



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Daniel 4: 1-37

TRANSCRIPT

“The Dream of the Great Tree” or “Nebuchadnezzar’s Lesson in Systematic Theology”

[Prayer] Father, we praise Thee and thank Thee for the privilege of the study of Thy word again and we ask for the illumination of the Holy Spirit as we consider the 4th chapter of the Book of the Prophet Daniel. Enable us to understand and also to profit from the things that we read within the chapter. We ask also Thy blessing upon the classes that follow, in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Will you turn with me to the 4th chapter of the Prophecy of Daniel and our subject for tonight is the dream of the great tree or Nebuchadnezzar's lesson in systematic theology. You may remember that we have been saying that the Book of Daniel may be simply outlined in this way. The first chapter is a kind of introduction to the book. From chapter 2, verse 1 through chapter 7, verse 28 or chapters 2 through 7, we have prophecies that stress the future of the Gentile nations. The subject matter especially touches the Gentiles and then in chapter 8, verse 1 through chapter 12, verse 13, the last chapters of the book, we have prophecies that touch primarily the Israelite nation.

I have tried to say to you very simply that the support for this simple outline is simply that the Book of Daniel is written in two languages. The opening chapter through

the 3rd verse of the 2nd chapter is written in Hebrew but then in the 4th verse of chapter 2 on through the 7th chapter the prophet writes in Aramaic. But then again in chapter 8 verse 1 he turns again to Hebrew and the remainder of the book is written in the Hebrew tongue. So that those chapters written in Aramaic, very befitting Gentiles, are chapters that have to do with the future of the Gentile nations primarily so far as their prophetic future is concerned and the other chapters, particularly at the end of the book are chapters that have to do with prophecy as it relates primarily to the Nation Israel.

There are three principles of interpretation that we need to bear in mind as we study the prophets and particularly a prophecy like Daniel, which has some apocalyptic material in it. In all parts of the Old Testament, there is a primary interpretation that should always be kept before us. That is, the interpretation that has to do primarily with the history and grammar of the text as you read it.

Now, of course, in a chapter such as this, the primary interpretation has to do with God's dealings with King Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon. And so, that is the primary lesson that we should think about. There is also a present application. The present application pertains to all of the Old Testament because the Apostle Paul and others point out that the Old Testament was written for our admonition, so it's proper for us to find principles in the Old Testament that have to do with us even though the material itself may have been addressed specifically to the Nation Israel. So do not think because something is addressed to the Nation Israel that it has no application to us. This has been the error of some extreme dispensationalist.

Now, it is easy to see that this is wrong if we will just read the New Testament and pay attention to the use that the apostles make of the Old Testament. They turn to the Old Testament and they use the Old Testament in application to their New Testament churches and so they appeal to everything that they find with a few exceptions to the Scriptures, as they knew them, the Old Testament Scriptures. For example, when Paul wants to talk about justification by faith, he doesn't invent something but he turns to the

history of Abraham and shows that the history of Abraham from the Old Testament sets forth the doctrine of justification by faith. So the present application of a passage is important and in this case, one easily sees the present application because it reveals God's attitude toward pride. And God's attitude toward pride is the same from the beginning of the Bible on through to the end of the Bible. "Pride goeth before destruction." The writer of the proverb says, "And a haughty spirit therefore a fall." And this is true in all of the ages of the divine revelation because man is a creature and therefore he is little. He is nothing in the sight of God as Daniel will say in a moment or two, or at least Nebuchadnezzar.

And finally, I think in the prophetic sections, there is a third principle that we need to bear in mind and that is the prophetic revelation; and frequently, typically, the passages of the Old Testament look on to the final consummation of the ages and in this section, we rather expect to find in the history of Nebuchadnezzar some things that suggest to us the final Gentile frenzy and the favor of God that shall ultimately be poured out upon them as they, with Israel, are blessed and are enabled to enter into the Kingdom of God.

Now, I want to look at all of these things but I want to close tonight, if I may, with a consideration of Nebuchadnezzar's correct and vigorous theological statement in verses 34 through 36 which was wrought out by divine providential affliction. And I will just, for the Scripture reading, read these three verses because we want to lay a little stress on them in a few moments.

