they pass under the rod, into the land and into the city, we are seeing that there is a very strong emphasis and focus on the nation of Israel. Well, Nebuchadnezzar is not an Israelite. But, by conquering Israel and taking control of those people, what has he done? What has he made himself? The king of Israel.

So, he does not get a get-out-of-jail-free card because he's a Babylonian. Just as Herod will not. Just as Darius the Mede will not.

Just as Cyrus, the king of Persia, will not. Just as Xerxes or Ahasuerus in the book of Esther will not. Just as the pharaoh of Egypt did not.

If you decide that you're going to rule Israel, then God says, OK, fine, you have some responsibilities, and you have some requirements and expectations that you have to meet. And by conquering Israel, you put yourself squarely in the crosshairs of God's righteousness and justice. And he says, if you're going to shepherd my people, then you have skylined yourself.

This is what they told us when I was a second lieutenant at Quantico and started teaching us about tactics. You know, there's the crest of a hill or a ridge, and then there's the military crest. Do you know what the military crest of a hill or ridge is? It is the highest point that you can occupy without silhouetting yourself in the vision of the enemy.

The military crest is where you put in your defenses. The military crest is as far up as you can go without making yourself a target. And if you go any further, and you silhouette yourself against the sky, and you make yourself visible to the enemy, you have skylined yourself.

You have made yourself an issue. And this is what Nebuchadnezzar has done. He's real happy that he has subjugated Egypt and he's subjugated Palestine and he has subjugated the known world that exists around him.

But unwittingly, he has become the king of the Jews. So now God is going to be paying attention to him and is going to be expecting things. He's going to confront him with, if you're going to rule the people of God, you're going to have to deal with God.

And that's what he has done. So God is going to give him a warning. God is going to give him information.

God doesn't judge him outright. God doesn't judge him in the absence of information. God judges no one that way.

Everyone gets a chance to consider the truth and to make a decision about the truth. What's Nebuchadnezzar's first contact with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? We saw this back in chapter 1 and 2, didn't we? We saw it with the first dream. Nebuchadnezzar comes face to face, more or less, with the God of Israel in that first dream, the dream of the great image.

Nobody can interpret that dream. Daniel comes in and interprets it. Nebuchadnezzar says, I know now that your God is the God that has the truth, reveals the truth, and he promotes Daniel.

That's good. He is not following the pattern of Pharaoh in the days of Moses. Moses goes into Pharaoh and says, Let the people go.

There's a God in heaven, and he demonstrates his power with turning rods to serpents, and turning hands to leprosy, and so on. God increasingly demonstrates his power through the nine plagues, followed by the Passover death of the firstborn, and Pharaoh hardens his heart. Hardens his heart.

Hardens his heart. Nebuchadnezzar doesn't manifest a hardened heart, does he? Initially. He says, OK, fine.

Looks like your God's the real deal. Great. Elevate you.

He is much more in the mold of the first Pharaoh that promotes Joseph. Joseph gets there the very same way. He interprets a dream that God gives the king.

Remember the fat kind and the lean kind? The fat cattle and the lean cattle? And the ears of corn that Pharaoh has and Joseph interprets? And what is the response of that Pharaoh? He says, OK, let's go for it. You're second in command. You take charge.

Let's handle this famine deal. He has a positive response. And that Pharaoh is blessed and lives a long and prosperous life because he honors God and he honors Joseph.

Nebuchadnezzar initially enjoys that same blessing because he has the same initial response. But you see him slipping away. And by the time he raises that image on the plain of Dura, he's getting a little full of himself.

And he's kind of lapsing away from that recognition of Daniel and the three friends, the God of Israel, the people of Israel. And he disregards all of these Israelite captives in his land. He says that everyone must bow down.

And he is forcing the people of God to do a thing that they should not have to do. And he knows better at this point. He knows the faith of Daniel.

He knows the faith of the three friends. And he just doesn't take it into consideration. It isn't like he's deliberately trying to make an issue out of them.

But when the three friends do not worship, he gets a burr under his saddle. And he doesn't stop and think. Their God is the God of Daniel.

Their God is the God that gave me that vision and its interpretation. And he forgets what he knows. He disregards what he knows.

