

(Through the Bible) Daniel 1-4

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the integrity and faithfulness of Daniel amidst challenges in Babylon, emphasizing God's sovereignty and the importance of maintaining one's values.

Duration: 1:24:35

Scripture: Daniel 2:31-35, Daniel 3:17-18, Daniel 3:25, Daniel 4:13-14, Daniel 4:23, Ephesians 1:11

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of seeking to bring glory to God rather than exalting oneself in any kind of ministry. The sermon references the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, where he saw a great and awesome image with different materials representing different kingdoms. The speaker also mentions the story of Daniel and his friends choosing to eat pulse and drink water instead of the king's meat, and how they appeared healthier than the other children. The sermon concludes with the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being thrown into the fiery furnace and how they were miraculously protected by a fourth person who appeared to be the Son of God.

Transcript

There are men who spend their lifetimes seeking to prove that the Bible is not all that it purports to be. Their whole premise for their doctorates are trying to take some aspect of the Bible and show that it isn't all that it claims to be. One of the favorite tactics of these men are to take the various books of the Bible and to try to prove that they are not written by those authors that they claim to be written by.

And the book of Daniel has come under this cloak of what they call higher criticism, as there have been many who have tried to prove that the book of Daniel was not really written by Daniel. And one of the basic premises for their proof is that it would be impossible to describe with such accuracy events that had not yet taken place. Therefore, it was written by some man a couple of centuries later after the fact and that he put the name of Daniel to it.

And they, of course, take the fact that there are about three Greek words in the book of Daniel and there are some Persian words in the book of Daniel. And it is written partially in Hebrew and partially in the Aramaic, the ancient language of Assyria, which is like the Chaldean language. And they use this as their basis of proof that Daniel was not really the author.

But to me, the fact that he uses some Greek words, Persian words, and both Hebrew and Aramaic only go to prove that Daniel indeed was the author and was all that the book purports him to be, that is, a wise man, a counselor, and in the court of the king where he would have met Greeks, he would have met Persians, he would have met people from all over the world in his capacity as an officer in the Babylonian kingdom. And I think that these endeavors by these people to bring doubt upon the Word of God has no value at all. They have written their doctorates and many expositions on it, but it's a waste of time and energy to consider their arguments just to say that with each argument they present, there is a very powerful argument to refute what they presented.

And when you look at the whole thing, it turns out that indeed Daniel was the author and they have not proved anything but their own foolishness. So I don't like to get all involved in those areas of reproving that which is already true. Truth doesn't need to be defended.

And so we aren't going to go into the arguments of the authorship of the book. We'll just assume that it is all that it purports to be, that Daniel indeed was the author, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and we will leave the critics and those men who love to tamper and dabble in those things to their own follies. One of the tragic things about seminary education is that you learn all of these arguments.

In fact, you'll spend a whole semester in seeking to determine the authorship of Daniel and you'll study all of the papers that have been written by the various people and the arguments, pro and con, on the authorship of Daniel. And you can use a whole semester, the study of Daniel, and the whole semester will be involved in trying to determine authorship and you'll never really get into what it says. And that to me is a waste of time.

What does God have to say to me? That's what's important. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem and besieged it. So this would be the year 607 B.C., the first siege of Jerusalem, when it fell to Nebuchadnezzar.

And the Lord gave to Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand, with the part of the vessels of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar, into the house of his God, and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his God. And the king spake unto Aspenaz, the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel and of the king's seed and of the princes. Now, this in itself is a fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah chapter 39, verses 6 and 7, where Isaiah was speaking about how that Judah was going to fall to Babylon.

And he declares, Behold, the days come that all that is in thine house, he's talking to the king, Hezekiah, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, saith the Lord, and of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, they shall take away and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Now, this was a hundred years earlier, actually 105 years in 712 B.C. Hezekiah had been sick and he prayed to God and he recovered from his sickness.

And there came certain emissaries from Babylon with messages of congratulations that you're well again. And Hezekiah showed these men from Babylon all of the treasures there in the house of God. And so Isaiah came to Hezekiah and he said, Who were these men that were here? And he said, Oh, they're emissaries from a country that's far away, a place called Babylon.

And he said, What did they want? And he said, Well, they just wanted to tell me that they were glad that I recovered from my illness. And he said, What did you show them? He said, I showed them all of the treasures in the house of God. And Isaiah became angry and he prophesied that these Babylonians would come back and they will carry away all of that treasure to Babylon and they'll take the young men and the princes and carry them away captives.

