

Daniel 05-12-18b

Let's resume our Christmastime study now in the seventh chapter of Daniel. We've already seen that this is back in the first year of Belshazzar. His father, Nabonidus, spends 10 years away fighting battles to try to preserve the crumbling Babylonian Empire.

There is a stela that has been found that communicates this information. The archaeologists have found an inscription that indicates that Nabonidus spent 10 years in Tema, and this probably began in 549 BC, which was the year that Cyrus defeated Astyages, the king of Media. And you have the whole Medo-Persian Empire starting to ascend.

And so, Nabonidus has to go deal with this threat. Of course, he's going to slow it down, but he will not ultimately stave it off. Babylonian documents will continue to be dated by Nabonidus' reign, but Belshazzar is the king.

So, in the context that Daniel is writing, it makes sense to date things within the years of Belshazzar rather than the years of Nabonidus, because that's the king they see. These visions, both in this chapter, Chapter 7 in Aramaic, and Chapter 8, where we're going to go back to Hebrew, come from the beginning of this 10-year regency period that is going to end with the events back in Chapter 5. The structure of the book here emphasizes the link. Belshazzar is the link here to Chapter 5, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8. Prophecies were written down, thankfully, or we wouldn't have them.

They were written down. We find this again in Chapter 8. We're going to see it partway through Chapter 8, when Daniel is going to say, "...the vision of the evenings and mornings which was told is true. Therefore, seal up the vision, for it refers to many days in the future." Why would he say, seal up? Because it's been written down.

In Chapter 12, verse 4, "...you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end." So, all of these visions are being recorded in writing as Daniel receives them. Same thing in verse 9 of Chapter 12. He says, "...go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end." And the physical sealing of the physical book is metaphorical for the fact that these visions, their content, their portent, their meaning isn't going to make a lot of sense until the time of the end.

We are near the time of the end, and they begin to make a lot more sense to us than they have to any intervening generations. Isaiah 8, verse 1. God speaks to Isaiah and says, "...take a large scroll and write on it with a man's pen, concerning Mahershalah Hashbaz. Hurry the plunder, hasten the spoil." That name always makes me smile because I can just imagine Isaiah's wife.

You know how it is when you're a child and you misbehave and your parents use your full name? Whenever I heard my dad in another room saying in a loud voice, Samuel Curtis, I knew I was in big trouble. Well, you'd have time to recover if somebody said, Mahershalah Hashbaz. I don't know if they called him Hash or Baz or what for short, but I seriously doubt that they used

his full name all the time.

But 8.1 tells us that Isaiah wrote his prophecies down. Verse 16 of that same chapter, "...bind up the testimony, seal the law among my followers, among my disciples." Isaiah 30, verse 8, "...go write it before them on a tablet, note it on a scroll, that it may be for time to come, forever and ever." A record, a preservation of the words of God. We have computers, we have printers, we have published editions of the text of the word of God, but for many hundreds and even thousands of years, that was not the privilege of the individual believer.

But God is concerned. What is the point? Why am I even emphasizing the fact that this is written down? Every word is inspired. All scripture, and the word scripture means that which is written.

All scripture is God-breathed. Theonoustos. And is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may become mature, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Every word. That's why it's written. And people that say, well, the gist of it is what counts, and the general tone, and the main principles, and you know, Jesus' message is basically love one another.

But don't get down to the fine details, because you'll find errors, and omissions, and inconsistencies, and discrepancies with what we know of reality through science, and so on, is pure hogwash. It's written down because God wants the words to be just so. Men spake as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit, Peter tells us.

No scripture, no writing is of any private interpretation, any private expression. Men put this stuff down as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. So, Daniel writes this down.

Also, by telling us that it's written down, and this is my question, we know it's written down, we've got the writing right here in front of us, so why is it told to us that it's written down? Well, this connotes the idea that this prophecy is solid, concrete. That it is certain of fulfillment. It's been written.

It's not like, well, maybe our memory was faulty, maybe we just misremembered that, and that's why it wasn't fulfilled. It's written down. It will be fulfilled.

It is certain. It is graven in the stone of God's decrees for history. It also documents the prophecy, not only to indicate that it is certain, but also to document its fulfillment.

