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Date: 22 September 2024 Preacher: Ron Gannon

[0:00] Let's have a word of prayer. Father, we just thank you this morning for your love and follow for just for this church. We thank you for that and the fellowship that we have here.

And we just thank you for your word, Father, that you've given to us and just guide us this morning as we go through it this in this study of Daniel. Father, we just thank you for who and for what you are. And Father, for our Julie, we just pray for her this morning, Father, and for those that are caring for and just give them good decisions on the outcome of this. And Father, we just thank you this morning. We praise you. We ask it all in our Lord and Savior's name. Amen. All right, back to Daniel. This is our fifth week in Daniel. Last week, we started chapter three.

Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold. Chapter two finished showing that his empire would be destroyed and he gave glory to God saying that Daniel's God is a God of gods and the Lord of kings. However, that newfound humility provided and proved to be very short-lived.

Instead of learning humility and submitting himself to the God of gods, our God, the Babylonian king, went other way. He seemingly became even more egotistical if that was even possible. Nebuchadnezzar built an entire statute dedicated to himself. It was almost as if he was saying the head is not enough.

Remember back in chapter two, the head of that statue was gold and that represented Nebuchadnezzar. It's not just enough. He said that I am everything. So I want this whole thing. And that's what he did. He turned around and made a huge statue completely of gold so that people could worship that. And that's what he wanted. And he went out and told all the nation around him, all his leaders, that the statue would be erected and people would come and stand and bow down.

[2:16] And worship to him. His repentance didn't last long. Often immediate response to an exciting spiritual experience like he had in chapter two is to become pious.

This wonderful thing happened. And I feel religious. I feel pious. And things are going my way. But, you know, that piety and that religious feeling, it just doesn't last when we go back to normal. And sometimes, you know, we go back to our old ways.

So the application here is we may think that we go back to our life and remember an event or perhaps a trial or some kind of a victory that we've had in our life that it made you feel excited about God and the things that's going on in your life with God.

Perhaps you made your resolution to surrender some aspect of your life back to God. But as time passed, things go back to normal. You slip back to your old ways.

And I think a lot of us, we probably have gone through that in our life. And that's just a natural way of life. The king made the image. He ordered everyone to worship it.

[3:33] If you did not bow to it, you would be put in a fiery furnace. These government officials that he had ordered, they didn't like the foreigners that came in, which would have been Daniel and his three compadres.

So they wanted to find a way to get even with them. And this was their different way because they knew that because of their religion that they were not going to bow down.

And so they go to the king and tell the king that. So Daniel chapter 3 verse 13. We'll start there this morning. Verse 13.

Then Nebuchadnezzar in a rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These three men were brought before the king. Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them.

Right. My computer went off and it came back. Okay.

[4:44] But if you do not worship, you will be immediately cast into the midst of the furnace of the firing blaze. And what God is there who can deliver you out of my hands. Right there he's saying.

There is no God. If I give the command, there's no other God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king. Oh, Nebuchadnezzar. We do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of a blazing fire. And he will deliver us out of the hand, O king.

But even if he does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. When he hears this, the king is angry.

Bowing down to worship him is not negotiable. If they do not bow down, it's an act of betrayal. He doesn't care whether this is against the Jewish religion or not.

[5:44] They must submit or pay the consequences. His pride now is at stake. Every kind of officer of the empire was expected to be present at this image and bow down.

What a pompous fool he is. In other words, even the God of Israel could not overrule him. Now we're going to see what happens to the guy a little bit later in the book.

But see, isn't this exactly typical of many of the world leaders we see today? And the news that we see and all the things that's going on. This is all drawing us a symbolic picture of what Israel may be going through in the tribulation under the rule of a coming Antichrist.

He's going to be extremely intelligent, charismatic, and extremely brutal. And this is what the king was also. Nebuchadnezzar may take bowing down as non-negotiable, but so does God.

The Jews do not disobey their God. So they answered him bluntly, God is able to save us. But even if he doesn't, what do they say?

[6:55] We refuse to bow down. Notice how they state that determination. They state our God is able to deliver us. Yahweh is the all-powerful God.

Nothing beyond his power or intervention. There is nothing. They also state even though he doesn't deliver us. Now this is a great statement. We won't bow down to your image.

Even if he doesn't save us. If God doesn't deliver, he hasn't forgotten. Things don't have to end up the way we think they should. God knows better.

And we just rest in the fact that God will take care of us. As Job declares, though he slays me, yet will I trust him.

So often we are willing to serve God so long as he blesses us and we get our way. But are we willing to serve him when things go bad for us?