105 years later it happened. Nebuchadnezzar came and as the Scripture here records, he carried away the treasures from the house of God to put in the house of his God in Babylon. And then he ordered that they bring some of these fine young men of the princes and all from Israel in order that they might groom them to stand in the Babylonian court.

And so they had chosen children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, good looking, skillful in all wisdom, cunning in knowledge and understanding science. And such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. So they took the cream of the young men.

They took those who were skillful in science and understanding, good looking, strong. And they carried them away to Babylon to teach them the Chaldean language in order that they might stand in the court of Nebuchadnezzar as an advisor and as a counselors to Nebuchadnezzar. So the king appointed unto them the daily provision of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank.

And so he nourished them for three years that at the end thereof he might bring them before the king. The idea was, of course, three years of training, learning the Chaldean language, learning the customs of the court and all in order that they might stand in the court of the king. Now, the king's meat was meat that no doubt was sacrificed to his pagan gods.

In those days, a person, whenever they butchered a lamb or a cow or whatever, they would usually offer it as a sacrifice to their gods and then they would go ahead and eat it themselves. In other words, you sort of roast it and you take the fat and burn it unto the gods. But it was offered as an oblation or a sacrifice to the gods and then you ate it.

The butchering was sort of a religious ritual and this, of course, carried on far beyond the Babylonian period on into the New Testament. It was a common practice among the Greeks and all to have the same type of a religious ritual in the butchering of any animal. So you would butcher it and offer the blood and all as an oblation unto your god and then they would take the meat and serve it in the restaurants or they would sell it in the butcher shops and all.

And it was a real problem for a Christian who wanted to eat meat. You know, you wouldn't want to eat meat that had been offered as a sacrifice to some pagan god. And so it was a real problem because it was hard to buy meat that wasn't killed in a ritualistic way.

So Paul the Apostle, in order to help the Corinthians, said, hey look, when you go to the butcher shop to buy a steak, don't ask the butcher, was this offered to a god? He said, just buy it, don't ask any questions, you know. And for your conscience sake, buy it and take it home and enjoy it. And if you go out to eat dinner at somebody's house, don't say, you know, was this offered to a god as a sacrifice? He said, just eat what is set before you asking no questions.

And that's where that comes from. It's when you are visiting someone and they offer you a roast beef or something, just eat what is set before you asking no questions. For conscience sake.

Because, he said, we realize that it really doesn't make any difference. You know, we receive everything with thanksgiving and all things are to be received. But Daniel did not want to have any part of eating meat that had been sacrificed to pagan deities.

And so he requested that he be freed from this particular portion that the king offered in a few moments. But that's to give you the reason why Daniel did not want to eat the king's meat. Now from the children of Judah, there was Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

In the Hebrew, these are actually beautiful names. All of them relate to God. But Daniel means God is judge.

Hananiah is beloved of the Lord. What a beautiful name, Hananiah. Some of you young parents wondering what you might name your next son.

It's really a beautiful name. Beloved of the Lord. I love that name.

Mishael, who is as God. And Azariah, the Lord is my help. And so they have beautiful names all relating in some way to the Lord.

But the prince of the eunuchs gave them Babylonian names that all related to the Babylonian deities. And so to Daniel he gave the name of Belteshazzar, which means Belle's prince. Belle was one of the gods of the Babylonians.

To Hananiah he gave the name of Shadrach. And Shadrach means illumined by the sun god. To Mishael he gave the name of Meshach, which means who is like Shaq.

Shaq was another one of the Babylonian deities. And to Azariah he gave the name Abednego, which means the servant of Nego, which was another one of the Babylonian deities. So, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Belteshazzar, these are all the profane names that were given to them by the eunuch in Babylon as they took away from them their Hebrew names which related to God.

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Daniel did not want to defile himself with this meat offered to pagan deities with the wine.

And so he requested that he not have to eat it. Now, God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear the Lord, the king, who has appointed your meat and your drink.

For why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? Then shall you make me in danger of my head before the king. Now look, Daniel, I am fearful of the king. I respect him.

And he gave me command to feed you this stuff. And if you don't eat this and you guys get thin and skinny, then my head is in danger because I'm the one in charge of making sure that you're strong and healthy when you come to stand before him. Then said Daniel to Melzar, who was the prince of the eunuchs, he said, let's just have a testing period for ten days.