Now, remember, this comes from Nebuchadnezzar and we should remember that it does come from the king of Babylon, but he has learned these truths correctly and he stresses them and expresses them very vigorously. And of course, they are true.

"But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored him

who lives forever. For his dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off his hand." (That's a very interesting idiom. We will talk about it in a moment but notice the marginal reading.) "And no one can strike against His hand or say to him, "What hast Thou done?" At that time, my reason returned to me and my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty and surpassing greatness was added to me."

Let's turn now to the 4th chapter of the Book of Daniel and let me read the first three verses in which we have Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation. This chapter, incidentally, is a chapter which Nebuchadnezzar addresses to all the peoples and nations and men of every language that lived on all the earth and so it is a kind of state document by the great king of Babylon.

Now, we read the first three verses,

"Nebuchadnezzar, the king to all peoples, nations and men of every language that lived in all the earth: May your peace abound! It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for 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."

Now, you must admire the courage of King Nebuchadnezzar because here he relates publicly a very humiliating experience. How would you like to lose your mind and go out and walk naked among all of your people? You would probably want to bury that chapter of your life. But Nebuchadnezzar is a man who, directed by the Holy Spirit,

had the courage to relate publicly this experience, which must have been extremely humiliating to him when he found out what had really happened. He was the king of Babylon and incidentally, Nebuchadnezzar was one of the greatest men who ever lived. He was a great builder. He was a great ruler. Some have considered him an even greater general than Napoleon and the vision that he had embraces universal government. He is the great king of Daniel's vision in the second chapter or of his own vision. He is the head, the head of gold; so he was a mighty man. But he was a Gentile, so bear that in mind. We are having things here that still have to do with the Gentiles.

Now, notice what he has learned. He says in the 3rd verse, "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." He has already learned that his own kingdom is not an everlasting dominion. It is a dominion of men and, therefore, like all the dominions of men it begins, it rises to its peak, it begins to subside and then it vanishes from the face of the earth.

Let's look now to the second section, verses 4 through 7 in which we have the narration of the dream which he had to the diviners or the wise men.

"I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me so I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me."

Now, that is very reminiscent, is it not, of the experience that he had in the 2nd chapter? He found out that none of his own wise men could make known the dream or its interpretation to him. So, let's move on to the next section. This is a lengthy chapter

and so we must treat some of the sections rather briefly. Here we have the third section, the narration to Daniel. He still remembers that Daniel is a man who is able to discover dreams and give good interpretations of them and so in verse 8 through verse 18, we have the narration of the dream to Daniel.

"But finally, Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my God, and in whom is a Spirit of the holy gods."

Now that, incidentally, can be rendered in two ways. It might be rendered "the spirit of the holy gods" in which he might be referring to something like the Holy Spirit or it may mean simply a spirit of the holy gods and you can see the translators of the New American Standard Bible have opted for the translation that means that he understands a little less of theology; and it's probably a proper translation. This is an instance, incidentally, of how one's theology determines his translation because if a word may be rendered in two different ways, naturally you will render it in the way that is in harmony with the clearer passages of the Bible. Verse 9:

"O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you; tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation. Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed. I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great. The tree grew large and became strong and its height reached to the sky and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade by it and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches and all living creatures fed themselves from it. I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven. He shouted out and spoke as follows."

This does not seem like language for an angel to me and this is a reflection of the translators. "Chop down the tree." That sounds like something a farmer might tell one of his hands. But anyway, that is the way the NASB has it. "Chop down the tree and cut off its branches. Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven and let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let the beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him."

Notice specifically that statement. "Seven periods of time pass over him." Now, the periods of time, most of the commentators feel, refer to years so think about seven years passing over him.

"This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers and the decision is the command of the holy ones in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whom he wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men. This is the dream, which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation in as much as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you." So, Daniel is set before the peoples by Nebuchadnezzar as the only person who is able to interpret the dream and the reason being that there is a spirit of the holy gods in him.