It's going to be vindicated when it is fulfilled. People will go back and say, look, letter for letter, word for word, this came to pass just as it was spoken by God. This is one of the ways that God identifies himself.

I am the God who tells you beforehand what is going to happen. This is the documentation.

When these events come to fulfillment, we can check it, and we can check much of this in the historical record and see that it came to pass.

It is so accurate that secular scholars and liberal Christian scholars believe it was written after the fact because there's no way it could be that accurate and be predictive. Writing also helps establish the authority of this document. It's not just Daniel speaking it and telling people what he saw in his vision, but it's written down, and that document begins to carry its own authority because it becomes quote-unquote scripture.

And it stands on its own. Its content is available and visible. The word of God is its own authority.

We've talked about this. I haven't mentioned it in a while, but in years past within what's been called the doctrinal movement, the ICE churches, churches that derive their philosophy of organization and ministry from Baraka Church in Houston in particular, developed a focus on the pastor and on his qualifications and on his authority personally. He is my right pastor, people would say.

And so what he speaks, that's pretty much the gospel. God has given me this pastor and so what he says goes. And it's a misunderstanding because the pastor should not be put on a pedestal.

He shouldn't be elevated to a quasi-Catholic priest or bishop or pope. He is the Lance Corporal slinging hash on the mess decks while you're deployed. There is already food provided.

There is already facility provided. This is just the guy that takes it from one spot and puts it on your plate, prepares it, organizes it, and dishes it out. But nobody runs down and bows before the Lance Corporal with his giant metal spoon.

And people in churches should not do this with pastors and teachers or television preachers or authors of books. Some people, every time Max Lucado writes a book, they're down at the bookstore waiting in line the way they're waiting for Xboxes. You know, they just can't wait for the next thing that comes off the press from some author that they like.

It is, as has been said many times, Bob Thieme himself repeated this over and over and over and over in some circles to no avail. It's not the man, it's the message. By writing this message down, it takes Daniel out of the picture and the message stands on its own.

It's not an appeal to the authority of the prophet. It is an appeal to the authority of the message. And it is the Word of God that is alive and powerful, sharp, piercing, discerning.

Not the pastor. Not the teacher. Not the author.

Not the gray-headed author of systematic theologies. It's the Word of God. That's our authority.

I am so grateful that when we have our discussions, and I assume elsewhere, when people talk,

they don't say, well, you know, Sam says that this means thus and so. And Sam says that means thus and so. We look at it and we can say, by comparing Revelation with Ezekiel, by comparing Revelation with Isaiah, it's clear that.

It's the Word of God that speaks. It's the Word of God that makes sense. And each of us as believer priests can rightly divide the Word of Truth for ourselves.

We don't need to cite any alleged intermediate authority. It is not the man. It's the message.

That's emphasized here in the beginning of Daniel chapter 7. Daniel writes down the dream telling the main facts. Telling the chief words is another way of translating this. These are the things that count.

The most important elements. This also indicates that maybe there was more there that Daniel saw than was written down. And that's one of the privileges of the communicator is a lot of times the intermediate, you know, you don't muzzle the ox that treads out the grain.

And so the ox gets some of the grain for himself and it doesn't necessarily all get transmitted on. And that's just one of the benefits to offset some of the hazards of being a communicator. And so Daniel probably understood and saw more than what is in this record.

But it tells us that Daniel spoke saying... Now, he just got through saying that he wrote it down, but now he's speaking and saying. Who is he speaking to? He wrote the vision down, but then he didn't just hand out copies. He also communicated it verbally.

If Hananiah or Azariah or Mishael, one, two, or all three of them are still alive, he probably told them first. His confidants, his long associates in the work of God and in administration in what is still the Babylonian empire. Others who may have come to faith through the personal presence and witness and testimony of Daniel and his three friends.

But he speaks and he says, I saw in my vision by night and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. Four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings.

I watched till its wings were plucked off and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man and a man's heart was given to it. Suddenly another beast, a second like a bear. It was raised up on one side and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth.

And they said thus to it, arise, devour much flesh. After this, I looked and there was another like a leopard which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads and dominion was given to it.

After this, I saw in the night visions and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth. It was devouring, breaking in pieces and trampling the residue with its feet.

It was different from all the beasts that were before it. And it had 10 horns. I was considering the horns and there was another horn, a little one coming up among them before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots.

