

# 24-0310a Transcript

## 24-0310a - *Understanding Our Times*, Scott Reynolds

**Bible Readers:** Mike Mathis and Roger Raines

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## Understanding Our Times

Transcript (0:03 - 33:26)

### Scripture Readings

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Reader: Mike Mathis

##### 1 Chronicles 12:32,

(0:03) The first scripture reading this morning will be 1 Chronicles 12 and verse 32. (0:13) Of the sons of Issachar, who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, (0:24) their chiefs were 200, and all their brethren were at their command. And that concludes the reading. (0:35)

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Reader: Roger Raines

##### Daniel 4:28-34,

(0:40) I will be reading from the book of Daniel, chapter 4, verses 28-34. Daniel 4, 28-34. (0:53) All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar, the king.

Twelve months later, he was walking on the roof of the (1:02) royal palace of Babylon. The king reflected and said, Is this not Babylon, the great which I (1:09) myself have built in the royal residence of my might, of my power, for the glory of my majesty? (1:17) While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you (1:26) it is declared. Sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, (1:34) and your dwelling place will be with the beast of the field.

You will be given grass to eat like (1:41) cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize the most high is ruler (1:49) over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whoever he wishes. Immediately the word concerning (1:58) Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled, and he was driven away from mankind, and began eating grass like cattle, (2:06) and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers, (2:13) and his nails like birds' claws. But at the end of that period, I Nebuchadnezzar raised my eyes towards (2:21) heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I am blessed the most high, and praise and honor him (2:30) who lives forever.

But his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures (2:37) from generation to generation. This concludes this reading. (2:41)

# Transcript

**Preacher:** Scott Reynolds

(2:46) Thank you, Roger. King Nebuchadnezzar is an example (2:54) of something we're going to be talking about today, the depraved mind.

God gave Nebuchadnezzar (3:04) a depraved mind. He lost his mind, thought he was a cow out in the field eating grass, (3:14) and it took a period of time, it says seven periods of time, before he came to a realization, (3:20) came back to his senses. His senses were restored by God after a certain period of time (3:27) for King Nebuchadnezzar.

I wanted that example up as we look at what we're going to be talking (3:35) about today, understanding our times. I thought I would talk today about some thoughts from the (3:42) seven threat series we just completed, beginning with the importance of understanding the times in (3:50) which we live, because it is only when we understand our times that we can begin to know, (3:58) with God's help, how we ought to answer each person. Paul says in Colossians chapter 4, (4:07) verses 5 and 6, walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

(4:15) Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to (4:22) answer each person. And notice, Paul tells us when we answer an outsider that the first thing (4:32) he wants us to think about, the first thing we do is answer with a gotcha, answer to win an argument. (4:49) The first thing we are to do is answer with grace.

Our attitude is of first importance (5:00) in how we address someone else to God. That's what he's concerned about, (5:08) how we answer somebody, and it needs to be with grace. (5:16) We always seem to concentrate on what we should tell somebody and not so much on how we should (5:23) answer.

Then Paul says, seasoned with salt, that is seasoned with the truth. (5:32) And this is interesting because when you season something with salt, how do you go about doing it? (5:38) You pile it on so that you can't see. The object you put the salt on, it's all white.

(5:50) Not with that taste. How much of it do you add? Seasoning suggests a controlled application of salt. (6:00) We are to apply it in a gracious manner also, so that you may know how you ought to answer.

(6:10) We are to answer someone. Answer suggests we first listened to someone, and not just everyone (6:21) as in where we answer everyone the same, but we listen to each individual person (6:32) and season our answer. Give them the salt that they need with a gracious attitude.

(6:42) So Paul says a lot in that little verse, and combining that with 1 Chronicles chapter 12, (6:48) verse 32, that Mike read. Thank you, Mike. Understanding our times will help us understand (6:56) how we ought to answer outsiders.

Mike mentioned last Sunday that we need to get out and start (7:05) talking with others and possibly do or not. And he's right. If we don't do something, (7:13) that here at Westside, Westside as we know it, may not be around much longer.