Let them give us paltz, which is a grain cereal to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee in the countenance of the children that eat the portion of the king's meat. And as you see, deal with your servants.

So he consented to this matter. And for ten days, and at the end of the ten days, their countenances, that is Daniel and his friends, appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all of the children, which did eat the portion of the king's meat. So Melzar took away the portion of their meat and the wine that they should drink, and they were able to eat the grains, the vegetables.

Thus Melzar, and for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all of the learning and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days, that is the three years that they were in this training period, the king had said that they should bring them in, and then the prince of the eunuchs brought them before Nebuchadnezzar, and the king communed with them, and among them all, none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, that stood before the king, and therefore they were brought to stand before him. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all of his magicians and astrologers that were in all of his realm.

And Daniel continued through the entire reign of Nebuchadnezzar and his grandson Belshazzar, and even into the first year of King Cyrus, so on through the reign of Darius and King Cyrus. Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep was taken from him. Then the king commanded to call the magicians and the astrologers and the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to show the king his dream.

So they came and they stood before the king, and the king said unto them, I've dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. So the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Syriac, and so part of this book is written, and in fact at this point, from chapter 2 verse 4 on to chapter 7 verse 28, this book is written, because it says they spoke to him in Syriac, the book is written in this language of Aramaic, which was the ancient Syrian language. O king, live forever! Tell thy servants the dream, and we will show you the interpretation.

The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, I've forgotten it. If you will not make known unto me the dream with the interpretation, you'll be cut to pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if you show the dream and the interpretation thereof, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, great honor.

Therefore, show me the dream and the interpretation. They answered again and said, let the king just tell the servants his dream, and we will show you the interpretation. And the king answered and said, I know of certainty that you would gain the time, because you see that I have forgotten the dream.

But if you will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you. For you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me till the time be changed. Therefore, tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me the interpretation thereof.

And the Chaldeans answered before the king and said, Look, there's not a man on the earth that can show the king's matter. Therefore, there is no king, lord, nor ruler that has asked such things of any of his magicians or astrologers or Chaldeans. Ah, come on, king.

You know, let's be fair. No man knows what a man dreams. No man can show you this.

Look in history. No king has ever demanded such a ridiculous thing from his counselors. It's a rare thing that the king requires.

There's none other that can show it before the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. Now, they were dealing with the wrong man because Nebuchadnezzar is a hothead. He was always becoming angry and very furious until his conversion.

For this cause, the king was angry and very furious, and he commanded that all of the wise men be destroyed. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain, and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain. Now, we notice the tremendous power of Nebuchadnezzar.

Autocratic control. He was the final word. His word was law.

He could order these men all eliminated, cut them to pieces. His word was law. When we get into the next empire, as we get into chapter 5 and 6, as we get into the Medo-Persian Empire, we notice that when the king made a decree and signed it, that he was subject then to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which once a decree had been signed, it could not be changed.

He did not have the same type of autocratic control and power as did Nebuchadnezzar. Probably no man has been vested with so much power in the history of mankind as was Nebuchadnezzar. So much control over the world and over the lives of people.

That is why in the interpretation of his dream, he said, your kingdom will be replaced by an inferior kingdom. Not inferior as far as strength. The Medo-Persian Empire was very powerful and a very wealthy, but as far as the control by the king, much less.

He was subject to the laws of the land, whereas Nebuchadnezzar was the law himself. His word became law. So he was very furious.

He ordered the execution of his wise men and Daniel answered with the counsel and wisdom to Ariok, who was the captain of the king's guard, who was commissioned to go out and to slay all of the wise men. And he said to Ariok, why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Ariok made the thing known to Daniel. Daniel went in and he desired of the king that he would give him a little time and he promised to show the king the interpretation.

Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, his companions, that they would desire mercies of God of the God of heaven concerning this secret that Daniel and his fellows should not perish for the rest of the wise men of Babylon. So Daniel went into the king and he said, look, give me a little time. I'll come and I'll tell you the dream and interpretation.

Then he went to his buddies and said, hey, it's time for a prayer meeting, fellas. We got to get some information, you know, our necks are on the line. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.

Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Now it is, I think, important to the story and for us to know that Daniel at this point was probably around 19 or 20 years of age. He was probably around 16 years old when he was carried as a captive to Babylon.

Just a very young man. Just a very young man when he purposed in his heart he wasn't going to defile himself with the king's meat. It shows that somewhere along the line, Daniel had excellent training in the ways of God and in the things of God.

