

Kings and Prophets 16-10-13b

Let's resume our study now in Daniel chapter 4, and we've seen that the interpretation of this dream from Daniel comes to the point where the tree is being chopped down and the branches are being cut off, the leaves are stripped, and the fruit is scattered. We know that there are a lot of trees in Scripture, as I mentioned in the first session, and history begins in the Garden of Eden, looking at trees. You have the Tree of Life, you have the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

At the end of history, in the Kingdom of the Father, you have the Tree of Life that lines the River of Life that flows out from under God's throne, and you have a mention of both its fruit and its leaves. And so this Kingdom on Earth, in some ways, foreshadows the kind of protection, provision, and prosperity that pertain in the perfect Kingdom that is coming from God, both the Millennial Kingdom for Israel and ultimately the Kingdom of the Father that you see in Revelation chapter 22. But here there is a Watcher, a Holy One, coming down from Heaven, crying aloud and saying in verse 13, destroy this tree, get the beasts and the birds out of it, but leave the stump and the roots in the earth.

Now what is this Watcher or this Holy One? Obviously this is some sort of being from the divine realms, a supernatural individual of some kind, and we have several references to these in Daniel. If you look back at chapter 3 verse 28, which is the fourth man in the fire, he says he is an angel or a messenger that looks like a son of God or a son of the gods. So that's a little bit different terminology.

Then later on in Daniel chapter 7 verse 16, a divine realm being is referred to as one who stands by. Daniel says, I Daniel, after watching in the night visions one like the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven, coming to the Ancient of Days, you can see that in verses 13 and 14, he says he was grieved and the visions of his head troubled me. He came near to one of those who stood by and asked him the truth of all of this.

And so Daniel, still in vision mode or in out-of-body mode here, asks one who stands by, and that's again not just your neighbor or your fellow human being, this is someone from the divine realms. And then once again in chapter 10 verse 13, you have the account of the prince, the prince of Persia, the prince of Israel, one of them withstanding another and delaying a message coming to Daniel and so on. And so these same individuals, from the same realm at least, are described in a number of different ways.

Here's what's interesting about this to me. Why doesn't it just have a voice from Heaven saying God's decree? Why doesn't God's voice come forth from the heavenly realms? Instead, his will and his word are mediated through these messengers. And this happens very regularly throughout scripture.

There is mediation, there is transmission through preachers. God uses his created sentient

beings, and in some cases unsentient, ones like the mule that Balaam is trying to ride, the donkey that he's trying to go to do Balak's bidding. But you have this use of messengers.

And here there is a watcher who comes down from Heaven. He cries aloud and gives this decree to chop down the tree, bind the stump, and then it switches and says, let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man.

And that tells you that this tree, which represents the kingdom, also represents the king. He and the kingdom are synonymous in this sense. Until seven times Passover.

Look at verse 17. This decision is by the decree of the Most High God. Is that what it says? Whose decree is this? It says it's the decree of the watchers.

And it's not just said once. You have this wonderful parallelism that pertains throughout the book of Daniel. We saw it in the last chapter, the repetition, the emphasis, the rehearsal.

Why all of this repetition? Why all this emphasis? Why the telling of the dream, the retelling of the dream, and then the retelling again in the interpretation by Daniel? This threefold repetition does what? Helps people remember. It's not just once. It's not just twice.

It's three times. Who is going to hear this story told and retold and told again? Decaptive people in Judah. Who is going to remember it, meditate on it, reflect on it, think about it, and try to make application of it? The faithful remnant within that captive group.

And of course, that should be us. We should think about this and try to figure out, so what? How should we then live? This decision is by the decree of the watchers and the sentence by the word of the Holy Ones in order that the living may know. In order that the living may know.

The living who? Well, by way of extension and application, this is the spiritually alive. This is the fruitful. These are those who, even though they are in captivity, that hopefully this is us.

We hopefully are abiding in divine and bearing fruit and being pruned so that we can bear more fruit. And whom the Lord loves, he chastens. And no discipline is fun while it's happening, but it afterward yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

In order that the living may know, those who are healthy, those who are productive, those who can benefit from it, will know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men. It looks as though all is lost. It looks as though Judah is destroyed.

Many of these people either witnessed or have heard eyewitness accounts of the destruction of the temple by this time. If the Septuagint annotation is correct, this happens after 586 BC and the temple is now in ruins. All the glory of Israel and the glory of Jerusalem and the glory of Judah is lying on the ground.