Take a look. (7:23) And that's where I think Del Tackett and his worldview information and teachings (7:28) can be of great help to us. I believe Del has a great understanding of our time.

(7:35) The seven threat series identified the world's thinking and motivation. Del has developed a (7:41) biblically based plan for engaging with those outsiders, the lost of our day and time. He (7:49) calls his plan the engagement project.

And just like in the truth project, where he shows how the (7:57) scriptures touch on every area of human endeavor so that through study we can uncover a biblical (8:05) Christian worldview, Del shows us that God, through the scriptures, has also shown us (8:14) how we are to engage our neighbors. Del says, we've tried it our way and failed. (8:23) Now it's time to do it his way.

So this morning, I'd like to mention some thoughts from the seven (8:30) threats to remind us of the world in our time, and only a couple of those, and then talk a little bit (8:38) about the engagement project, because we need to do something, and God has planned works for us to (8:45) do since before the creation. Ephesians 2.10 tells us. So now, on with some thoughts on the seven (8:54) threats.

It appears that we are living in a time of the scoffer and the depraved mind. I like how (9:04) Del merged the thoughts from Proverbs about the simple, the fool, and the scoffer, (9:10) with Paul's teaching in Romans about the three pronouncements, my word, (9:18) in terms that God has directed towards the one who rejects God, the one who aggressively or (9:27) regressively moves away from God and devolves into sexual immorality, then to unnatural (9:35) relations, and finally given over to a depraved mind. And if you remember when we read Romans (9:44) chapter one, verses 18 and following, it was God who gave them over to—it wasn't their idea, (9:52) actually, by the way—sexual immorality, unnatural relations, and the depraved mind.

(10:02) God gave them over to those sins. And Del paired the simple-minded with sexual immorality, (10:11) and the fool with unnatural relations, and the scoffer, who is the militant fool, (10:17) with the depraved mind. And do you remember how Del described these three? The simple say, (10:25) I'm okay, you're okay, and they live and let live.

The fool says, there is no God, (10:32) but if you think there are boundaries, then you're not okay. The fool takes a stand. (10:40) The scoffer is no longer satisfied in saying there is no God.

Now he wants to make you believe (10:47) the same, or he wants to punish you if you do believe there is a God. It's interesting to note (10:54) that these pronouncements are an act of God against those who move away from him, the simple, (11:01) the fool, and the scoffer. Since it was God who gave them over to sexual immorality, unnatural (11:08) relations, and eventually a depraved mind, a logical assumption is, then, that it is only God (11:16) who can bring them back to their right mind, as he did with Nebuchadnezzar.

Continuing with this (11:24) thought, then, no manner of logical arguments from us, or, for that matter, willpower on their part, (11:35) is going to bring them back to their senses. If we are going to reach outsiders, as the scripture (11:42) calls them, in today's world, then somehow we must invoke God on their behalf. And that's an aside (11:52) here.

We learn from the second threat, the rise of Homo Deus, God-man, where having rejected God, (12:03) that man now begins to think that he is divine, especially in his heart. (12:09) I have to do what my heart tells me, and it's all about me. (12:15) Our culture has even impacted the church.

Neo-Christianity, Del calls it. If you haven't (12:24) studied the scriptures to learn what the Bible has to say about government, law, ethics, family, (12:30) history, science, and so forth, then chances are you have probably been influenced by our culture (12:37) and hold many of its views, especially in areas where we might think it is not essential (12:44) for salvation. Have you ever heard that argument? You don't have to think there's long periods of (12:51) time.

It doesn't matter how long the earth's been around. It's not essential for salvation. (13:01) But it's an argument the Bible makes, which makes it essential.

And not in just our time (13:09) have Christians been influenced by their culture, but Paul thought it necessary to tell the church (13:16) in Rome, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. (13:25) How are we transferred? It has to do with our thinking, that by testing you may discern (13:31) what is the will of God, and we must learn to think differently from the world. (13:36) God through Paul also tells the Romans to whom we must conform.