And he acts contrary to it. And that to me is at the heart of the first half of the book of Daniel. It's one thing to know what you know.

It's something else to remember what you know and to live by what you know. This is what distinguishes Daniel and Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah and Ezekiel, by the way, from many of their contemporaries who know the God of Israel, who know His word, who know His will, but don't live by it. Expediency takes over.

Convenience takes over. The sway of popular conduct. Well, everybody else is bowing.

I don't want to stick out. Everyone else is thinking this way. Everyone else is operating this way.

This is our challenge, isn't it? We live in a modern day where it is easy to just go with the flow. It's easy to just blend in. It's easy to not make an issue of oneself.

And we have to make a decision, don't we? We have to decide what are the essentials, what are the non-essentials. A great pastor of the recent past emphasized and taught over and over again, when it comes to being a Christian, we have to be inflexible about essential things. There are essentials about which there is no debate, no dispute, and there's no compromise.

There are non-essentials about which we can be flexible. This is an issue in fellowship. There are Christians with whom we can have fellowship.

They may have a different understanding of the afterlife. They may have a different understanding of Christian practice. They may have a different understanding of dispensations or the lack thereof.

Maybe they don't understand the difference between Israel and the church. Maybe they don't understand the doubtful things that Paul taught about. Is it right to eat meat offered to idols or not? They may come down on the opposite side of that.

From our perspective, and without patting ourselves on the back, if we feel like we have a good understanding of God's Word that's been confirmed through years of study and through practical application, that puts us in the position of being the stronger brother having to bear with a weaker brother. There may be other areas where they are the stronger brother and we are the weaker brother. But we don't break fellowship.

We don't divide and say, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Peter. The problem in the Corinthian church, Paul says, I hear there are wars and divisions among you. It shouldn't be that way.

There's one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. And we ought to be united on the essential things. One Lord, that's an essential.

One faith, that's an essential. One baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that's an essential. Not two baptisms, not five baptisms, one baptism.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. Now if there's one baptism, which one is it? Shall we exit to the backyard and get dunked in the pool or shall we accept the baptism of God's Holy Spirit? There's one baptism, Paul says. Paul himself baptized people in the book of Acts.

But in the fullness of time, when the canon is complete, there's one baptism. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. These are essentials.

So the tricky thing is deciding what is an essential and what is a non-essential. In chapter 3, the three friends of Daniel had to make a decision. Is bowing before this image or refusing to do so, is this issue an essential or a non-essential? I can bow my body, I'm not bowing my heart.

I can do a sweeping bow from the waist here or get down on my hands and knees and I can pray to God during that time. I'm not actually worshipping this colossal 9 foot by 90 foot tall image. I'm just not making waves.

Who's going to know the difference? They decided that that was an essential. Daniel, as we're going to see in an upcoming chapter, is going to decide that his prayer life is an essential. And he's not going to change it even though there's nothing by way of command that says that he should pray in his window three times a day.

But he chooses to do so. And when people start making an issue out of it, he says, well, tough. Not going to change.

It's an essential for Daniel. So this is really the challenge for you and for me, isn't it? We have to be able to discern what is essential, what is it that brooks no compromise, no giving of ground. We stay there.

You know, this comes up in battle. You have a unit that is occupying some ground. You might

get orders from higher headquarters that says you've got to defend that to the death.

There's nothing spookier than going to an old battlefield about which you've read and about which you know a lot. And you walk on ground that men bled and died to defend and hold. And at the time, it was an essential.

And now it's jungle. Now it's unoccupied. Now maybe there's a marble marker or a little sign, you know, historic place.

But nobody's so worried about that piece of ground that they're going to stand there and die for it now. But in 1864, it made a difference. In 1943 or 44, it was an essential.

And people bled and died that somebody not come and take that ground. And you walk on it now and you think, what's the big deal? It's a field. It's a jungle.

It's abandoned. It isn't important at all. People built and defended military bases and you go there now and they're just hollow shells.

They're empty. They're unoccupied. We have to decide in the context of our life.

Nobody can tell you what your essentials are. Nobody can tell you what your non-essentials are except God Himself. It is our responsibility individually in our battlefield to determine in the light of God's Word what is an essential and what is a non-essential.