There in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking pompous words." Well, one of the classic great prophetic passages of scripture. We looked briefly at this in our revelation study as we saw the many headed beast raise up in John's vision. And here we have the archetype.

Here we have the first vision of this set of great beasts. The first thing Daniel says is, I saw in my vision by night. So in his dream, this is vision number one.

Behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. Now, it's already clear and it's going to be explicitly stated in verse 17 of this chapter that these beasts represent kingdoms, empires. We know this already.

But where do they come from? Well, Daniel sees the winds of heaven stirring up the great sea. What is the great sea? It's the Mediterranean Sea. Always in scripture, you have these references to the Mediterranean as the great sea.

You can go back to Numbers 34 verses 6 and 7. When God is describing the western border for the land, the western border, you shall have the great sea for a border. This shall be your western border. This shall be your northern border.

From the great sea, you shall mark out your border line to Mount Hor. And it goes on. But the great sea is the Mediterranean Sea.

It's mentioned as such in Joshua 1.4, Joshua 9.1, and so on. We'll also see this in Ezekiel chapter 47 in verse 10. It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from Engadi to Eneglaim.

There will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the great sea, exceedingly many. We'll see what that means when we get to Ezekiel 47.10 and following.

So this vision relates to the Mediterranean world. That's the wellspring. That's the sea from which these empires arise.

And this is sort of the locus of activity. The focus of these visions is going to be the center of the world, as it was known in that day around the Mediterranean Sea. Now, the word translated, wind, here is, what do you think? Ruach.

Ruach. I saw in my vision by night, and behold, for Ruach-eh. Now, what does Ruach mean in Scripture? It can be breath, it can be spirit, it can be wind.

And you find this tension and understanding in a lot of different places I've mentioned before. My favorite example of this is in the book of Jonah, where as Jonah gets on the ship headed the

other way from where he's supposed to go, God hurls a great Ruach into the sea, this very same sea. And it churns mightily and turns Jonah around.

Another foreshadowing of what's going to happen to Israel, who is Yonah, the dove. God says one thing, they do another. As they're heading away, heading out into the nations, God churns up the nations and casts them back, ultimately, in the direction they're supposed to go, to be a witness and a light to the Gentiles.

That's the book of Jonah in a nutshell. A Ruach goes into the sea. But the winds or Ruachim can refer and often does refer to angels.

Angels are God's intermediate agents in intervening in the affairs of nations in the Old Testament. We've seen this also in our Revelation study. We saw it just night before last.

So God's actions, His providential intervention in the affairs of men, is often mediated through angels. Jeremiah mentions this, Jeremiah 23, 19, Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord has gone forth in fury, a violent whirlwind that will fall violently on the head of the wicked. If you look at this in context, you find that this is God working in the national history of Israel.

Jeremiah 49, 36, Against Elam I will bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven and scatter them toward all those winds. There shall be no nations where the outcasts of Elam will not go. We saw the four winds held back by the four angels in Revelation as well.

Jeremiah 51, verse 1, Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, against those who dwell in Leiv Kamai, a destroying wind. The destroyer angel is well known. Going back to the days of the Exodus, it's possibly that same angel that guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden once Adam and Eve were evicted.

Zechariah 6, verses 1-6 Zechariah says, I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bras. With the first chariot there were red horses, the second chariot black horses, the third chariot white horses, the fourth chariot dappled horses, and the fifth chariot was strong. I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, What are these, my Lord? The angel answered and said to me, These are four spirits of heaven, four ruachim of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.

The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country. God has assigned nations to the angels. You have that great passage where it says when God was apportioning out the nations to the angels, he reserved the nation of Israel for himself.

He calls them there not ruach, but b'nai elim, sons of God. So, as we know from other prophetic passages, most recently the book of Revelation, the nations are influenced by both unfallen and fallen angels. And the four winds of heaven, who are working for God, stir up the great sea.

Four great beasts come up from the sea, each different from the other. Notice that the Gentile nations, the sea which is the universal symbol of chaotic forces of darkness in the Old Testament, is manipulated by God and caused to produce. This echoes, you know, we see a lot of things that look forward and foreshadow.

Well, this looks back. Remember Genesis chapter one? Where did life come from? First, let the sea bring forth. Remember that? Let the sea bring forth.