It isn't the evidence of the eyes. It isn't the rationale and the witness of military might and political power and sojournity and control and enslavement and captivity. It is knowledge that

the most high rules.

What is the evidence for this? Daniel is interpreting a dream. The dream can't be proved. The interpretation can't be proved.

Could God have given a tangible miracle? Could he have done signs and wonders in Babylon like he did in Egypt? It is the account of those things that is issue. It is Nebuchadnezzar's word that he had this dream. It is Daniel's word as to what the dream means.

Why does God do it this way? Why doesn't he give his people a more tangible, material set of evidences to bolster their faith? Because that's not what we need. It is the response of the heart, recognizing truth the way a suckling child knows when it has found its mother's milk. You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.

And when you search and when you find, there is a deep-seated knowledge. I have found the truth. And it isn't founded on, there's nothing wrong with reason.

There's nothing wrong with evidence. There's nothing wrong with the wonders of science and comparing the results and triangulating and developing an understanding of the way God's universe works, the laws of physics and the way biology and astronomy and all the rest of it work. It's wonderful.

The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament shows forth his handiwork. But when it comes to spiritual truth, there is no amount of physical evidence that will convince someone who is not seeking.

Look at the mighty works that Jesus did. He raised the dead, the manifestly dead, the four days dead, and he stinketh. He opened blind eyes, blind from birth.

John chapter 9. In the history of the world, has it ever happened that somebody who was not from God opened the eyes of the blind? The blind man tells the Pharisees who are not seeking and not looking, anyone with an ear to hear can hear. Anyone with a heart that is seeking will find, and will find that deep peace and spiritual knowledge of the truth. When you are seeking, you will find.

When you are knocking, the door will open. When you ask, it will be given. And so this message from Daniel, this interpretation that is given to the king, seems to be all about the king's dream and the interpretation of it.

But word of this spreads throughout the captive community of Judah. And those like Ezekiel and the faithful who listen to Ezekiel and who listen to Daniel, those who have a heart like Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah, and that faithful remnant, take heart from this, because what does it tell them? God is in control, and God mediates his control through intermediate agents. First of all, the watchers and these angels and holy ones who come from heaven doing the will of God.

Secondly, through human agency, including the mightiest man on the planet, Nebuchadnezzar. He is controlled by God. His comings and his goings, his prosperity, his fall and his restoration are in God's hands.

Nebuchadnezzar cannot avoid this decree. He is warned of it ahead of time. What can he do? He asked earlier on, what can you three do to escape my power if you don't bow at the sound of the music? Well, they did escape his power, because God is mightier than Nebuchadnezzar.

Can Nebuchadnezzar himself escape God's power with all of his might? He's the mighty tree, but by the decree of God and God's watchers, it is chopped down. Also, look at this. Compare verse 17, this decision is by the decree of the watchers, with verse 24, the interpretation, O king, this is the decree of the most high.

Well now, which is it? Is it the decree of the watchers and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, or is it the decree of the most high? You can already anticipate my answer, yes. Remember in the New Testament, where Jesus is speaking to the disciples in Matthew 18, and he says, what you bind on earth has been bound in heaven, what you loose on earth has been loosed in heaven, because the apostles, as they teach, and as they preach, and as they pronounce judgment in the house of God, remember Ananias and Sapphira, remember what Paul does and says, is a reflection of God's word and God's will. God's word and God's will is mediated in the earth through his servants.

In this case, divine environment, angelic watchers and holy ones, and then Nebuchadnezzar. God uses Nebuchadnezzar. He uses the Assyrians as the rod of his anger and the staff of his indignation.

Earlier on, we saw that. And all of these things are in God's control, whether it is people, whether it is circumstances, whether it is large or small, world politics, the forces of darkness and terrorism, the uncontrollable chaos of the sea that casts up its mire and dirt, whether it is near at hand, the immediate people who control our work life, or our social life, or our family life, or any other aspect, remember ultimately God is in control and there is a delegation on God's part. And many times God brokers blessing and provision through intermediaries.

We have gifts of opportunity to minister and to provide and to lift one another up and support one another. It is a decision that we make in the exercise of our gift, but ultimately it is an opportunity and a provision that God makes. So it's both and.

So yes, it is the decree of the watchers in this sentence by the word of the holy ones, but they are so in tune and so reflective of God's will and God's decree that they are doing this almost without being told. And wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if many times as we navigate our circumstances, we don't have to go to God in prayer and say, oh Lord, what should I do next? We know what his will is. We know him so well that we know what he wants us to do.