That even by the age of 16, these things were so deeply embedded that as he is carried away to a far country where he is away from the influences, the spiritual influences under which he grew up, still he maintains such integrity in spiritual matters. Absolutely glorious to behold. And to realize that even as a very young man he had such high principles, high ideals.

And the depth of his spiritual character is expressed here after God reveals to him the dream and the interpretation. As we read Daniel's response to God and realize here's just a young man in a far country, but he shows such depth of spiritual character. Daniel answered the Lord and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever.

For wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings.

He gives wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding. He reveals the deep and secret things. He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwelleth with Him.

I thank Thee and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, who has given me wisdom and might and has made known unto me now what we desired of Thee, for You have now made known unto us the King's matter. And this to me is just a marvelous expression of praise and thanksgiving unto God which shows a real depth of spiritual character in such a young man. I think that a lot of times we perhaps think, well, you know, he's too young to really have much spiritual maturity or to be able to share much in spiritual things.

But I look at Daniel. I look at Jeremiah. These young men who started their ministry so early and the depth of spiritual understanding that they had, even while young.

Therefore Daniel went in unto Ariok, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus unto him, Destroy not the wise men of Babylon. Bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation.

Then Ariok brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah that will make known unto the king the interpretation. The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Beldeshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen and the interpretation thereof? And Daniel answered in the presence of the king and said, The secret which the king has demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers show unto the king. But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and makes known unto the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.

Thy dream and thy visions of thy head upon thy bed are these. Now, first of all, make note that Daniel does not take personal credit for the interpreting of the dream. King says, I understand you can make known to me the dream and the interpretation.

Daniel says, look, the wise men, the astrologers, none of them can do it. But there's a God in heaven who reveals things and he gives credit to God for the interpretation, for the understanding and interpretation of the dream. I think that this is something that if anyone is at all interested in becoming involved in the work of the Lord, it is important to note this particular aspect of Daniel.

That he was not about to take credit for what God had done. He immediately points to God as the source. And he gives credit to God.

He does not let the king give him credit or give him honor. But he points the king to God. There's a God in heaven who reveals things and he has made known.

Secondly, the dream is for the latter days. So it is a dream that has prophetic significance. The things that are going to come to pass here on the earth.

But as for me, now notice he's not taking credit. As for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than anyone else. But for their sakes, that shall make known the interpretation to the king that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

God didn't do this for me because I'm something special. Because I have anything over anybody else. He's not trying to exalt himself in this at all.

He does seek to exalt God. But not seeking to promote or exalt himself. And so important for anyone involved in any kind of ministry, not to try to exalt yourself, but to just seek to bring glory to God.

Now, he tells the king what he dreamed. But notice he said, Thou, O king, saw and behold a great image. And this image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was awesome.

So you saw this great image. Awesome. Bright.

The image head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part iron and part of clay. And you were watching till a stone was cut without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, the gold, broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors.

And the wind carried them away that no place was found for them. And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. So this was the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had that troubled him.

This is the dream, Daniel said, and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings, for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, the fowls of the heaven, hath He given into thine hand and hath made thee ruler over them all, for thou art this head of gold.

Now, we skipped a verse, and it is an important verse. I want to go back to it. Verse 29, he said, As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed.

What should come to pass hereafter? And he that reveals secret is made known unto thee. What shall come to pass? Before Nebuchadnezzar had gone to sleep, he was wondering in his mind, what's going to happen to the world? What does the future hold? And so, this dream pertains to the future. God is in this dream, giving him history in advance as he lays out the kingdoms that would rule over the earth.

The first world-governing empire, the Babylonian empire, the head of gold. But after thee, there shall arise another kingdom that is inferior to thee and another third kingdom of brass, which will bear rule over all the earth. Notice, these are world-dominating empires bearing rule over all the earth.

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, for as much as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things, and as iron that breaks all things shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas you saw the feet and the toes, part of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided. But there shall be in it of the strength of iron for as much as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly weak or brittle. And whereas you saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men. That is, there would not be a monarchy, but there would be more of a democracy kind of a thing, a confederacy of states, but not a strong dictatorship or monarchy as such.

You saw the iron mixed with the miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men. And they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

And the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever. For as much as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it broke in pieces, the iron and the brass, the clay, the silver, the gold, the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter, the dream is certain, the interpretation is sure. So this great image, the head of gold, representing the Babylonian empire, the first world dominating empire, which was to be replaced by an inferior empire, the arms and chest of silver or the Medo-Persian empire, which was to be replaced by the brass stomach or the Grecian empire, which was to be supplanted by the legs of iron, the Roman empire.