And that's what happens here. But this is a different kind of life. This is a political life, a military life, a national empirical creation.

If I can use empirical in that way. Empire type creation. So, these four great beasts come up from the sea, each different from the other.

The first is like a lion and has eagle's wings. What do the lion and the eagle represent? Lion, king of beasts, power, authority. Nobody can stop it.

Wings of eagles. Swift. Appears seemingly out of nowhere.

Swoops down. Plucks up the unwary. I watched till its wings were plucked off.

Its speed and freedom of movement are taken away. And it was lifted up from the earth, reared up as it were. Its front feet are lifted up from the earth.

And it's made to stand on two feet like a man and a man's heart was given to it. What does this refer to? Well, the first beast is, of course, the Babylonian Empire. And under Nebuchadnezzar, great conquest, great military victory.

And then the empire settles into place. And it begins as a beast, but it ends up as a man. Not just a man in appearance, but a man's heart was given to it.

What does this represent? What do we know from our first four chapters of the book of Daniel? What happens to Nebuchadnezzar? He goes from being a Gentile, pagan, Babylonian God worshipper to what? A believer in the Lord God of Israel. And because of that, and because of his recognition of Daniel and Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, this becomes, instead of the empire of a Gentile lion with eagle's wings, it becomes an empire ruled by a man, a man of God with a man's heart. It is a brief and succinct reference to the transformation of Nebuchadnezzar, who writes a chapter of the inspired Word of God for us and tells us about his lycanthropy, his seven year experience as a beast, and how at the end of that time, the banded stump sprouts once more and his things are restored to him.

He stands on his feet like a man and he's given a man's heart. And you will find Nebuchadnezzar strolling about, happy and comfortable in the millennial kingdom. He is a believer.

Suddenly another beast, a second like a bear. It was raised up on one side and had three ribs in

its mouth between its teeth. What does a bear signify or connote in symbolic terms? Strength.

This is what's notable when David is appealing to Saul to allow him to go down and fight Goliath. And Saul says, you're too young, you're not proven, you have no experience. And David says, look, what are the two things that David had killed in defense of his sheep? A lion and a bear.

A lion and a bear. What does this tell you about the coming king of Israel and the great empires that are summed up in the tribulation period in the rule of the Antichrist? He is the last and greatest summation of all of those. He sort of represents all seven heads, doesn't he? But who's greater than the lion? And who's greater than the bear? The Lord Jesus Christ.

And you find this out through His father, David, who will return to be the prince regent in the nation of Israel during the millennial kingdom. And you have sort of a nice little inclusio there in the life of David. He started out conquering the lion and the bear, and he's going to end up sitting on top of the conquered lion and bear.

So, the bear represents strength. This is Medo-Persia, the empire that follows Babylon. We know from the predictive prophecy in Isaiah chapter 13 that the Babylonian empire is going to be superseded and supplanted by the Medes.

God says in verse 17 of Isaiah chapter 13, I will stir up the Medes against them who will not regard silver, and as for gold, they will not delight in it. Their bows will dash the young men to pieces, and they will have no pity on the first day of the year. They will not eat the fruit of the womb.

Their eye will not spare children. They're just like a bear. I've been discussing with a goofy guy the implications of the Elisha story this past week.

Remember Goepfel, Baldhead, and the 42 youths who were slain by the bear? Well, the Medo-Persian empire had no regard for the young, for the youth. Slew them just like a bear would without even thinking. Now, it says there are three ribs in the bear's mouth.

Now, if there are ribs in its mouth, what does that mean? Something has already been slain and eaten, right? Typically, when a carnivorous animal devours its prey, where does it start? It starts with the meaty portions, right? Where's the meat? The meat is in the large muscle groups. How much large muscle do you have in the ribs? You know, when you get down to the ribs, although a lot of people like barbecued ribs and that, but there's not near as much meat in the ribs as there is in a roast or a steak. That's already been consumed.

You're down to eating the remnants, right? So, he's got three ribs in his mouth. These probably represent the first three kingdoms of the total of seven in Revelation. This would be Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon.

That's one notion. In real terms, there were three major parts of the world that were conquered

by the Medes. And I personally think this second is more likely because I think the ribs sort of all come from the same feast, the same meal, so to speak.