It's like when you know a person well, and you know the way they like their laundry folded, you

know the way they like their food cooked, you know the way they like the trimming done when you do the lawn or whatever else it might be. And even as a child, you don't have to be told. You know the way your parents are going to want to see this done.

You know the way your spouse would like to have things done and you don't have to ask. You're so in tune and so aware. Wouldn't it be great if this is us, if we could be like these watchers, these servants of God who are so attuned and so in fellowship with God that when they give a decree, it is the decree of God.

It is the decree of the Almighty and the Most High. So it is synonymous. It's both and.

And that's the way Jesus commissioned the apostles. He said, what you do on earth is going to reflect what God wants done and has decreed in heaven. That's by the power of the Holy Spirit what you will be able to do.

Now think about this. When we are promoted, when we are elevated, when we join the Lord Jesus and those of us who qualify, who are overcomers, who sit with Him on His throne, who walk with Him in white, who have the white stone and the new name and the hidden manna and who sit with Him on His throne and rule and reign with Him for a thousand years, will we be in this position in the kingdom of the Son? Will we be like the watchers and the sanctified ones who can implement the will of the Lord Jesus the way the sons of David will in the earthly millennial kingdom? Will we be able to do this while the angels move up in a similar promotion and do something else in God's eternal kingdom? And we do what they do here. We become those who look over the nations the way the prince of Persia and those who are mentioned later on in Daniel do.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful opportunity to serve and to be qualified to serve and to be so in tune with God and His plan and purpose and be equipped and fitted because of our experience and our trials and challenges in this life that we will know without having to constantly run back? You know, it's tough to have a subordinate that you have to just micromanage because they never do anything on their own. They're afraid to move without guidance. And wouldn't it be wonderful that God could entrust us with responsibility? And when we do a thing, it is His will.

It is His decree. It fully reflects. And when we come back in and report, He says, well done, thou good and faithful servant.

That's what these watchers are, and they're a role model for us. What is the point? Be aware, not just Nebuchadnezzar, but the living, the most high rules in the kingdom of men. How important is it for us to remember that God is in charge? God has total, complete control of every aspect of our lives.

There is no test that comes to us, but that God has adjusted it, that God has calibrated it. It is never beyond what we are able to bear. He always provides the solution either to deliver us

through it or out of it.

And He has provided us the strength when He gave Paul the thorn in the flesh. And three different times, Paul says, Lord, please take this away. And He said, no, you need this.

My grace is sufficient for you. And what a wonderful victory that Paul, instead of having his thorn removed, endures and perseveres and bears fruit with the thorn because God's grace fills the need and makes up the lack and enables him where he doesn't feel able on his own. We lose that opportunity if God delivered us from every trial and removed every obstacle.

So in verse 18, this dream I, Nebuchadnezzar, have seen, now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make it known to me. Be aware, the secular world is never going to figure out what's going on in the Bible. They're never going to make sense of God's works in the Old Testament or in the New.

Why do they constantly decry and criticize? It is opaque. It is gobbledygook. It is meaningless and non-understandable as it was to Pharisees when Jesus said and did things in the New Testament.

Wise men are not able to make it known. Remember, the wisdom of man is as foolishness with God. Keep your finger here and turn over to 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians, chapter 1. Speaking of the Apostle Paul, here he is helping us out with his wonderful apostolic gift and his communication function. Verse 17, Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, not with reasoning and arguing and rationalizing people, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. Isn't that interesting? He says, not with wise words, not with profound arguments, because if I argue you in, if I reason you in, if I cite evidence and a preponderance of common sense and so on, it would render the cross of Christ of no effect.

What is it that should convince and compel and persuade? Jesus Christ. His unselfish, sacrificial work on our behalf. His reflection of the fullness of the Father.

Greater love hath no man than this. And he laid on his life for his friends. And the Lord Jesus became a man.

Philippians chapter 2, you remember, a memory verse. Humbled himself, emptied himself, took on the form of a servant, came in the likeness of men. If you substitute reason and trying to persuade by a lot of lofty, windy arguments, Paul says, the cross of Christ is made of no effect.

It is the cross that's the issue. What think ye of Christ? He is the Savior. He has borne what we could not bear.

He has made us acceptable in the sight of the Father. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to God but through him.

If you've seen him, you've seen the Father. He came to do the Father's will. And as his body on this earth, that's what we should do.

Not our will? He said, not my will, but thine be done. Do not render the cross of Christ of no effect. Anytime people start kibitzing and quibbling and finding fault and claiming the Bible has got errors and all the rest of it, it is our mission to keep the cross of Christ foremost.