Of course, Nebuchadnezzar does not fully understand all that is involved in this. We would say that of course being a prophet, he was given by God illumination. Or put

in another way, being a Christian man he was given illumination. For the Bible teaches us that a man cannot understand the Bible if he does not have the Holy Spirit. A natural man receives of not the things of the spirit of God. They are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned. That is why people read the Bible and get nothing out of it.

When I say I read the Bible and get nothing out of it, they only reveal their own inability to comprehend. They do not have the capacity to understand because most of the time they have not been born again. And even believers who have been born again can only understand the simple things, if there are certain aspects of their own Christian life that are out of harmony with the will of God. The more a man walks in the will of God the more he is able to understand. A man who is unsaved cannot understand the Bible. He needs the work of the Holy Spirit in illumination. He needs to be given the Holy Spirit as he is brought by faith to Jesus Christ.

But even the saints, who do have the Holy Spirit, need the continuing illumination of the Holy Spirit and the work of sanctification to deliver them from sin and iniquity which clouds the moral vision. Always, the man who walks in sin, his moral vision is clouded and consequently he cannot understand. If you walk contrary to the word of God and to the will of God, you will find that your own moral vision is blunted and your ability to comprehend the truth is limited. This is true of all. One of the reasons that Christians go often to various types of errors is not simply because their minds are bad, it is because their hearts are bad and it affects their minds.

So here is a tribute to Daniel as a man of the spirit. It is recognized that he has the capacity to understand. Now, he explains it as God revealed things to him. He is illumined by the Holy Spirit and consequently, he is a man who is able to be taught. "The secret of the Lord is with him that fear him and he will show them his covenant," the Psalmist said. This is a principle that pervades all of Biblical teaching.

Yesterday, I was listening to the radio as I frequently do, riding around the city. I think it was KRLD and I was listening to one of the commentators who was interviewing a young man who has just recently written something like a Christian almanac. It sounds to me as if it is an enlargement of the Christian yellow pages. And they were having a little discussion and in the course of the discussion, the young man mentioned the fact that they were now, according to George Gallup, about 50 million born again Christians in the United States of America.

This young man, as I remember said that he asked Dr. Gallup, "If there are fifty million born again Christians in the United States, then why have they not had more influence on the life of the United States?" It's a good question. And Mr. Gallup said, "Well, I don't know that I can understand, but I can say this that the United States of America might be a lot worse if it didn't have the 50 million born again Christians."

Now, personally, I think the question is still a good one, and the answer is there are not 50 million born again Christians in the United States. If they were, then we would have something like a spiritual revolution in this country. There are 50 million, there may even be a 100 million who claim to be born again. But to be a genuine Christian and to claim to be one are two entirely different things.

Now, Daniel is a man who is able to understand and so there follows in verses 19 through 27, the interpretation of the vision. Now, let me say, since the interpretation of vision is rather simple if you read through the chapter, in so far as its primary application to pride in Nebuchadnezzar and pride in us is concerned, the thing that you might not get is its possible application to prophetic teaching. And so, I am just going to speak about that with no dogmatism, but suggest to you that the story of Nebuchadnezzar in this chapter is a kind of typical presentation of the future of the gentiles in the last days.

So let me read through verse 27 beginning with verse 19 and then I want to make a few comments as quickly as I may or I am able. Verse 19,

"Then Daniel whose name is Belteshazzar was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him." The King responded and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My Lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries." (What a beautiful statement that is. Would had this applied to your enemies and not to you. What a nice way of saying, this is a horrible dream for you, Nebuchadnezzar.)

"The tree that you saw which became large and grew strong whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth and is fully it was beautiful and its fruit abundant and in which was food for all. Under which, the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged; it is you, Oh King." (So the tree is the King.) "It is you Oh, King for you have become great and grown strong and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth."

You think about the times of the Gentiles; that's what we are dwelling in today, the times when the Gentiles have authority over the affairs of this earth. Verse 23:

"And in that, the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one descending from heaven and saying, "Chop down the tree." (That's still not angelic language. I don't care what anybody says. That could have been rendered more elegantly as far as I am concerned.) "Chop down the tree and destroy it. Yet leave the stump with its roots on the ground but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field and let him be drenched with a dew of heaven and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him.