Daniel was willing to go to the den of lions rather than stop praying three times a day. The three friends were willing to go into the fiery furnace rather than make a simple bodily movement of bowing in front of a statue. We're not in their situation.

We're not in their time and in their place. Our issues are different. And we have to decide what our essentials and non-essentials are.

Now, Nebuchadnezzar. As the king of Israel at this time comes under responsibility for how he thinks and for what he does. The policies that he implements.

I have a handout here I want to have you take a look at. Because I ask myself, why did God pick this time? Why do the watchers issue this decree? Why does God send the dream to Nebuchadnezzar at this time and say you need to straighten up and fly right. Or bad things are going to happen.

This handout is an excerpt from the material in the Shoyan collection. S-C-H-O-Y-E-N Which is a collection of archaeological artifacts and inscriptions and things. This is called the Tower of Babel.

Stele. I don't know that it's actually the Tower of Babel. But it is a ziggurat.

That's the issue. Tall, conical-shaped building in Babylon. Look at what this says.

The inscription says Etemenanki Ziggurat Babili The house, the foundation of heaven and earth Ziggurat in Babylon. That is the caption that identifies the great Ziggurat of Babylon, the Tower of Babel. The royal inscription of Nebuchadnezzar continues Etemenanki, I made it the wonder of the people of the world I raised its top to the heaven made doors for the gates and I covered it with bitumen and bricks.

This, if you continue reading there, is an inscription in Neo-Babylonian on black stone. Circa 604-562 B.C. That, of course, is the duration of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The upper half of a stela with rounded top gives you the dimensions there.

Three columns. Cuneiform script. To the left, there is the carving of the Tower of Babel from a side view clearly showing the relative proportions of the seven steps and the buttress construction and a temple complex at its foot.

To the right, the standing figure of Nebuchadnezzar II with his royal conical hat holding a spear in his left hand and a scroll with the rebuilding plans of the tower in his outstretched right hand. At the top, a line drawing of the ground plan of the temple on the top showing both the outer walls and the inner arrangement of rooms including the one that had once had a fine large coach in it richly covered and a gold table beside it according to Herodotus, The Histories, Volume 1, 181. On the left edge, a line drawing of the ground plan of Esagila, the temple of Marduk showing the buttresses as an integral part of the construction.

Now the picture, I've included it there. This isn't the highest resolution picture in the world but if you look in the upper right of that little picture you see there's kind of a if you look closely, you can see Nebuchadnezzar. That's the guy.

That's a picture of him with his little cone-shaped hat and you can see the spear in his hand. There's a lot of, you know, damage over time to this inscription but you can see him pretty well. You can see his beard there.

He's looking to the left. I think this is just fascinating. This is the guy that wrote Daniel chapter 4 and there's his face.

That's him. And this inscription was made in his lifetime. And what does it detail? He's rebuilding the Tower of Babel.

You know, that's where the thing was. This is the same thing Saddam was trying to do. Rebuild Babylon, rebuild a lot of the monuments and things.

Well, Nebuchadnezzar said, you know, we're the cradle of history. We're the cradle of civilization here. And here's the foundations and the ruins of this ancient tower.

Let's rebuild it. If you look at the commentary section at the bottom of this page it says the Ziggurat in Babylon was originally built around the time of Hammurabi 1792 to 1750 BC. I could tell you a little something about those dates.

But Hammurabi himself was building on the old foundations of the Tower of Babel. So this is like the second time that somebody tried to rebuild it. The third time was Saddam.

Hammurabi tried to build the thing and it fell apart. Nebuchadnezzar tried and succeeded, by the way, in rebuilding the Ziggurat. This is a picture.

This is an inscription. He completed it. Look at what it says in the commentary here.

The restoration and enlargement began under Nabopolassar. That's Nebuchadnezzar's father, remember? He got sick and he had to run back up there and take the throne. It was finished after 43 years of work under Nebuchadnezzar II.

That's our man, 604 to 562 BC. It has been calculated that at least 17 million bricks had to be made and fired. And by the way, each one of those 17 million bricks has Nebuchadnezzar's name on it.

Every single brick has his name on it. Babylon with the Ziggurat was captured by Cyrus, that Keros there, that's Cyrus. 538 BC, Darius, that's Darius.