I think that the three ribs represent Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt. Not in Egypt in the sense of empire, but in the sense of realms. You know, the empire of Alexander the Great is one thing, and then when he dies, it gets split four ways.

And you could think of that as being, you know, four component parts. Well, here you have three component parts of what has been conquered. These three ribs in the mouth of the bear, I think are Egypt, Lydia, and Babylon proper.

Because we know from history the Medes and the Persians conquered in great battles these three areas. The bear is told to devour flesh. And notice this bear can understand English or understand Aramaic in this case.

I mean, it understands verbal human speech. You have the first king, the first empire, Nebuchadnezzar slash Babylon, as a man with the heart of a man, easy to communicate with him. The second one who rises up is a bear, but he's a trained bear in the sense that you can say, go devour flesh and he'll go do it.

He responds to commands that he's given. And so he has some sense. He's not just a wild, oblivious beast.

And this indicates that there is still some response, still some suggestion of human interaction on the part of the bear. And it reminds us that these kingdoms are operating at God's behest, at God's instigation. He's the one that through the agency of angels whipped these beasts up out of the great sea and they are operating at his command and fulfilling his purpose.

Then we have the third beast, like a leopard, which has on its back four wings of a bird. What is the outstanding characteristic of a leopard? I think of two things. I think of its spots and I think of its speed.

It's very fast, but not in the sense of the eagle's wings in arriving swiftly and unexpectedly, so much as traveling over ground at great speed and having the wherewithal to hurt you when he gets there. So this is speed and swiftness in the sense of agility, cunning, sneaking up, lying in wait and that sort of thing. It has four wings like a bird, which also connotes swiftness beyond what you would expect from a standard leopard.

A winged leopard is going to be a little bit quicker and more deadly than a non-flying version. It has four heads and it's given dominion. Who conquers the Medo-Persian Empire? Well, down in circa 330 BC, in about a span of less than five years, Alexander the Great conquers the entire Medo-Persian Empire very quickly.

Historians today still marvel at the swiftness and the unparalleled genius in the military realm exhibited by Alexander in conquering so much land in so short a time. The guy's going to do all

this and die at the age of 28. It's just stunning.

He is the leopard with the wings of a bird. But he's got four wings and he's got four heads. And of course, this speaks of the partition of the Greek Empire after Alexander's death, which we are going to see referred to again in Daniel chapter eight, when the male goat is going to grow up and become strong, but then his large horn is going to be broken and four horns are going to come up in its place.

This is another reference to Alexander being supplanted by the Seleucids and the Ptolemies and so forth, as is explained in Daniel 8.22. Well, this then brings us to the fourth beast. Notice all of this is in the Gentile realm. We're still getting all of this in Aramaic.

Daniel evidently not only spoke it, but wrote it down in Aramaic, the language of the Gentile kingdom. The fourth beast isn't compared to any earthly animal. We've had lions.

We've had eagles. We've had leopards. We've had bears.

This is just called a beast, a fourth beast. It's dreadful and terrible and exceedingly strong, but it's not compared to anything. It's unlike, and this is what they always say in Star Trek, Captain, it's like nothing we've seen before.

And that's what this beast is like. It's unparalleled. You can look through history and not find anything like this.

So, he just calls it the beast. Strong, terrible, dreadful, huge iron teeth devouring, breaking in pieces and trampling the residue with its feet. So, whatever's left over of the three previous empires in the same way that the bear had ribs in his teeth, well, this empire gobbles up what's available with its iron teeth and tramples anything that's left.

It's either consumed or destroyed. It has ten horns. Verse 24, if you skip down there, you'll see that in the interpretation of this, the ten horns are ten kings who will arise from this kingdom.

Daniel looks at these little horns and while he's looking, he sees another one growing up. This is like your wisdom teeth coming in. It's like a wisdom tooth coming out of his head.

And three of the preceding horns get uprooted by this horn emerging. It's an insignificant little horn to begin with. Nobody thinks much of it until as it grows, it uproots the three that precede it.

It has the eyes of a man. What does this tell us? What do eyes connote? It connotes perception, intelligence. It looks around.

Eyes are connected to a brain. You can interpret what you see. These aren't glass eyes.