What are you going to do about the hopeless, helpless separation from God that cannot be solved by any amount of philosophy, any amount of willpower, any amount of science? What happens at the point of death? If Christ is not raised, we're still in our sins. There is life. He is the Lord of life.

He is the Lord of resurrection. He is going to raise us. He is going to make us like himself.

He has the keys of hell and of death. It is the cross of Christ that is central. Never, ever get deflected or distracted in any protracted discussion from the cross of Christ.

The cross of Christ should be made in no effect. But look at this next verse, for the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. Why are they perishing? The God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Do not deceive, God is not mocked. When you sow, you will reap. If you sow to the flesh, you're going to reap corruption.

If you sow to the spirit, you will reap life everlasting. Foolishness to those who are perishing. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Since in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, you're not going to science your way to God.

Science is consistent with God. It reflects God's glory, but you're not going to know God through a study of God's work. You're going to come to know God through Christ.

It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. What is the message preached? What did Paul say? I preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. Right? Jews request a sign, Greeks seek after wisdom.

It's still that way. You've got people today who say, well, I want God to rip the fabric and poke his head through. I want to see a miracle.

Show me something that will give me enough evidence to believe. Jews request a sign, Greeks seek after wisdom. I want you to reason me into it.

I want you to show me that it's the best option and that it makes sense from a philosophical and analytical point of view. We preach Christ crucified and that's a stumbling block to the Jews. They're looking for a king.

They want power and authority. Go back and look at Daniel, you Jews. Power and authority are all in God's hands.

Whoever is the king. To the Greeks, it's foolishness. Oh, this blood sacrifice.

Why this bloody God that isn't going to be propitiated unless somebody dies and there's blood everywhere and without the shedding of blood, there's no remission. And what sense does that make? It's foolishness to the Greeks. But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

And you ask yourself, some of the most intelligent men who have ever lived have been God-fearing, Bible-believing Christians, and to them, the cross of Christ is not foolishness. Some of the most dedicated people who have diligently studied the scripture find no fault in it, don't find it unreasonable or irrational. They don't find God to be a bloody, vindictive, implacable, misogynistic, and all the other hateful adjectives that are applied to it.

How is it that incredibly intelligent and well-read and learned men don't draw that conclusion? Somebody is wrong. And it isn't a matter of, well, if you were just smart enough, you would see it differently. The highest IQs in the world belong to people who are believers.

To both Jews and Greeks, those who are called, who are the called? The called is anybody that hears the call and responds, right? When you hear a ringing noise coming out of your pocket, what do you do? Somebody's calling me, right? What do you do? You pick up the phone and answer, unless you look at caller ID and it says unknown caller or something you don't like, but you are the called when you pick up the call and answer. The called are those who hear the call and respond. You see that in Romans chapter 8. The foolishness of God is wiser than men.

What does that mean? People said, how could God possibly let these Babylonians destroy his people, destroy his nation, tear down his temple? I thought that's what happened to the pagan gods, who had no power, the useless idols that aren't real. And here's God and his nation and his people and his temple have all been destroyed. Well, that's just foolish.

How can he be God? If you are looking and seeking, you will listen to his prophets who explain why those things happened. They have forfeited the privilege of God's presence and God's power and God's deliverance. It doesn't mean that the arm of the Lord is shortened, that he cannot say, or his ear is heavy, that he cannot hear what happened.

Remember your verse, your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear. The problem isn't with God, it's with God's people. And the same is true for us.

You see your calling, as I continue in first Corinthians, not many wise, according to the flesh, are called, not many mighty, not many noble. God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world and the things which are despised

God has chosen, and the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are. Invisible evidence, the dream and its interpretation will be meaningful and valuable and applicable and will be strength and power to the call, to those who listen, to those who get the message that this is actually a message for God's people, delivered to and through Nebuchadnezzar, but it comes from the heavenly realms.

It is brokered and proxied through the watchers and the holy ones, and it's not just going to be a message. It starts out as an invisible and an intangible, but what's going to happen? Nebuchadnezzar tells the dream, and that's our first indication. That's just Nebuchadnezzar's word, right? The second telling here, when Daniel explains the dream, beginning in verse 19, this is Daniel saying, this is what the dream means.

That's still an intangible, and people could say, well, so says Daniel, but I don't know that that's what the king dreamed, and I don't know that that's what it means, but what happens then? Well, beginning in verse 28, all this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of 12 months, he's walking about the 12 months. What does that mean? He had time.