"This is the interpretation, Oh King. This is the decree of the Most High which has come upon my Lord the King, that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the most highest ruler of the realm of mankind and bestows it on

whomever he wishes. And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree. Your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that the heavens do rule."

I like that Authorized Version rendering better than this, that it is heaven that rules. The heavens do rule. I rather like that. The Authorized Version has some brilliant renderings and that is one of them. The heavens do rule. My dear Christian friend, never forget it. The heavens do rule.

"Therefore, O King, may my advice be pleasing to you, break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your inequities by showing mercy to the poor in case there maybe a prolonging of your prosperity."

You will notice the decree is fixed. It is just a matter of time so far as Daniel is concerned. Well let me just hasten down through and point out a few of the major points to bear in mind in the interpretation. Well, the tree is Nebuchadnezzar; that's very plain. He is the tree. The tree in the Bible is often symbolic of a man with great power and influence in the earth. And surely Nebuchadnezzar is such a man.

Now Nebuchadnezzar is typical of Gentile world dominion. And we have read in the 2nd chapter that there will be four great kingdoms over the face of the earth, the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian and the Roman. And I think we can say typically, that what we find here, typically or illustratively, is a picture of final Gentile dominion in the last days under the great beast who will have a worldwide authority.

"Chop down the tree." That would seem to suggest the end of Gentile world power and the madness of the Gentiles during the tribulation period. When the beast comes to his authority and then as a result of the events of the judgments, those trumpets and bowl and vile judgments, the seals, the bowls, and the vials of the Book of Revelation set forth God's final series of judgments upon the earth before the coming of the Lord

Jesus Christ. Notice he was told not to cut down the tree entirely. That is, not to destroy it utterly, but to leave the stump.

Now the stump suggests to me that there is no complete destruction of Gentiles during the tribulation period. There is a judgment poured out upon them and we may expect the Gentiles to give over authority to the Jews, ultimately in the person of the ruler of the tribe of Judah who shall come, the Lord Jesus Christ, but the Gentiles shall also experience blessings during the Millennial age. And so while there is great judgment upon Gentiles, the stump is left and Gentiles shall also be blessed by God during that future period of divine judgment preceding the second coming of Christ.

The expression, "Till seven times," rather seven years and incidentally the Greek translation of the Old Testament made before the time of Christ renders those periods of time as years, seven years. Most of the commentators feel that the period of time referred to as a year. We recognize that as the precise time in the 9th chapter of the same book which will be marked out as that period of judgment which is to come upon the earth and so we have here again, a lost material that is illustrative of the tribulation period of the future. "Till seven times past over him." A reference then to the tribulation period, which is God's means of judgment and purification both upon the Gentiles and also upon the nation of Israel.

This also introduces our personal application that we might make to ourselves. Nebuchadnezzar might have asked, "Well, how long must I endure discipline?" Well, the answer would be seven years or until the discipline has been able to teach you the lesson that you needed to be taught. Well, that principle pertains to us. When we pass under divine discipline as children of God, and answer to the question, "How long must we endure the discipline?" Well the answer to it is; as long as it is necessary for you to learn the lesson that you must learn. So, if we are under divine discipline, if we feel that God has put us under discipline, the faster we learn the lesson, the sooner we are delivered from the divine chastisement or discipline.

Now, the discipline then is a discipline in order to bring the nation and the Gentiles to judgment and purification. And finally he said in the 26th verse, that the kingdom will be assured. That is, there is Gentile participation in the future Kingdom of God upon the earth. Now we need not talk about that. That I am sure is something that with which most of you in this room are well acquainted.

Let's look now at the 5th of the sections of the chapter where we have the humiliation of the king. Verse 28 through verse 33, all this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the King. Well you expected to find that, didn't you? Verse 29: Twelve months later, he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. Men do not learn anything, even when they have prophets like Daniel speak to them, they do not learn their lesson. He knew that Daniel was a person in whom was the spirit of the gods. Daniel told him, "It would be good if the things that are going to happen to you, happened to your enemies." But here we find the king and we read in verse 30,

The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself,' (in the Aramaic text that bears emphasis), '... which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty.' While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared sovereignty has been removed from you and you will be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field, you will be given grass to eat like cattle and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the most highest ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever he wishes.'"

Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair was grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's

claws. So, the king walking around on the roof of the royal palace saying, "Is not this great Babylon which I, myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and the glory of my majesty?" and suddenly his reason left him. He began to act like a beast. He began to tear at his clothes. He raced off of the roof. He raced down through the rooms tearing off his clothes as he went. Finally, he raced on out of the royal palace, down one of the avenues, stark, stripped naked.

What a humiliating experience. And then we find him, for this period of time, acting like a beast. Someone has said the disease was lycanthropy. Lycanthropy is a disease, which makes a person think he is a wolf and it may well have been this because that kind of thing does take place. I heard the story of a man who came in to see a psychiatrist, he was a farmer, and so he said to the shrink, "I would like to tell you about my son," he said, "He is going around back on the farm acting just like a hen. He is down among the hens and the chickens and he is cackling and doing all of the things that hens do and we don't know what to do."

And the psychiatrist said to the farmer, "Well, how long has this been going on?" he said, "Well, it's been going on about a year." he said, "Oh, dear me! If you just brought him in earlier, I might have been able to do something for him, why didn't you bring him in?" he said, "Well to tell you the truth, we needed the eggs." Well you can understand, I am sure how Nebuchadnezzar must have acted under the discipline of the Lord when, acting like a beast, he lived for seven periods of time out on the field eating grass.

Now, finally, we read in verse 34 through 36 of the restoration of the king. But at the end of the period,

"I, Nebuchadnezzar raised my eyes toward heaven....." (this is really his account)
".....and my reason returned to me and I blessed the most high and praised and honored him who lives forever. For His dominion is an everlasting dominion and His kingdom endures from generation to generation and all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted

as nothing, but he does according to his will and the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth, and no one can ward off his hand or say to him, What hast thou done?"

Now in my opinion, this is the most remarkable section of this entire chapter. Now I know that people will say, "Ah, but it's just the words of Nebuchadnezzar." Yes, it is the words of Nebuchadnezzar. These verses are the words of Nebuchadnezzar, that is true. But these words are the words of a Nebuchadnezzar who has experienced the discipline of God and who has been brought to an understanding of a number of things that pertain to God and it is obvious by the incorporation of this chapter and specifically these words in this chapter, that the Holy Spirit intends for us to understand that these words spoken by Nebuchadnezzar are true words and accurate words, words that he has learned from the Lord God through the experience that he has had.

Now, he said there are three steps in his restoration: He said he raised his eyes toward heaven, first of all. Incidentally, the term "man" in Greek *anthropos*, has been thought by many to be a reference or to be a root that refers to a creature who looks up, so that the root of the term "man", *anthropos*, has the idea of looking up. All the beasts looked down but man is the only one of the animal kingdom. I wouldn't call man of that kingdom but to use the terms that men do that looks up that in itself marks out man as something distinct from the animal creation. So he said, as he looked he raised his eyes toward heaven and then secondly his reason returned to him and third he blessed the most high and praised and honored him.

Now, there are some great theological points. I am going to suggest five of them to you in the ten minutes that we have left. And first of all, they are all in order. Anyone can learn them. Anyone, if you will ponder them can easily see that there are three of the five great points that every believer ought to have clearly in his mind. In fact, this is not a

bad little section on the doctrine of God, certain aspects of the doctrine of God, particularly, certain attributes.

Now the first thing that we notice is that he praised the most high and honored him who lives forever. Now that suggests immediately the eternal self-existence of God. There is only one being in this universe who has eternal self-existence. Everybody else has a derived existence. You have a derived existence. If God should withdraw his power from you, you would fade into nothingness immediately. Only God lives as a self-existent being. Everyone else is the result of some activity of God. Everyone else is a being caused by some power. God is the only uncaused being. He is self-existent. He is independent in his existence.