519 BC, Xerxes, 483 BC, and entirely destroyed by Alexander I, Alexander the Great, 331 BC. Alexander comes in and his great contribution to history is to knock this Ziggurat back down. Until now, our knowledge of the Tower of Babel was based on the account of Genesis 11, 1 through 9, and of Herodotus' histories, with the measurement of the first two steps, and a Seleucid tablet of 229 BC, that's in the Louvre, giving the size of the steps.

However, no contemporary illustrations have been known, resulting in a long series of fanciful paintings throughout the art history until present. Here we have, for the first time, an illustration contemporary with Nebuchadnezzar II, restoring and enlarging the Tower of Babel, and a caption making the identity absolutely sure. We also have the building plans, as well as a short account of the reconstruction process.

Only four of the 24 lines concerning this have so far been read. These cuneiform inscriptions are exceedingly difficult to decipher, especially when they're damaged to this extent. This had originally been one stela, and in ancient times it was broken into three parts.

Well, I think they tell that story here, up above, where it says, Context, the lower part of the stela, with the account of further building work on other temples, was in a religious institution in the United States. The stela was found in a special hiding chamber, broken into three parts in antiquity, at Robert Calderway's excavations of the site of the Tower of Babel in 1917. Its importance was immediately recognized.

A photograph was taken with three archaeologists standing next to the stela. With the imminent danger of war breaking out in the area, they decided to rescue it. Each archaeologist carried one part out of the war zone.

One part was taken to Germany, one to Jordan, and then London, the third to the USA. Now the two most important parts have been reunited in the Cheyenne Collection. And those top two, you can see the crack between those two pieces.

The third piece exists, but hasn't been reunited. So, you know, you've got to travel around to even look at these lines and decipher them. But this was first published in about 1975.

So any of your biblical references, like if you've got an old copy of Kylan Dalich or the Izbe prior to 1975, nobody knew much about this inscription. But isn't it interesting that sometime in his reign, in the latter part of his reign, Nabuchadnezzar had started rebuilding this thing. And in the process of doing empire building, in the process of putting down rebellions, in the process of aggrandizing and capturing and bringing in peoples, and as Nabuchadnezzar is growing and building the Babylonian Empire, he keeps the construction going on this.

17 million clay bricks. Every single one of them has got Nabuchadnezzar's name on it. You know what that tells me? Only the foundations got laid in the time of Nabopolassar.

And all of the superstructure was built by Nabuchadnezzar. Daniel was there. Daniel watched the construction crews working on this thing.

Daniel probably saw and read this inscription. It just boggles the mind. It's like the Hezekiah tunnel inscription.

I look at that and I think, you know, Isaiah saw this. Isaiah walked past it and read it. Isaiah might have seen the guys chiseling it into the wall.

And there it is. You can look at it. You can see the very thing.

Lay your eyes on something that a Bible prophet looked at. That's what you have here. I would bet money that Daniel himself saw this stela created.

That Daniel read it. Daniel walked by it wherever it was in Babylon. And Daniel, this ziggurat and this King Nabuchadnezzar that we're looking at here in this inscription.

This is what Daniel saw. This is what we're reading about in chapter 4. Now, why would God decide that Nabuchadnezzar had gotten too big for his britches? The people of God are in the land of the Tower of Babel. That's why.

He has become a tree that has gotten so big and so large that evil is starting to dwell in the branches. The birds of the air. And he's accountable.

It doesn't matter what somebody in the ancient land of Asia Minor or someone down in Egypt is doing. The Egyptian pharaoh can build whatever monuments and put whatever paintings into the funerary inscriptions. They can do whatever they want down there.

Israel is not in Egypt. Israel is not in ancient Greece. Israel is in Babylon.

And Nabuchadnezzar is making himself into the same mold as the people that built the Tower of Babel. The same mold that Hammurabi tried to rebuild. He's on the very site of the Tower of Babel.

I think this gives us a good insight into the thinking of Nabuchadnezzar. My name is on every brick in that thing. Who is the greatest king that has ever lived? Who is the head of gold? Who is the surpassing culmination of ruling power? It's me.