Remember Daniel's final exhortation, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you. Break off your sins and be righteous. Cease your iniquities and show mercy to the poor.

Remember over and over again, remember the first 39 chapters of Isaiah that we went through verse by verse? What was the indictment? They were ignoring the poor. Be righteous. Remember the indictment that was given right before in Josiah's day? Observe the Sabbath.

Follow God's law. Be righteous. Can Nebuchadnezzar achieve God's favor just simply by being righteous and by favoring the poor? This is really a message to Israel, and it harks back to every one of the prophets that God sent, warning them.

It goes all the way back to Cain. If you do well, will you not be accepted? But if not, sin is crouching at the door, and it has a desire for you, and you've got to master it. Same is true all down through history.

The same is true for us. It came to pass. There is a time after the warning.

He has a whole year to respond, and he doesn't, just as Judah had time and time and time again to respond. But it's pride. I've got this wired.

I've got this figured out. Look at my prosperity, and prosperity was the downfall of Judah. Under King Josiah, they prospered.

They filled that vacuum left by the Assyrians and by the Egyptians, and what happened? They lost sight of God, and they were destroyed. While the word was still in King's mouth, a voice fell from heaven. King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken.

The kingdom is departed from you. What did Paul tell the Jews in Acts? We go to the Gentiles.

You haven't heard the word.

We're going to the Gentiles. The kingdom is taken from you. Jesus told them, the kingdom will be taken from you and given to those who will bear its fruit.

And once again, all of this is for Israel. This foreshadows, even in Nebuchadnezzar's example, what is going to happen, what is happening to Judah. How long is this going to last? It says until seven times have passed over.

How long was the Babylonian captivity? Until the Sabbaths were complete. What is a Sabbath? It's a seven. What is going to happen later on in Daniel? Seven sevens have been decreed upon your people.

Remember that? And there's one seven left to run. Well, here is a seven. Seven times you're going to pass over Nebuchadnezzar.

Seventy years are going to pass over Judah in captivity before Ezra and Nehemiah and the return. All of this is for God's people. All of it is a reflection.

Now, I've saved for last what I think is the the most fun part, the best part. Turn back here. What is the decree proclaimed by the watcher who comes down from heaven in verse 15? Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field.

Bound with a band of iron and bronze and it's a stump. What do we know about stumps? Does the Bible have anything to say about stumps? Turn over to Isaiah chapter 1. Isaiah chapter 1 verse 11. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom.

Give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. And once again this is code language for Israel. What purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, says the Lord? I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle.

I do not delight in the blood of bulls or lambs and goats. Bring no more futile sacrifices and so forth. They have been a tree and they are going to be cut down.

And I think I wrote that I think I wrote that verse down wrong. So go to the next one which is Job chapter 14 verses 7 through 9. But you remember that Jesse is called the root shoot. There's a root shoot from the stump of Jesse and that stump of course is Israel, is the nation that has been cut down.

I think what I was looking for is Isaiah 10 verse 33 and 34. In Isaiah chapter 10 verse 33 it says, look the sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies, the Lord of hosts, will lop off the bow with terror. Those of high stature will be hewn down and the haughty will be humbled.

He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron and Lebanon will fall by the mighty one. And this of course is a reference to God's own people and God's own kingdom. And you had

that same thing you remember in Ezekiel chapter 17.

There was the the idea of the tree. There's a spring from the lofty top of the cedar and God is going to take just that twig and replant it. But you have the branch in Isaiah chapter 4 in verse 2 and Zechariah chapter 3 in verse 8 talking about Joshua the high priest sitting is a symbol.

I'm about to introduce my servant the branch. The Lord who rules over all says here's the man whose name is branch who will sprout up from his place and build the temple of the Lord. That's Zechariah chapter 3 verse 8. And Zechariah chapter 6 verse 12.

Time and again you have the root shoot from the stump of Jesse. And so this idea of the stump is it looks like it's cut off, it looks like it's gone, but something is going to spring up from the roots and from that stump. Now it says it's bound with a band of iron and a bronze.

Where do you last remember those being mentioned? Remember the first dream? The head is the head of gold. The shoulders are shoulder and arms of silver. Then you have the belly and thighs of brass or bronze.

And then you have the legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay. And now you have this band which is going to preserve the stump. What does this say? Long after the head of gold is gone, long after the Medo-Persian empire is gone with the shoulder and arms, that's why it's doubled because it's the Medes and the Persians.

But the Jews are going to be preserved through the time of the Greeks with Alexander and the division of his kingdom after his death. Then you have the Roman empire which is the legs of iron. And all through that you have the survival of the Jewish nation.