As the Lord Jesus said in John chapter 5 and verse 26, "He has life of himself." So life proceeds from himself. He is self-existent. God is always self-existent and we are always dependent, even when we get to heaven. There is the difference between finiteness and infinity between the redeemed to glorified seat in heaven and God in heaven down through the ages. Don't ever forget that. Even when we are there, we are still creatures. The Puritan I think said once that we have more of nothing in us than of something.

Now the second truth, so he lives forever for his dominion as an everlasting dominion and his kingdom, contrary to mind, his kingdom endures from generation to generation. His throne is not vacant. It's never vacant. There are no elections in heaven every four years to decide who is going to sit on the throne for the next period of time. It is not like the presidency, but it is a throne upon which he sits forever. No elections, there are no need for heirs in heaven, because he has a throne that is eternal, always sits upon it. Down here on earth, everybody who sits on the throne of a kingdom is interested in the heir that is to come. And those who sit under the King are also interested on the heir that shall come. Kings sit on the throne; if they have horrible sons,

the people quail, thinking about the time when the son shall come to the throne. We have no such problem in heaven.

Furthermore, other kingdoms are destroyed from within because of corruption. This kingdom is a kingdom of holiness and purity, and therefore it is a kingdom that shall never be corrupted from within. It is an eternal kingdom, the everlasting dominion of God. That's the second of the theological points that Nebuchadnezzar has learned.

The third one follows in verse 35, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing." Isaiah says, "We are a drop in the bucket." You know what a drop in the bucket is? Well a drop in the bucket is what is left after you pour out what you are interested in. It's worthless! We are like the dust in the balance. The dust in the balance is the dust that sits upon balances or scales, which does not make any difference so far as the weight is concerned, and no one bothers to brush off the dust when they weigh something because it is worthless. It does not have any weight, and so we are as dust. We are accounted as dust. We are a drop in the bucket.

And the only thing that people will ever remember about us is when they happen to stumble over the stone in the cemetery that says, "Samuel Lewis Johnson, born September 13, 1915, died so and so, whenever it shall be." That's all. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar may have over-emphasized that when he says, "And the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing," for we are really accounted as nothing. Our sons are born in order to bury us, and they are born in order that their sons may bury them. We are really nothing. We are nothing in divine election, because God has sovereignly determined to save us not because he looked down through the years and foresaw our faith, thus tracing election not to God's sovereignty but rather to men's sovereignty but he determines to elect us because of his good pleasure so we are nothing in our election. We are nothing in our redemption for the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished the whole of the work by shedding his blood on the cross at Calvary.

We do not contribute anything for even the faith by which we receive the benefits of the death of Christ is a gift of God. We are responsible to believe. Every one of us is responsible, but God is sovereign in his wonderful determination of our redemption through the blood that was shed. Do you have that redemption? Do you have the forgiveness of sins? Do you know that if you were to die tonight you would go to heaven? And then we are as nothing in our regeneration. We are not regenerated because we in our unregenerate state exercise faith; they who are in the flesh cannot please God. Faith pleases God but they who are in the flesh cannot please God. If we are to please God, we must be taken out of the flesh and placed in the Spirit.

As Paul says, "Ye are in the spirit if so be the Spirit of God dwells in you." We must be placed in the Spirit in order that we may believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, we are dead. Dead and trespassers in sins, unable to believe. We are accounted as nothing. We truly are nothing. As I look at you, I think the Lord's right. We are nothing. You already know how I feel because one of you has already told me before the meeting that I looked terrible tonight, so I am nothing too, I agree. We are nothing and the Scripture is true. The inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing.

Fourth lesson: This is the nothingness of mankind. This one, the divine power is at work sovereignly. Listen, but he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and this divine power at work sovereignly is a divine power that touches all of the things that are at work in our holes in all of our life. In fact, it even touches sin, for God even controls the activity of sin.

Now, if you have any question about that I want you to think of Acts chapter 2 and the work of Jesus Christ referred to there by the Apostle Peter where he says, "You have with wicked hand – Him – Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." That's the most evil act that has ever been allowed to take place in the human existence. The cross of Christ and yet we read, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. You have with wicked hands taken and

crucified him hanging him upon a tree." So, even in the sphere of sin, God controls everything that transpires upon this earth. We have a great sovereign God. There is nothing that is beyond his grasp and control.