These aren't just spots on a peacock's tail. These are real eyes. And so this little horn has eyes.

It's smart. It's intelligent. It looks around.

And it has a mouth speaking pompous words. So, it is intelligent and active above any of the other horns that precede it. It speaks boastfully.

In the latter part of this chapter, we're going to see what the identity of this fourth beast is. But this is what Daniel sees. In Daniel's view, in the first year of Belshazzar, most of this is future, isn't it? From our perspective, three of the four beasts have come and gone.

And we await the coming of the fourth beast. So, so far, much as Jesus would tell the parable of the soils, and then there's a little interlude, and then he interprets it for the disciples, we have this first vision. Then Daniel says in verse 9, I watched, or as I continued to watch.

And this is one of those markers like we see in Revelation when John says, and I looked and behold, or then I looked and behold. So, this is a marker. It's a vision separator.

You can turn one of these on in your software when you're typing a document in Word or Excel. You can say, put a horizontal line here, separate this section. That's what I watched does.

So, this is vision number two. I watched, or as I watched, thrones were put in place and the ancient of days was seated. His garment was white as snow and the hair of his head was like pure wool.

His throne was a fiery flame. Its wheels a burning fire. Whiteness, especially as you look at the face of an individual, speaks of holiness, white hair, white raiment, speaks of righteousness, speaks of purity.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Revelation 1.14, we saw the same thing in terms of the Lord Jesus. This throne with wheels, what does that remind you of? Who's the man that saw the wheels? Same time period, a little earlier, Ezekiel chapter 1. The vision of Ezekiel chapter 1, the flaming throne with wheels.

Thousands surround this throne. Fiery stream issues and comes forth from before Him. Fire always, universally, represents what? The righteousness of God expressed in judgment, consuming that which is not permanent, that which is not eternal, that which does not reflect the glory of God as precious stones and precious metals do.

Gold and silver and precious stones are all reflective of the glory of God. Wood, hay and stubble don't and they are temporary. They are of the earth.

They are organic, produced by man, produced from the cursed ground. Wood, hay and stubble consumed by such a fiery stream. A thousand thousands ministered to Him.

Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated and the books were opened. Now, who are these thousands who surround the throne? We see different crowds at different times surrounding God's throne in the Revelation.

John sees them and through their characteristics and through their description, we're able to identify them. The white robed multitude with the palm branches, we know who that is. The 144,000 servants, we know who those are.

Who is this crowd? A thousand thousands ministering to Him. Has He not made His angels, spirits and His ministers a flame of fire? These are the angels. These are the angelic hosts.

How do we know this? There are no humans in heaven yet. Now, we know this. Ninety-eight percent of the Christian world doesn't know it.

But there aren't any humans in heaven. Enoch's not up there. Moses is not up there.

David, Solomon aren't up there. Surrounding God's throne, you have the angels. He's pre-incarnate at this point.

He has not been told, Thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee. He hasn't been begotten yet. So, the Lord Jesus, although He's the second person of the Trinity, the presence of God is presented as a unity here.

So, you have the throne of God, His garment white as snow, the hair of His head is like pure wool. This, by the way, is God the Father. For our purposes, it says a thousand thousands ministered to Him.

Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. Notice, these are not synonymous. There are a thousand thousands.

How many is that, by the way? It's a million, right? Take a thousand, put three more zeros after it. So, there's a million ministering angels before God. Ten thousand times ten thousand, how many is that? It's a lot more than a million, isn't it? Is it ten million or a hundred million? These are the remainder of the unfallen angels.

So, even in heaven, you have a hierarchy. You have a division. There are those who are close to God and minister before Him.

We've already seen this with the cherubim and with Satan's original job. But you have a million who minister to Him. You have ten thousand times ten thousand beyond that who stand before Him.

Just as star differs from star in glory, so shall it be in the resurrection. Well, the court is seated and the books are opened. What's going to take place? We'll have to save that for, what, New Year's Day? We won't be meeting next Sunday for Christmas, but we'll be here New Year's Day unless someone tells me otherwise.

And that's what we'll pick up. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for revealing to us through your word, your plan and purpose for the ages, your intimate acquaintance and involvement in human history.

We know that our lives have been woven into the fabric of your plan, and we pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress that fact on our hearts, even as we celebrate in this Christmas season. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.