[7:58] Would we be willing to be faithful to God when we're facing death? That's a good question, isn't it? God. So the Jews are thrown into the fiery furnace.

At this point, the king was angry. Before now, his anger is completely out of control. Verse 19, Daniel 3, 19.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath and his facial expression was altered towards Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnaces seven times more than it was usually heated.

He commanded certain violent warriors who were in the army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to cast them into the furnace of the blazing fire. Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps, and their other clothing and were cast into the midst of the furnace of a blazing fire.

Daniel 32. For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

[9:12] Get that, how hot that is. You know, these guys carrying them that close to that furnace, they were killed. But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell into the bits of the furnace of the blazing fire, all tied up.

Verse 24. Now Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste. He said to his officials, Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?

They replied to the king, Certainly, O king. He said, Look, I see four men, loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire, without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like the son of the gods.

Now I'd like to ask that one question. How would he even know what that face looked like? But then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of the blazing fire.

He responded and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Come out, your servants of the Most High God, and come here.

[10:25] Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out in the midst of the fire. All the king's high officials gathered around and saw, in regard to these men, that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men, nor was the hair of their heads sanded, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of the fire even come upon them.

Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who had sent his angel and delivered his servants, who put their trust in him, violating the king's command, and yielding up their bodies, so as not to serve or worship any god, except their own god.

Therefore, I make a decree, that any people, nation, or tongue, that speaks against these men, shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses reduced to rubbish and heap, insomuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.

Then the king calls Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to prosper in their providence. Wow. This king has seen something that's just unreal.

It shakes him. He says, These, their God, saved them. And he says, To all the other people, do not bother these men about their God.

[12:02] This day's events had not turned out the way the king had planned it. How did he plan it? He planned it. He built this big, big old statue, and he said, Everybody come, worship, bow down. And all this stuff has happened.

And it's not what he intended. He intended to turn the nation and to worship his idol. That failed. He planned to make all worship his God. That failed. All the energy and expense to produce worship of a false god was to no avail.

And the king fell to his knees before the God of Israel. He questioned, asked only moments before, what God can deliver you out of my hands.

He made that statement. Well, now he answered himself, didn't he? It's now answered by the king who asked it. So he answered his own question.

Nezapkenezer, bless the God of these three Hebrews as the God who had delivered them from the death. He praised them for their faithfulness in aboing God, obeying God, even unto death.

[13:08] Significantly, the king praised these men for their exclusive worship of their God. Unlike the rest, they were not willing to serve any other God in addition to the one God they worshiped and that they served.

The king's degree goes beyond praise and declares punishment for any who interfere with the free worship of the Jews. Nebuchadnezzar tried to interfere with the religion of the Jews their God had interviewed and delivered them.

Wow, what a different thing that this man has came upon. He thought he was a great ruler and that he could go against this religion and now he's found out that that is not true.

Now the king seeks to ensure that this will not happen again and he declares that they are not the bottom of these men. Has Nebuchadnezzar now accepted Daniel's God, the only true God?

What do you think? It appears so, doesn't it? It appears that, yeah, he's accepted the fact that there is another God out there and it's their God and he's a God that's able to protect those who believe in him and those who are not willing to sacrifice and to accept all these other gods.

By the way, all these other people that were there, they had all kinds of gods in their worship, didn't they? So they didn't care if Nebuchadnezzar, or Nebuchadnezzar, yeah, if the king came and said, now worship this idol.

No big deal. But to these three guys, they had a God in heaven, they knew better. So some practical insights from this chapter.

Today, we don't usually see gold statues, but we have our own golden idols, don't we? Think about the things that you give too much importance to.

Maybe it's money, fame, our phones, fancy cars, or even being popular on the internet.

So we have things also that we kind of hold out in our life and kind of worship, don't we? The king's man was clear, bow down, now let's think about the king of the universe.

[15:36] When it comes to worshiping him, is it enforced? Does God demand demand that we do everything that he says? Unlike these earthly kings, God, God's, king's demands, God gives us a choice.

But don't mistake this freedom for something that's light. He gives us a choice. God's approach is different. He offers us the freedom to decide whether to obey him. But with that freedom comes a serious responsibility, doesn't it?

Jesus taught us to fear not the one who can destroy the body but cannot touch the soul. Instead, respecting one who can affect both the physical and the eternal well-being.

Nebuchadnezzar's fire could only harm the body. But have you considered that God's judgment can reach further, touching even to our soul? Talk is cheap.

Act and speak louder. It's easy to declare, I'll follow the end of my life. Who's somebody that said that? That we can think of. Think of the New Testament.