Just read the bricks. My name is not Acme. My name is Nabuchadnezzar.

And there it is on every brick. So I find this very fascinating. And I just can't stop looking at that picture.

I can't stop looking at the face of Nabuchadnezzar right there on that inscription. I am building the Tower of Babel, he says. It's really something.

So the watchers take note because this is the land where the people of God dwell. This is where Ezekiel is. This is where Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael, and all the rest of the people of Israel are.

They're going to be there for 70 years. They are there at God's initiation. At God's behest.

It is God's plan and will that they be there. To learn what? Why are the people of God captive in Babylon? What are they supposed to be learning? What's the great refrain throughout the book of Ezekiel? Then you shall know what? That I am the Lord? Then they shall know that I am the Lord. Now, if an Israelite walks out and sees this giant golden statue, if an Israelite walks out and sees the ziggurat of the Tower of Babel going up with Nebuchadnezzar's name on every brick, who's the Lord? It's pretty tough for God to teach His people the lesson of who is the Lord when Nebuchadnezzar is lording it over everything in the area.

And so God, through the agency of these watchers, says, I will humble the proud. I will resist the proud. Pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty spirit before destruction.

And this is a man who is not insensitive to the things of God. Nebuchadnezzar has indicated he's not like the Pharaoh of the Exodus. He is not like Agag.

He is not a thumb-chopping king. He's not anti-God. He's sympathetic, but he's somewhat indifferent.

And God will not stand for indifference among those who acknowledge His presence. Indifference isn't good enough. Apathy isn't good enough.

Forgetting isn't good enough. And so God sends an active discipline on Nebuchadnezzar. When you look at the nature of this discipline, you see that in verse 31, a voice falls from heaven, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken, the kingdom has departed from you.

They will drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like the oxen. That particular detail is repeated five times in this section.

Five times it's said, you will eat grass like the oxen, or he did eat grass like the oxen. Why eat grass? I can understand the bird claws and the bird feathers and his appearance being all matted and bestial during this time. But why eat grass? Why is that particular detail? Why couldn't he eat bugs or eat locusts and wild honey or something? Why does he eat grass? Well, the word for grass here is the same in both Aramaic and Hebrew.

And it is Esev, E-S-E, soft B, E-S-E-V. And it's the word for herbage. It includes grass, but it's not limited to grass.

This includes grains. You go back to Genesis 1.11, when God says, let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed. Well, the first word there, grass, is a different word.

The one that says the herb that yields seed, that's our word, Esev. The herb that yields seed. So he's not only eating lawn clippings.

There are grains. The disciples themselves walked through the field and did a little reaping by hand and eating of the heads of the grain. So Nebuchadnezzar is getting a lot of roughage in his diet there.

He's getting grains, herbs, edible herbs. All the animal kingdom ate Esev in the Garden of Eden. In the millennial kingdom, all animals will eat Esev once again.

When God wants to discipline a nation, He takes away these herbs. In Isaiah 42.15, God says, I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation. Dry up all their Esev.

There won't be anything to eat. This is the stalk and the staff of life, so to speak. So that provision is there.

And it looks back, in a sense, that grass is very evocative in Scripture because the grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God shall stand forever. It is an essential, it's a staple. You don't have animal life without the herbs.

You don't have meaningful human life without the herbs because without that, no one can eat. So it is an essential, but it is transitory. It is temporary.

It easily withers and fades away. It is subject to weather and climate. And in a harsh environment, you can lose this very necessary thing.

And it puts us in mind of what we learned in Ecclesiastes about how you can spring up and flourish and then vanish. Every day in the twisted insanity that grips Nebuchadnezzar for these seven years, he's eating these herbs. And in some part of his mind wondering, well, there's herbs today, will there be herbs tomorrow? There is a transitory and temporary implication, evocation.

That's what it suggests, is that you're dependent on these plants growing, and if they don't grow, you're going to die. He doesn't eat meat, he doesn't eat bugs, he doesn't eat insects, he eats grass. And seven times pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men.

Look again at this inscription. Who's up at the top of the stela? Who is standing there with the spear and with the scroll, saying, I've got the power and I've got the plan? That's what the spear and the scroll are. I'm wearing the tall hat.