(13:43) Be conformed to the image of his son, Romans 8.29. It is important for us to develop a biblical (13:49) Christian worldview before we can be of any help to one another and outsiders. (13:58) When God is considered, we see there is a plan, a creation. There is design.

When you reject God, (14:06) you are left with chance and chaos. And so in the beginning becomes, well, man has just appeared. (14:14) It's like magic.

With God, we have a purpose. We are meaningful. Our significance is from him.

(14:22) Those without God who reject him, they say, we're just an accident, a meaningless mistake. (14:30) Where do you get significance from that? What an uplifting philosophy. (14:37) When you take God out of the picture, all that is left is you, and you're not God.

(14:48) By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth, all their host, (14:56) he spoke, and it came to be. He commanded, and it stood firm. He merely speaks.

(15:06) You know, in ancient Greece, they had Atlas, a hero, Atlas, and on his back, (15:17) he kept the earth up on his back. He had to hold it up physically. Our God speaks, (15:29) and it happens.

And so now it's all about, well, actually, he merely speaks, and it happens. (15:38) But with God out of the picture, now it's up to you. And as the song says, (15:45) you've got to be bad.

You've got to be bold. You've got to be wiser. You've got to be hard.

(15:51) You've got to be tough. You've got to be stronger. You've got to be cool.

You've got to be calm. (15:58) You've got to stay together. And so now it's all about me, and we have the rise of homo deus (16:08) and neochristianity, as was mentioned earlier.

And even the song, you've got to be (16:14) in the song, you've got to be. They recognize time asks no questions. It goes on without you, (16:21) leaving you behind if you can't stand the pace.

The world keeps on spinning. Can't stop it (16:28) if you try to. The best part, the best part is danger staring you in the face, (16:38) and even they say, whoa.

The rest of the seven threats we looked at, (16:47) which we'll only mention here, were the loss of the noble male and the rise of malevolent (16:53) compassion, which drives everything, I said we're not going to comment, which drives everything (16:59) today, malevolent compassion. The consolidation of massive earthly power, the rise of demonic, (17:06) of a demonic worldview in the national rift, America addicted and soft, dependent and lost, (17:15) and the attack upon the biblical family. We've seen, as we've gone through these seven threats, (17:22) more and more evidence of each of these threats as they're playing out around us in our world today (17:30) and our times, and going through these has helped us to have an understanding (17:35) of the times in which we live so that we can now look at how we ought to proceed.

(17:47) It should be sufficiently clear that our world is hurting. It surely seems that our culture has been (17:53) given over to a depraved mind, and how do we engage those who are in such a state? (18:02) The engagement project was developed to do just that. The engagement project, like the truth (18:08) project, is divided into tours, lessons or episodes, if you will, beginning with tour zero (18:15) in the land of nought, or no ought, the land of nought, where there are no boundaries.

That's (18:24) our land today. In the land of nought, a remnant of hope, and going through tour nine, the band (18:32) of brothers, it's based on the king's command, and the tours are designed to discover and implement (18:39) his command. I'm going to finish up with a description of each of the tours.

(18:45) I'm suggesting that as a church, we ought to study these lessons and put them into practice (18:51) so that we can engage outsiders, our neighbors, with grace, wisdom, and truth. (18:59) In the tours, Del speaks of the metanarrative of God, and I don't know if you're like me, (19:04) but I had to look up what a metanarrative is, and the dictionary definition is an overarching (19:12) account or interpretation of events and circumstances that provides a pattern or (19:19) structure for people's beliefs and gives meaning to their experience. So to us, the metanarrative (19:28) of God is what the Bible provides for us.

It's the overarching account of events and circumstances (19:38) that provides the pattern and structure for our beliefs and gives meaning to our experiences. (19:46) This is significant because the humanist flatly rejects all metanarratives, which means they (19:55) flatly reject anything like Christianity, and they say so in their documents. (20:02) So on to the tours.