[16:52] He said, Jesus, I'll follow you no matter where you go. That was old Peter, wasn't it? Peter made a similar vow claiming he was ready to follow Jesus to prison or even to death.

But when the heat was turned up, literally, as the furnace was made seven times hotter for Shadrach, Meshach, and Meshach, he denied Christ three times.

Imagine the intensity of the heat faced by these friends of Daniel. Unlike us, who can only try to imagine such a scenario. For them, it was terribly, it was a terrifying reality.

Honestly, facing that, I might falter. Tempted and compromised just to avoid the flames. And I'm sure there's a lot of us that once we face these type of things, oh, question, Roger.

What's that? The rich young ruler, he walked away, there were several examples, some disciples. Yep. Okay. A bunch of them. Yep, they did.

[18:04] So talk is cheap. Many Christians today might withstand such extreme pressures when challenged is about, but it's not uncommon to see beliefs and weavers and even some of us that crumble under the pressure.

So true lovers of God are revealed when under pressure. when you're under pressure, what do you do? Do you bend the truth or out like lie?

Do you obey God in all situations? or are you tempted to compromise your faith? And I think that's just some of the lessons that we get from this chapter three.

It's an interesting chapter. It's something that all of our kids get in Sunday school when they're young and they read about that and we talk about how these men had the faith, how the angel came in and protected them and it's such a scenario.

Can you imagine that this is happening and three guys are in a furnace that's heated so bad and they're not even touched or scorched or anything and why wouldn't the king just be amazed?

[19:19] I know all of us would be, wouldn't we? Anything else that we can have questions or comments about chapter three before we move on?

Steve? I would have thought that Nebuchadnezzar would have got a heads up when the guards were burned and the Hebrew children weren't when he threw them in. Yeah. Yeah.

I should have told him something. He had all the things coming at him to make him think, didn't he? And he did think and he did turn around and he made some statements just saying, hey, things are changing.

Leave these guys alone. Don't interfere with them. They have a God that's up on high and don't mess with what they're doing.

Okay. Anything else on chapter three before we move on to chapter four? Okay. We're going to move into chapter four, Daniel.

[20 : 23] and we need to keep in mind that we're still talking about King Nebuchadnezzar. So as we're moving on into Daniel, we're still on this one king.

In the future, we're going to get to different kings, but at this point, we're still in a chronology with King Nebuchadnezzar. So, the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel provides Bible prophecy students with yet more insights based upon the divine details revealed to the Babylonian king in a dream.

Wow. This guy must have had some sleepless nights, huh? Because this is, this is what, his third dream? So, this time, King Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a giant flourishing tree that is suddenly cut down with all its branches and foliage removed and the fruit scattered.

All that is left of the tree is a stump and is bound with bands of bronze and iron, which are metals with great symbolism as we've already seen in chapter two.

The dream foretells Nebuchadnezzar's fall from power due to his pride and his eventual restoration after acknowledging God's sovereignty. Despite his initial arrogance, Nebuchadnezzar is humbled when he loses his sanity and lives like a wild animal as foreseen in the dream.

[21:55] This period of madness lasts until he recognizes the Most High is sovereign of all kingdoms. So, Daniel chapter four verse one.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king to all the peoples and the nations and the men of every language that lives on the earth. May your peace abound.

Now, this chapter four is kind of interesting. It gets a little confusing because it starts out he is actually witnessing for God, our God.

and it's kind of unusual and then it's going to switch and you're going to see about this dream and then we're going to see is this true of Nebuchadnezzar or is he just a phony?

Ron? Yes? It starts out like it's a letter or an official publication. Yeah. So, I think what he's doing is he's giving a history here.

[22:58] He's saying let me tell you what the most high God has done in my life and then he's going to talk about how he lived.

Yeah. And he gives this to Daniel. Daniel writes it. So, I think what has happened here is he's written this down or he's talked to Daniel and told him all these things and Daniel now is going to reveal it.

So, now again just to remind you how much the earth does not or does Nebuchadnezzar know. He says he's gone out to every man from all around the earth. Just a little spear of the Middle East.

That's all that's involved here at this point. You know we're not talking about vast areas like China or like Europe and any of that stuff from the West yet.

We're just talking about this little place here in the Middle East. So, it seems good to declare that the signs and wonders which the most high guy has made and done for me.

[24:04] We see a statement by the king in which he testifies to his personal experience here of Daniel's God. As a powerful testimony of a world leader to his faith of God, this section of Daniel is a remarkable piece of literature and it must have attracted considerable interest in this ancient world.