Right? What does God say? You are going to be crawling around looking for shrubbage, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever he chooses. And there needs to be a little sky above that image on the stela. And there needs to be a representation of divine power, raining down on you.

You don't stand at the top of the monument here, with your spear and your scroll saying, I've done it. You don't put your name on every single brick. By the way, what name is on all the accoutrements, and constructed things in the temple? What does it say? They have found artifacts and implements with that inscription.

They've found vessels and so on, with that Holy to the Lord inscription. It's one of the most common things they find, in and around places of worship in Israel. Holy to the Lord.

Nebuchadnezzar says, oh no. It's me, myself, and I. I'm the great trinity that builds all of this. Well, what is our interpretation and application of this observation? We control our destiny.

We are the people of God now, are we not? And what happens to national Israel in the Old Testament, applies to the individual in the New Testament age. We are, in effect, in the place of the king. We are captain of our ship.

We are master of our fate. We make decisions about what we do, when we do it, how we do it, whether we do it, what the priorities are. We stand there with a spear and with a scroll in our hand, don't we? We wear the little conical hat.

And we can easily construct a world where we've stamped our name on every brick. What does God say? God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Do we remember that God is the Lord? Then they shall know that I am the Lord.

Do we dedicate our efforts? Do we dedicate our constructions? Do we dedicate our plans? Do we dedicate our spear and our scroll and our little pointy hat? Do we dedicate that to reflecting the glory of God? It isn't that we don't know. Is Nebuchadnezzar ignorant of the God of Israel? Does God do this to manifest Himself to Nebuchadnezzar? Not at all. Nebuchadnezzar knows the God of Israel, knows His place, knows His plan, and knows His purpose.

He's just forgotten it. He's set it aside. He's not taking it into account.

He hasn't factored it in. He hasn't treated it as a reality in his own life. And that's our problem.

We know better. We know who God is. Our problem is we don't remember it as we build our ziggurats and as we fight our battles and as we put on our little pointy hat.

And the lesson we take away from Daniel chapter 4, above all others, is we have to remember day by day, minute by minute, task by task, conversation by conversation, thought by thought, that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men. We are the temple of God and He's supposed to be dwelling between the cherubim and our souls. And we are supposed to be worshipping Him and offering the sacrifices of praise and the sacrifice of self, the living sacrifice of Romans 12, 1 and 2, not being conformed to the world, being transformed by the renewing of our minds, else we can expect to be humbled.

We can expect to end up eating grass and being unrecognizable. It's very interesting to me, by the way, that there is an inscription, a tablet. Now this tablet was found in 1917 that has this picture on it.

And I mentioned earlier that something was published in 1975. That's not this one. The tablet that was found and published in 1975 is a tablet that publishes the fact that Nebuchadnezzar suffered some strange event in the latter part of his reign.

The first part of his reign, the first 11 to 13 years, there's all kinds of inscriptions. There's all kinds of things. And he's touting himself and saying what he built.

But suddenly, the number of inscriptions drops dramatically and their content changes. A.K. Grayson, in 1975, published a fragment of a tablet where for some unspecified reason, King Nebuchadnezzar becomes disoriented. His orders are contradictory.

He doesn't heed the mention of his name. He does not show concern for son or daughter. And he ceases his care for the temples of worship.

Even his own life is of no value to him. The text ends with the king going to the holy gate and weeping bitterly to the great gods. It's a fragmentary text, but it's from the time of Nebuchadnezzar and it's very striking that there is archaeological evidence that Nebuchadnezzar had a mental problem in the latter part of his reign and got to where he didn't care about the temples of the gods.

He didn't care about his family. He didn't respond to the mention of his name. And this is rare because typically, if a king had a malady or a weakness, it would never make it into an inscription form.

Yet Nebuchadnezzar allowed this inscription to be made. And why? Same reason he published the letter that was found in Daniel chapter 4. He recognized that this was a message from the Most High who rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he chooses. So it's a very fascinating confirmation of what we already know to be true from the word of God and what

we know to be true in our own lives.

We have to remember who we are. We have to remember who God is and what our place in his plan and purpose is. Let's pause and take our break.

When we come back, we'll pick up with Belshazzar in chapter 5.