And finally, God's fiat. God's decree is irresistible and no one can ward off his hand. Now, if you know this, it really says literally no one strike against his hand. You know what the figure is? Well the figure is of a father and a little child. When your children were growing up, you parents, did you ever have to spank your children's hands?

Well, we did, often. I remember particularly my son. If you allowed him to be free in the room, he would have his hands on everything in the room within five minutes. He would have sampled everything in the room, particularly things on the coffee table or on any other table. And occasionally, in those days we used to play mahjong. I was not even a Christian and I can remember this. We played mahjong with some friends. In mahjong, you know, if you shake a coffee table, you can do quite a bit of damage, so far as the hands are concerned. And he would occasionally come around, I can still remember, just slapping his hand. When he would put his hand on the card table, "Bang!" I was there. And I was excellent, I hardly ever missed. And one time, he came up after he learned, he did learn finally. One time he came over and put his hand on the table and I looked down at his eyes, I just looked at his eyes, and I can remember now, he lifted his hand and slapped his own hand.

Well now, that is the figure, that is exactly the figure here, no one can strike against his hand. God, everything that he does, he does properly and rightly and no one can slap his hand saying, "Don't do that." Or say to him, "What hast thou done?" For you see, he is the sovereign God. Now, I want you to know that if that is true, no one can ward off or strike against his hand or say to him, "What hast thou done?" Then he is irresistible in his power and he does all together his will.

Now my dear Christian friends, there are many of you in this audience who still, in spite of all of my screamings, still believe, you still believe that God is trying to save

everybody. Well, I just ask you to consider that doctrine in the light of these words. God is not trying to save everybody. If he were trying to save everybody, what would happen? Come on, what would happen? Everybody would be saved. Right. Exactly. Everybody would be saved, but he is not trying to save everybody. He is trying to save the elect. He is saving the elect and every single one of the elect will be in heaven. If it were possible for some non-elect to get there, I grant you that would be all right with the Lord because he loves souls, but that is not biblical teaching. He is saving the elect and he is accomplishing his work consequently. No one can slap his hand. No one can say, "What have you done?"

Now, Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson. I wouldn't want to learn my lessons that way. I suggest you study the Bible. Learn your lessons from the Bible. I certainly do not want anyone in Believer's Chapel to come down with lycanthropy. Don't do it on Sunday out of the church anyway. You've had enough streakers recently in our past history.

But now the last verse records Nebuchadnezzar's conclusions. He says, "Now, I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exult and honor the King of Heaven for all his works are true and his ways just and he is able to humble those who walk in pride."

Now, that may be a sign of Nebuchadnezzar's salvation. Bible students like to debate this. I do not know whether it is or not, whether Nebuchadnezzar became of what we would call a believing man or not, well, I do not know. I would say this. He learned a lot of theology by his experience, and it certainly may well have been that he came to know the true God. One thing I do like about Nebuchadnezzar. He told what he had learned. He didn't hesitate to do that. That's something that we need as an exhortation today. Many of you in this audience have far more understanding than Nebuchadnezzar ever had of divine truth. And therefore, you have a great responsibility to make it known. Make it known to your friends.

May I close with just a little story of something that happened I thought was rather interesting. Many years ago, Christian man died and the late Donald Grey Barnhouse had the funeral. This man had written before he died a testimony from over the edge of my grave and he declared that it should be read at his funeral. So Dr. Barnhouse read it. And he opened the letter in the funeral service and the letter read like this, "This is my funeral service, but I want it to be a time of testimony. Mike, I suppose you're in the audience looking at my casket. Ma, how many times I've played golf with you to seek to bring the gospel to your heart and you wouldn't hear. George, why have you continued to reject Jesus Christ when he died for you and offers eternal life now?" Of course, people in the audience began to be quite disturbed too that the man might say something about them. Much better that you should say something before you die. Time is up. Let us close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these chapters from thy word and the lessons from them. Enable us to learn and profit from them. For Jesus' sake. Amen.