But then he saw the feet of iron and clay with ten toes, weaker than just the iron because you have the mixture of iron and clay, not a strong monarchy but more of a confederacy and yet it is related to the Roman empire because it is part iron. So because of this and of course the subsequent vision of Daniel in chapters 7 and 8, in which Daniel declares that the second empire will be the Medo-Persian and the third will be the Grecian and of course we know from history that the fourth was the Roman empire, Bible scholars for years have been looking for a confederacy of European nations to join together with treaties that would become and will become the final world governing empire. Since the Roman empire there has not been a world governing empire.

It was of course Hitler's dream to become a world ruler and he sought to establish a world governing empire through the super race but he never accomplished his dream. It is the goal of communism to develop a world dominating empire. The communist will not fulfill their dreams but Bible scholars and I can show you books that were written back in the twenties, back in the thirties, by Bible scholars, Dr. Talbot, Arnold Gableen, William Newell, who all in their books predicted that there will arise in Europe a confederacy of ten nations who will link themselves together with treaties and that this ten nation federation in Europe will become the final world dominating empire.

Because the ten toes are part iron, the nations that become are joined together will be related to the Roman empire or nations that were involved in the Roman empire. But because there is also the mixture of clay so that you have a democracy among them, the nations having equal parts that won't be one nation ruling over them all but the nations ruling together as a confederacy. So that we as Bible students have been watching Europe for the development of a ten nation European community.

And of course at the beginning of this year among the Bible scholars there was tremendous excitement as Greece signed the treaty and became officially the tenth nation of the European community. Now the thing

that is especially relevant and significant is verse 44 of chapter 2 where the Lord said, And in the days of these kings, that is the ten kings, when this ten nation European confederacy has been formed, in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed. So that he does declare that the coming of Christ will take place during the time of the rule of these ten kings of the European community.

The fact that the European community has been formed is extremely significant from a biblical standpoint. Now there are many other passages that relate to this in the scriptures. The ruler that will ultimately arise from this ten nation European confederacy, the power that will be given to him and his rule over the earth as is described in other passages throughout the Bible as well as Daniel gives us quite a bit of insight towards the latter part of the book of Daniel concerning this man of sin that is going to arise.

But to me, the really exciting thing is that we in seeing the formation of the European community could very well be seeing exactly what Daniel was prophesying here as we see the Roman Empire in a sense being revived in the European community. And we see its growing strength especially in economy. And we see its industrial might as it is being developed.

The European community has a potential G.M.P. that is double that of the United States. And it is certainly one of the most powerful forces in the world today as far as economic and industrial. It is not yet a military force.

That will come later. But I'm always excited to realize that it's during the time of the ten kings that the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed. The coming of Christ and the kingdom of Christ upon the earth.

The stone not cut with hands that grows into a mountain to cover the earth. And to realize that we're coming to those days. It's just almost incredible that we see the ten nation European community being formed.

Now they say, but Spain and Portugal want to come in. That is correct. Then there will be twelve.

Well, there will be ten. Maybe Greece will drop out or maybe the Lord will come before Spain and Portugal can get in. But there will be ten.

We will get in Daniel chapter 7 a corresponding vision of Daniel in which it will amplify just a little more fully this ten horns that come out of this Roman Empire. And the little horn that arises and destroys three and all. But we'll get to that when we get to chapter 7. Nonetheless, I cannot read this second chapter of Daniel and look at what's happening in the world today without getting extremely excited.

Because we're coming right down. And like the Lord said, the dream is certain and the interpretation is sure. And it has followed the very sequences that were predicted.

And it is significant that since the Roman Empire, you have not had a world governing empire. And yet there will be one final world governing empire. Ten kings related to the Roman Empire.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and worshiped Daniel. And he commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him. And the king answered Daniel and said, Of a truth, it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing that you could reveal this secret.

Then the king made Daniel a great man and gave him many great gifts and made him a ruler over the whole province of Babylon and a chief of the governors over the wise men of Babylon. And then Daniel requested of the king that he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

So Daniel spoke to them about his three friends and got them important positions. Now in chapter three we find Nebuchadnezzar defying the revelation of God. Remember in his dream he saw the image with a head of gold.