Tour zero, the land of not, the land of no ought, no boundaries, (20:10) and a remnant of hope. What is God's metanarrative, and where do we find it? (20:15) The introductory tour is designed to help participants get a handle on this very basic (20:21) question regarding the purpose of the Christian life. As Dr. Tackett explains, there are five (20:29) major epochs in history, creation, fall, redemption, engagement, and restoration.

(20:37) As Jesus' followers, we inhabit the fourth of these, engagement, in which it is our task to (20:44) light, to bring the light of God's wisdom to bear upon an increasingly dark world. (20:54) Tour one, creation and the creation endgame. Tour one takes us back to the very beginning, (21:02) the epoch of creation, where we start to gain a sense of our place in the broader suite (21:10) of the metanarrative.

God's purpose in creating, says Dr. Tackett, was to promote fruitfulness. (21:19) He designed this world and everything in it in such a way that his creatures and mankind (21:25) in particular might

play an active participatory role in the creation process. The goal or endgame (21:35) of this plan of creation is the proliferation, cultivation, and flourishing abundant life.

(21:46) Tour two, fall, the river of death. The second epoch of history, that of the fall, (21:55) saw God's original plan frustrated, turned back upon itself. At this stage of the game, (22:01) a villain entered the picture with a counter-narrative.

Once adopted, this counter-narrative (22:07) introduced a new default setting into the fabric of creation, and a tipping point was passed beyond (22:18) which the flow from life to life became an irresistible current of death leading to death. (22:26) Life, fruitfulness, and goodness were all put at a disadvantage, and the world began running (22:33) backwards. Redemption is tour three, the heart of God.

And this first three are the metanarrative (22:43) of God. It's during this third tour that we get our first glimpse of the object of our quest, (22:51) the crown jewel of the divine nature, which is love. Obviously, God could not simply allow the (23:00) world to continue on its downstream course to destruction.

The big question was, (23:05) what was he going to do about the problem and how? He could have wiped the slate clean (23:14) and started all over again at square one, but love, which is the very heart of his nature, (23:20) made this impossible. Instead of annihilation, God chose the course of redemption, (23:28) and rather than letting out a roar of destruction, you know, it's God who says, (23:36) who ends one's life, and you know what he says according to the psalmist? Return to dust. (23:45) Again, he speaks.

So he could have let out a roar of destruction. He breathed out a promise (23:54) of grace instead. Tour four, engagement, the royal task.

Three guiding questions have directed (24:04) our steps up to this point. Why did Jesus leave? Why does God send? And what is God's end game? (24:14) In tour four, we begin to take a serious look at the last of these. The epoch of engagement is the (24:21) era in which we are given a job.

Now is the time, and today is the day, when the king's messenger (24:29) comes knocking at the door, bearing orders from our sovereign king in his hand. And this is when (24:37) we begin to fulfill the royal task, the task of sharing his redeeming love with the world by (24:45) seeking the shalom, the good, the peace of our neighbor. Tour five, engaging with grace.

Tours (24:56) five, six, and seven focus on the practical aspects of the assignment Christ has given us. (25:04) As his remnant of hope in this epoch of engagement, during the course of this first installment, (25:12) we'll talk about what it means to fulfill our task with grace and sensitivity. We'll consider (25:18) how to subject our speech, actions, and behavior to an overarching mission statement, the royal (25:25) vision, which we'll articulate in the following terms.

We will build real relationships with those (25:36) who are providentially near us through prayer and action with grace and wisdom and truth, (25:45) being attractively winsome, tearing down walls, building up trust, and doing the work of the (25:52) kingdom. Tour six, engaging with wisdom. The second part of our practical training as agents (26:03) of the royal law focuses on the challenge of turning head knowledge into heart knowledge.

(26:10) When it comes to loving our neighbors as Jesus loved us, wisdom is a question of practical (26:16) know-how. It's a matter of learning to engage uniquely with unique individuals. It involves (26:24) discernment and a willingness to listen and learn so that we can customize our words, actions, (26:31) and responses to fit the requirements of each new situation.