And notice, remember we pointed out how the language changes from the tree to the beast. Because now instead of being represented as a kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar becomes an individual. And in the same way Israel goes from being a nation and a tree and a vineyard.

Now remember the language of the vineyard where in Isaiah chapter five verses one through seven, look at my vineyard. I tried to cultivate it. I finally broke down the hedge and let it be destroyed.

And it's cut down, but it's going to come up from the roots. But in the meantime, it is people rather than a kingdom. And so you have this switch over and you look at Nebuchadnezzar as an individual.

He's no longer the king of his kingdom. He's out eating grass, which is unnatural. Israel is no longer under God's provision and God's land flowing with milk and honey.

They've been separated from their heritage, separated from the protection and provision of God. They're scattered out among the nations as Nebuchadnezzar is wet with dew of heaven and grazing with the beasts. This is a picture of the scattering, the diaspora that is going to

come both in the immediate future for Judah and already for Israel and in the longer term in that time of prophetic blindness, if you will, which is our time and on into the time of the 70th week of Daniel.

Let him be given the heart of a beast. And you've got this secularization of the Jewish people, but they still retain their identity. He is still Nebuchadnezzar.

And after the seven times Passover, when is it that the times end? When seven times have passed, what is the defining feature? Well, you remember I pointed out in verse three of this chapter, Daniel 4, 3, write these down. Daniel chapter four, verse three, Daniel chapter four, verse 17, Daniel chapter four, verse 25, Daniel chapter four, verse 32, Daniel chapter five, verses 34 and 35. Daniel four, you've got five passages, verse three, verse 17, verse 25, verse 32 and verses 34 and 35, five times.

It is emphasized until you come to know that God is sovereign. There is no other. He is the most high.

He rules in the kingdom of men. Wouldn't it be great if we learned this lesson and lived in its light without having to go through what the nation of Israel has gone through to learn it? What did Jesus tell them? You will not see me again until you say what? Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, because we recognize that the most high rules, and this is the one that he has sent. This is his anointed.

This is his holy one. This is his king. Well, this happens, and that band of iron and of bronze, those people are preserved through those kingdoms that were pictured by those metals earlier on in the first dream.

So at the end, in verse 34, Nebuchadnezzar at the end of time lifted his eyes to heaven, his understanding returned to him. He blessed the most high. When is this going to happen for Israel? When is it going to happen for Judah? When they are raised at the last day, Ezekiel's vision prophesied of these bones, the spirit enters them.

I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams, and you will have no need that anyone teach you.

All of you will have the spirit of God. They will have then what we have now, the ubiquitous and universal ministry and availability of God's spirit. Understanding returns.

I bless the most high and praise and honor him who lives forever. This is the goal. When we preach as Paul did, Jesus Christ and him crucified as the way to the Father, as the truth, as the life, when someone recognizes that from the heart, recognizes need, recognizes Jesus Christ as the only solution, that is deliverance.

That is eternal life. That is what the nation of Israel has to come to. The individuals in it have to individually recognize that the most high lives and reigns over mankind, and it is his provision

and his alone that counts.

It's a hard lesson for them to learn. It is a lesson that we learn as we traverse this life, but that is the point. Five times in this chapter, the meaning of the dream is given to us.

God rules in the affairs of men. God rules over death. God rules over sin.

God has solved that problem through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, this is the last we are going to see of Nebuchadnezzar, and in some ways it's the last we're going to see of the issue in his reign, in the vision and its interpretation. Things that follow now are going to be later in time, and we're going to really get a vision of the future in the book of Daniel.

Daniel is going to turn from the immediate situation of his people to the times that God has determined for their future. But this is the foundation. This is the background.

These times are passing over them, just as they are for us. Are we going to redeem the time? Are we going to see what God calls us to, through the Lord Jesus Christ, as his people, to reflect his glory and to declare his signs and his wonders in the earth? Nebuchadnezzar figured it out, just as the Ninevites figured out their message. So the question is, these things being written for us, on whom the ends of the ages have come, will we figure it out? That's our great challenge, and that should be our prayer.

And let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for these wonderful and powerful reminders of the grace to which we are heir, the wonderful provision that you have made for us in the Lord Jesus Christ, through your Holy Spirit, and the power and presence of your word.

And we pray that, as we reflect on these things, that they will be meaningful and helpful to us, to see clearly the path that you illuminate for each one of us, so that we can live and act in a way that is pleasing in your sight, that reflects the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.