Thou art the head of gold. But it had a chest of silver for the Babylonian Empire was to be replaced by an inferior empire, the Medo-Persian Empire. But Nebuchadnezzar in defiance of God and the revelation of God made an image of gold whose height was three score cubits or sixty cubits and the breadth thereof was six cubits.

You're getting into the sixty-sixes here. And he set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all of the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Then the princes and governors, captains and all gathered together and a herald cried aloud to you it is commanded, O people, nations and languages, that whatever time you hear the sound of the cornet, the flute, the harp, the sackcloth, the psaltery, the dulcimer and all kinds of music that you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. And whoso will not fall down and worship the same hour will be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. So Nebuchadnezzar not to be messed with.

You have your choice either bow down to it or be cast into the burning fiery furnace. Therefore at that time when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackcloth, psaltery and all kinds of music all the people and the nations, languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Now Nebuchadnezzar becomes in Scripture what we call a type of the Antichrist who we read in Revelation chapter 13 makes an image and he gives power unto this beast or this image to speak.

And he demands that the whole world worship this image that has been given power to speak. We've been reading a lot about the advancement of our science and especially of the capacities of computers. There is even talk of creating computers that will be smarter than men and will perhaps one day rule over man because of their wisdom.

Within computers there is already developed the capacity of chips, voice chips so that they have little calculators that you can buy and as you punch the numbers it will give you the number but then it will speak the answer as well as display it. Already in dialing wrong numbers you get the operator that says what number did you dial and you tell them the number and then you hear the number 6462575 has been changed to and it gives you the new number and it's a computer that is a voice computer. Power to speak.

Now up until just you know the last few years it seemed to be a totally impossible thing to make some kind of an image and give that image the capacity to think and to speak. It could very well be I don't say that it is but it could very well be that the image that has been created by this man of sin that is going to arise will be a highly sophisticated computer which will be used to govern the world. Nebuchadnezzar made an

image 60 cubits high, 6 cubits broad and demanded that everyone worship that image and anyone who refuses to worship the image would be put to death.

The man of sin the beast that arises out of the sea in Revelation 13 makes an image and demands that everyone worship the image and if anyone refuses to worship the image he has power to put to death. We see an interesting parallel. There were three young men Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who refused to bow to the image but God miraculously preserved them through the fire.

In the book of Revelation we read of 144,000 that God is going to seal and take safely through the great tribulation the fiery judgment of God that is coming upon the earth. Now, the big question here when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were reported to Nebuchadnezzar that they did not bow and worship the image the question what about Daniel? Do you think that Daniel bowed to the image? I think not. Daniel had purposed in his heart he would not defile himself with the king's meat.

His commitment to God was so complete I am certain that Daniel did not bow. Then why wasn't Daniel reported with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Obviously, Daniel must not have been there. He was probably away on business of the affairs of state.

For had he been there he surely would not have bowed. That of course becomes extremely interesting in that Daniel is a type of the church and when the great tribulation the fiery judgment comes when the Antichrist is demanding that people bow down and worship the image that he has created the church won't be there. It's gone.

It won't go through the fiery furnace. It's been delivered. Caught up to meet the Lord in the air and forever with the Lord and thus will not be here when the Antichrist makes the scene and creates the image and demands that the image be worshipped.

The church, Daniel, is out of the picture but it is the faithful remnant of the Jews who turn to Christ after the rapture of the church that God will seal as the three Hebrew children and take them through the fire. So a very beautiful typology in this story in Daniel. Now in verse 8, chapter 3, at this certain time the Chaldeans came near and they accused the Jews.

They spake and said unto King Nebuchadnezzar, O King, live forever! Thou, O King, have made a decree that every man when he hears the sound of the cornet and the music and so forth shall fall down and worship the golden image. And whoso does not fall down and worship that he would be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Now there are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and these men, O King, have not regarded thee.

They serve not your gods nor worship the golden image which you have set up. Then, O hothead Nebuchadnezzar, his rage and in his fury he commanded Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and they brought these men to the king. This guy's always in a rage.

And Nebuchadnezzar spake unto them and said, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Do not ye serve my gods nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if you're ready, that at the time that you hear the sound of the music, you will fall down and worship the image which I have made, then all will be well. But if you do not worship, you will be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we're not even careful to answer you in this matter.

If it be so, our god whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. And he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

Now, God is able. The god that we serve can deliver us out of your burning fiery furnace. He will deliver us out of your hand.

And even if he doesn't, we're still not going to serve your gods. We're still not going to bow down to your image. Now, we're not even careful how we answer you in this.