Just as a similar statement by one of our present day world leaders would today. Presumably Nebuchadnezzar gave Daniel permission to publish his statement in this writing of this chapter.

King Nebuchadnezzar continues his praise of the God by the Hebrews by calling the greatness of his signs and the mightiness and the strength of his wonders. The king has experienced Almighty God's great signs and mighty wonders and speaks from experience.

Chapter 2 chapter 3 these things that Nebuchadnezzar saw. Nebuchadnezzar was a great king but in this chapter he recognizes that God's kingdom was far greater and his dominion was completely unique because it's an everlasting kingdom.

Verse 3 How great are his signs and how mighty are his wonders. His kingdom is everlasting kingdom and his domain is from generation to generation. This earthly king of Babylon understands the concept of a kingdom.

[25:33] He knows his own kingdom is perishable but now he knows the Almighty God's kingdom is everlasting. That is while man's kingdoms are temporary the kingdom of God he's eternal with no end.

God's domain is from generation to generation able to last throughout all ages to come. Nebuchadnezzar the king this unique chapter is a testimony of a Gentile king and how God changed his heart.

In this Nebuchadnezzar is a good example of a witness who relates what is seen and of his experience. And what can we say about that other than when we have experiences and what are we to do as Christians? We're to go out and talk and explain to people what God means in our life. And here's a king who is no way a believer in God that we think we are today and he's willing to explain to his people the things that he's seen and experiences he's had with God.

so he's out and he's actually given a testimony of what this God can do. So that's amazing. So chapter 4 starts out like Nebuchadnezzar has changed.

[27:03] Do you think Nebuchadnezzar was converted here or he was just impressed with what he saw and what he heard? Good question, huh?

A lot of times we have people that we have friends or whatever and we talk to them about Christ and after that we wonder did this make an impact on this person's life?

Or is they just hear it and they took it in? But we don't know, do we? So we don't know about him either.

So yes. He kind of answered as far as converting to God, Jehovah, according as far as converting to Jehovah as the only God, he answers it in verse 8.

Okay. Because he calls Daniel by Belteshazzar according to the name of my God. According to the name of his God.

[28:14] Exactly right. Yeah. So Daniel 4.4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my place.

Nebuchadnezzar's rest was a false piece of the ungodly. God soon shook him from his false security. Verse 5. I saw a dream and it made me feel fearful.

And these fantasies I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. So I gave orders to bring in my presence of all the wise men of Babylon.

that they might make known to me the interpretation of this dream. Does this sound familiar? The purpose of the king's man is to properly determine his unusual dream.

He is unable to interpret the dream for himself and rightly understands that its interpretation will require divine wisdom.

[29:17] However, instead of simply calling for the prophet of Daniel, he requests all the wise men of Babylon to come to his aid. He did this before. And finally they said, hey, we have another guy, this Daniel.

Bring him in. And he did. And he interpreted this dream for him. So now he has another dream. What's he do? He says, bring in these wise men again. Did the king simply forget about the unmatched divine wisdom that rested upon Daniel?

Or is this display of Nebuchadnezzar's lack of trust in Daniel's God? Either way, the fact that Nebuchadnezzar calls for all the Babylonian wise men instead of simply calling Daniel is somewhat interesting.

in it. Seven, verse seven, 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.

Sounds familiar. This is not the same dream as in Daniel two. Nebuchadnezzar promptly told his counselors this dream. He didn't tell him the dream before. They said, you tell me my dream.

[30:32] This time he knows what his dream is, but they did not tell him what it meant. The dream was actually easy to interpret. The wise men probably lacked the courage or more than insight.

Nebuchadnezzar said they did not make it known, not that they could not make it known to him. So they could have, but they didn't. They were afraid because of what the interpretation was going to be.

Verse 4, 8, but finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Balthazar, according to the name of my God, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods, and I related to him the dream, saying, 4, 9, O Balthazar, chief of the magicians.

He is now the chief of the magicians because what did King do back in 2 and 3? He promoted him. Now here's a man that's just a slave.

He's been captured from Judah, and now he is one of the highest guys in the king's service. This is amazing. Since I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery baffles you, tell me the vision of my dream, which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

[31:52] At last Daniel came before me, and why at last, why was it not sent sooner? This is the guise of a graceless man. They turn not to God till another refuge fails them.

So he tried everything except going to God first. His name is Balthazar, according to the name of my God, who is his God. Before Daniel interpreted the dream described in the previous chapter, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, considered the Babylonian deity, Baal, his God.

So he did not have, he just worshipped his God, a foreign God. This means that he saw previously with Daniel and the three Hebrew young men was enough to impress him, but not enough to convert him.