Tour six is designed to show us (26:39) how this works in the context of real life. Sounds different than what we've done before, doesn't it? (26:47) Tour seven, and this evening we'll be watching some excerpts from tour seven, engaging with truth. (26:58) The third part of our discussion of practical strategies reminds us that biblically speaking, (27:04) love and truth are always and inextricably intertwined.

We cannot have one without the (27:12) other. Love without truth is sentimental and mushy. Truth without love is impersonal and harsh.

(27:22) But when God's word is communicated from heart to heart with a context of trust, deep relationship, (27:30) and sacrificial zeal for the peace or the shalom of the recipient, lives can be changed (27:37) in a miraculous way. That's what true evangelism is all about. (27:46) And we [have] tour eight, the royal sacrifice.

And in eight, we return to the all-important question (27:55) of motivation. If you've gone through things like this before, or even to be asked to go out (28:02) and doorknock, you know what it's like to find the motivation to do so. And so on tour eight, (28:11) Del talks about the all-important question of motivation.

What is it, he asks, that drives (28:19) the Christian to move out into the world, engage the people of his Jerusalem and his (28:26) vicinity, and seek the shalom of his neighbor? Why take on such a formidable assignment? (28:34) The answer takes us back to the object of our quest. It's all wrapped up in the sacrificial (28:40) agape love of God, the crown jewel of the divine nature. And tour eight attempts to plumb the depths (28:49) of this love through a detailed examination of the great self-sacrifice of Jesus himself.

(29:00) And tour nine, the band of brothers. The last tour underscores the importance (29:08) of Christian fellowship and camaraderie, not just the camaraderie of conversation on the church (29:15) patio during coffee hour, but the deep interpersonal bonds that are formed within (29:24) the context of a shared task. The key idea here is that we can only fulfill the royal law (29:32) as a body, a family, a group with a common identity and mission.

This is why Dr. Tackett believes it's (29:40) so crucial for every Christian to be a part of a small group, a group of dedicated disciples (29:50) who are committed to go the distance together, come what may. So I'd like to close with these (30:00) two verses. 2 Timothy 2, verses 24 through 26.

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, (30:12) but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed (30:19) in the hope that God, in the hope that God will grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge (30:28) of the truth and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil who (30:35) has taken them captive to do his will. What a great passage from God's word for us, that our (30:44) mission in a world of increasingly skeptic people, lost people, lonely people, hostile people, (30:52) people with depraved minds, that cannot respond to our logic that we must first of all begin to (31:00) build that relationship with them.

This means we're going to have to get rid of the notion (31:06) that bigger is better. And we have to concentrate on building a relationship with a fewer number of (31:14) people that we might then have the opportunity to begin to deal with them as we read in Colossians (31:22) chapter 4, 5, and 6. Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the (31:30) opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will (31:38) know how you should respond to each person.

And that will be the case if we concentrate on doing (31:45) what the Lord has asked us to do, to build those relationships with people in the culture around us (31:51) and to pray for them diligently, that as God is going to begin to allow them to come to their (31:57) senses, he's the one who allows them to escape from the trap of the devil. He is the one who (32:04) will grant them repentance. We need to call on God to do that.

So this is actually a time where we (32:12) might even say this could be our finest hour. You know, the post-COVID scare. We now live in a culture (32:21) so radically different, but I can guarantee it is a culture that is filled with all kinds of fears.

(32:30) Whether we're afraid of the glaciers melting, we're afraid of virus, we're afraid of so many things, (32:36) and we're isolated, and we increasingly don't have relationships with anybody, true relationships. (32:43) We have a lot of likes, we have a lot of follows, but we don't have true relationships. In fact, (32:51) I would hazard a guess that the vast majority of our culture doesn't even know what it's like (32:58) to have a true, trusting relationship with someone who has no agenda other than to love them.

(33:12) And of course, that is exactly what God is calling us to do. (33:18) And so now, we are extending the invitation to anyone who's subject to it, (33:23) if you will come while we stand and sing.