This is a set matter with us. We're just not going to do it. These guys had such commitment, such commitment to God that God is able, if He wants to deliver us, if He doesn't want, we're still not going to bow.

Our lives are in God's hands. He can do with us whatever He wants. But we're going to be faithful to God and true to God and God will be faithful to us.

And whatever God does with us is fine. We're not worried. We're not concerned, Nebuchadnezzar, about your decrees or your threats at all.

You don't scare us, Nebuchadnezzar. You don't move us because our trust is in God. The God that we serve is able to deliver us.

And if He doesn't, we're still not going to bow. Then old Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury and the form of his visage was changed. I mean, his whole attitude towards these three fellows was changed completely.

And he spoke and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was ever heated before. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to cast them into the burning, fiery furnace. And these men were bound in their coats, their hoes, their hats, and their other garments and were cast into the burning, fiery furnace.

Now, in Israel today, you see these various Orthodox Jews, and there are some of them that have these little black hats and their black coats and black hosiery. They wear sort of knickers with black hosiery and they have long curls. They're the Hasidics and they have these long curls down the sides of their heads here.

And when he describes binding them with their hats and their coats and their hosiery and all, I get a picture of some of these Hasidic Jews that you see over in Israel. Probably didn't look like that, but that's the mental picture that I get as he binds them with their hats and their hoes and their coats and casts them into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace. Therefore, because the king's commandment was urgent and the furnace was exceeding hot, the flame of the fire killed those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

And these three men fell down in the midst of the burning, fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished and he rose up in haste and he spoke. And he said to his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? And they said unto the king, True.

He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose and they're walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hurt. And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. What a marvelous, exciting experience.

Hand of God, the God that we serve is able to deliver us out of your burning, fiery furnace. So here they are walking around in the midst of the fire. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning, fiery furnace and he spoke and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth.

Come on out. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth from the midst of the fire and the princes and the governors and the captains and the king's counselors being gathered together saw these men upon whose body the fire had no power. Nor was a hair of their head singed.

Neither were their coats changed. Nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who has sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in him and has changed the king's word and yielded the bodies that they might not serve nor worship any God except their own God.

Do you see Nebuchadnezzar making another proclamation here? Therefore, I make a decree that every people, nation, language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be cut in pieces and their houses shall be made a dunghill because there is no other God that can deliver after this sword. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. So, oh, Nebuchadnezzar, quite an interesting character in his wrath and in his decrees.

Now Nebuchadnezzar the king, a proclamation unto all the people, nations, languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs and how mighty are his wonders.

His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his dominion is from generation to generation. Listen to these words of Nebuchadnezzar. Sounds like a convert.

And I personally believe he was. He tells now his story. I am going to tell you his story.

He said, I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house. I was prospering in my palace and I saw a dream which made me afraid and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. Therefore, I made a decree to bring in all of the wise men of Babylon before me that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream.

There came in the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and all the soothsayers and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me the interpretation. But at last Daniel came before me whose name was Belshazzar according to the name of my God in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. And before him I told the dream saying, O Belshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, no secret troubles thee.

Tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen and the interpretation thereof. And thus were the visions in my head in my bed. I saw and behold there was a tree in the middle of the earth.

It was very tall. The tree grew and was strong and the height thereof reached into heaven and the sight thereof unto the end of the earth and the leaves thereof were fair and the fruit was very much. And in it

there was meat for everyone.

The beast of the field had shadow under it. The fowls of the heaven dwelt in the bowels thereof and all flesh fed from it. And I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed and behold a watcher.

Now this is interesting. And a holy one, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven. And he cried aloud and said, Cut down the tree.

Cut off his branches. Shake off his leaves and scatter his fruit. Let the beast get away from under it and the fowls from his branches.

Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field and let it be wet with the dew of heaven and let his portion be with the beast in the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from a man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him and let seven times pass over him. This matter is by the decree of the watchers and the demand by the word of the holy ones to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever He will and sets over it the basest of men.

This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now thou, O Beldeshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof for as much as all of the wise men of my kingdom were not able to make known the interpretation, but you are able for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you. Then Daniel, whose name was Beldeshazzar, was astonished for about one hour.