Being impressed with God isn't the same as being converted. You can be told, you can see things happening, you can see the wonders of it, you can be impressed, which he was, but it's not the same as being converted.

Going to this God, the high God. Verse 10, 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.

[33:22] The tree grew large and became strong, and its height reached to the sky, and it was visible to the ends of the whole earth. Its foliage was beautiful, its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all.

The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it.

I was looking in the vision 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, chopped down the tree, 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.

let yet leave the stump and its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze, around it and 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.

[34:30] Let his mind be changed from that of a man, and let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him.

This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers, and the decision is a 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 lowest of men.

So this is the dream that Nebuchadnezzar has now. The tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was noted for its size, strength, prominence, beauty, and shelter, just like him being absolute king.

He could do it all. It's striking that all three stages of God's self-declosure to Nebuchadnezzar in the previous chapters focus on something of immense size.

A colossal dream statue, a colossal actual golden statue, and now a colossal dream tree. One gets the impression that Nebuchadnezzar was a big man in every sense of the word.

[35:46] He thought his greatness had grown and reached to the heavens and to the ends of the world. This kind of gets you back to the Tower of Babel, doesn't it?

Everything's so great, everybody's worshiping, we're going to worship this thing that goes to heaven. And God didn't want them to do that. He wanted them to spread out, but they wanted to stay there and create this thing.

God changed that, didn't he? This tree is extremely attractive. The leaves were beautiful. It gave protection, shade, food.

The imagery of a beautiful is very suggestively sensitive. The very first commandment made about trees in the biblical creation narrative has to do with the aesthetic qualities.

of the people. The tree of the tree of life, also in the midst of the garden, in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[36:49] Beyond the gardens, Babylon was full of architecture and artistic expressions of the king, aesthetic imagination. He had made it a glorious city.

He also ensured that everyone was aware that he was responsible for its magnificence. He cried around and said the watcher, presumably an angel, explained the fate of the tree.

He noted the tree was to be chopped down and it would lose its size, strength, and prominence, its beauty, and its shelter. He also said that the tree represented a man who would be changed and given the heart of a beast.

In other words, he would start acting like a beast or he would be mentally unstable. The tree stump, there seems to be no reason to put a metal band around a stump.

So the interpretation shows something which Nebuchadnezzar would experience during this madness, probably either the loss of metal freedom or the physical restrainment or the confinement.

[37:56] And we see that these kind of things were mentioned back in chapter 2 about the bronze and the metal. Well, what a shock for the king to hear this.

In order that Nebuchadnezzar heard these words in his dream, considering this dream wasn't hard to interpret, it clearly dealt with the humbling of a great king. No wonder none of Nebuchadnezzar's counselors wanted to interpret the dream for him.

You know, they were afraid. If we tell the king this, he's probably going to kill us. Terry. What happened to the silver? What happened to what? To the silver. You mean the...

In chapter 2, it had silver and bronze. Right, right. Now we've gone from the tree, and now we're just... Well, now they just talked about the silver. Now, that's a band that they're putting around there, which was the metal parts of it.

It didn't say anything about the silver. It's going to be mentioned later on, but at this particular point, it doesn't say anything about the silver. You said the silver will be mentioned later on. Yes, in the other parts of the visions and stuff.

[39:06] Yeah. So, like most kings, ancient and modern Nebuchadnezzar wanted to believe it.

As he ruled, instead of God or anyone else, both the Assyrians and the Babylonian kings thought of themselves of rulers over all the earth, so describing themselves in their inscriptions.

You know, at that point, the ruler was a ruler. He was a king. He could do anything he wanted. 4.18, this is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen.

Now, you belts and are, tell me this interpretation since none of the wise men in my kingdom is able to make it known to me. The interpretation, but are you able for a spirit of the holy God is in you.

You're able to do this. Well, we're running out of time. I don't know if to go any further or not. Any comments or questions about what we've done so far here in chapter 3 or chapter 4, or the whole study so far?

[40:15] Daniel 4.19, then Daniel, whose name is Belshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him.

The king responded and said, Belshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you. Belshazzar replied, my lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversities, those who hate you, your enemies.

So it seems here Daniel has been given privileges from this king. And it seems here that Daniel is kind of backsliding a little bit.

He really doesn't want to give this interpretation to the king, does he? And we're going to see what we'll see next week, how this falls, and how he interprets the dream, and what happens with Nebuchadnezzar.

And it's a very strange situation. He just kind of switches back and forth. And we'll see that. Anything else before we close this morning?