His thoughts troubled him and the king spoke and said, Beldeshazzar, don't let the dream or the interpretation thereof trouble you. And Beldeshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream is for those that hate you, and the interpretation is something your enemies will enjoy. For the tree that you saw, which grew and was strong, whose height reached into heaven, and the sight of all that were upon the earth, whose leaves were fair and the fruit was very much, and in it was meat for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and so forth, it is you, O king, that have grown and become strong, for thy greatness has grown and reaches unto heaven and your dominion to the end of the earth.

And whereas the king saw a Watcher and a Holy One coming down from heaven and saying, Hew down the tree and destroy it, yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, till the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let the portion be with the beasts of the field till seven times Passover. And this is the interpretational king, this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king. They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as an ox, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall Passover thee, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever He will.

And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee after that you have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee and break off thy sins by righteousness and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, for it may be a lengthening of your tranquility. So he had this dream, the tree and the whole thing.

And as Daniel interprets it, the tree is you, Nebuchadnezzar. You've become great and powerful and this great kingdom is given unto you. But you've been lifted up in pride Now, the interesting thing to me is there are watchers that are watching the whole affair.

Do you know that your life is being watched? That's sort of awesome. These watchers from heaven who are down here watching you. And he had in this dream the insight into these watchers who had come from heaven and were watching him.

And he heard one of them say, Hew down the tree, cut off the branches. Until seven times, let him go out and live with the wild beast until seven times are passed over him. The seven times are probably a year and three quarters.

Referring to the summer, fall, winter, spring rather than seven years. And so for a year and three quarters, King Nebuchadnezzar was to be insane. He was to live with the oxen out in the field.

He was to eat grass like a wild animal. This was to continue until he realized that the God in heaven is the one who rules over the earth as far as establishing kingdoms and setting in power those whom he will. God still rules in the overall sense.

And sometimes God puts evil men into power in order to bring judgment upon the people. But God rules overall. So after Daniel interpreted, he said, Now look King, straighten up man, live right.

You know, it may be that you can increase the days of your peace because you know, this is going to come on you. But maybe by living right, you can forestall it a bit. And so for a year, there were no furies or rages.

The king was marching, watching his Ps and Qs. But all of this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar at the end of 12 months as he was walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. Now, according to the ancient historians, Babylon was just a place of marvel and beauty.

They described the hanging gardens of Babylon. They were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. They described the walls that surrounded the city, the glory, the grandeur of this marvelous city of Babylon.

And so Nebuchadnezzar was walking there in the midst of the gardens, the beautiful city, the palace, and the king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty? Boasting in himself that I have built with my power for my majesty. And while these words were in his mouth, there fell a voice from heaven. One of the watchers said, he'd been watching him, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee.

And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling place shall be with the beast of the field. And they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen. And seven times shall pass over thee until you know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men and he gives it to whomsoever he will.

And in the same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from men. He became insane.

He did eat grass as the oxen. His body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair was grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws. And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes unto heaven and my understanding returned unto me and I blessed the Most High and I praised and honored Him that lives forever whose dominion is an everlasting dominion and His kingdom is from generation to generation.

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. And He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou? He came into a consciousness of the power of God and the sovereignty of God who rules over the universe. And no man can say to God, What are you doing? At the same time, my reason returned unto me and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and my brightness returned unto me.

And my counselors and my Lord sought unto me and I was established in my kingdom and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven. That sounds like conversion to me.

All whose works are truth and His ways judgment and those that walk in pride, He is able to abase. So, this final proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar, a very interesting proclamation of the faith that He had come to as He believed in God and in the power of God and in the sovereignty of God over the universe. Very exciting.

I think that we will hold off on the remainder and next week we'll take chapters 5 through 8. So, we'll cut Daniel up in four chapter sections so we can spend a little more time in it. And fascinating, interesting book and you've got some great reading next week as we get into Daniel's chapters 5 through 8. Exciting prophecies. Father, we do acknowledge that You are the Lord, the King, the Ruler over all the universe.

We acknowledge Your sovereignty. We realize, Lord, that none of us can really challenge You to say what are You doing because You do things after the counsel of Your own will and after Your own purposes. God, we bow before Thee and we submit our lives to Thee that we might be ruled over by Thy Spirit.

Lord, we thank You for the commitment of Daniel and of his three friends. Lord, help us that we too might make a full commitment of our lives unto Thee. To have that same kind of confidence and trust that Your ways are best.

Knowing, Lord, that You can do whatever You want. Take our lives now and use them as You see fit to glorify Thy name. Bless this week.

Lord, strengthen us. Guide us. Keep us in Thy love.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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