

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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The Kingdom To End All Kingdoms
Daniel 5

This morning, we are jumping back into our verse-by-verse study of the book of Daniel. And since we took a break for a few weeks, I want to take a few minutes to review some of what we learned in chapters 1-4.

The book of Daniel begins with the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, invading God's holy city, Jerusalem, and taking a group of God's people captive back to Babylon - including Daniel. From the very beginning, Daniel is under constant pressure to turn his back on God and adopt the godless culture of Babylon. But, through it all, Daniel remains faithful to God. Even more, God remains faithful to Daniel.

But the book of Daniel is not just about what God wanted to do in Daniel. It's about what God had planned to do throughout the world. In chapter 2, God gives Nebuchadnezzar a dream that reveals Babylon will be overthrown by the Medes and Persians. He shows Nebuchadnezzar that the kingdoms of this earth are temporary and only God's Kingdom will endure forever. But Nebuchadnezzar continues in pride until chapter 4. Through miraculous events, God humbled Nebuchadnezzar and he began to worship God. As a matter of fact, chapter 4 is a letter Nebuchadnezzar wrote to the entire world telling them about the greatness of God so they would humbly repent of their sin and turn to Him.

And that brings us to chapter 5. It's been almost 30 years since the world received Neb's letter in chapter 4. There's a new ruler in Babylon. His name is Belshazzar. Historians tell us he was actually co-ruler of Babylon with his father, Nadonidus, who was very unpopular in Babylon. So Nadonidus traveled the world and left his son, Belshazzar, in control. And, just as a side note, our passage says that Nebuchadnezzar was the king's father. But that's a word that often means forefather. It's the same way the Jews said that Abraham was their father...so, don't stumble over that. And the way I want to begin our study of chapter 5 is by looking at the end of this story.

Daniel 5:30-31

30 That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

This is the moment God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar over 60 years ago in chapter 2: the Medes and Persians are taking over. And just think about the dynamic here. Not only was there a known prophecy about this, the Medo-Persian Army would have already been camped right outside the city since they make it into the palace by the end of the night.

And chapter 5 tells us what a man named Belshazzar is doing while prophecy is unfolding before his eyes and the end of his life is on the other side of the wall.

Daniel 5:1-4

1 King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

While the enemy surrounds the city and the end is on the horizon, King Belshazzar throws a party. He invites 1,000 lords to join him. And they engage in a feast that is marked by absolute debauchery.

Verses 2-4 describe the sin of Babylon

- **SEXUAL IMMORALITY – 5:2 [Belshazzar called for the vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem] that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.**

Without going into detail, this feast is intended to be filled with sexual immorality as the king's concubines get drunk with the lords of Babylon. (Drunkenness is a sin, as well)

- **MATERIALISM/IDOLATRY – 5:4 [they] praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.**

I put materialism and idolatry together because they are really the same thing. Materialism is valuing the stuff of this world in a way we should ultimately value God.

- **BLASPHEMY – 5:3 Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them.**

Blasphemy is the act of speaking or acting in a way that insults something sacred. Taking anything that was made for the worship of God and using it for anything other than the glory of God is blasphemy. The golden vessels that had been in the Temple of Jerusalem were made for the worship of God. But Belshazzar uses them to get people drunk and worship false gods.

So, while a blind man could see that prophecy was being fulfilled and the end was near for Babylon, they persist in their sin: sexual immorality, materialism, and blasphemy. But there's something you need to see. We aren't just looking back at the fall of Babylon. We are actually looking at events that foreshadow our future.

Here's what I mean: the kingdom of Babylon is not just a kingdom from the past. The Bible prophecies that the kingdom of Babylon will be reestablished on the earth before the return of Jesus. As a matter of fact, the defeat of Babylon is one of the final things Jesus does when He returns to earth and sets up His kingdom. So, let's take a look into the future to see what will happen as Babylon is reestablished on the earth.

Revelation 17:3

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 17:18

And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.”

Revelation 18:2-3

2 And [the angel] called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. 3 For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.”

So, the Babylon that is going to be established before the return of Jesus will influence all the nations of the earth. And, according to the book of Revelation, there will be several distinct ways the demonic spirit of Babylon will be manifest among the nations, see if they sound familiar...

- SEXUAL IMMORALITY

Rev. 18:3, For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality,

- MATERIALISM

Rev. 18:3, the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living

- BLASPHEMY

Rev. 17:3, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names

The resurgence of Babylon will be marked by Sexual immorality, materialism, and blasphemy...just like Babylon from 2600 years ago. The nations of this earth will descend more and more into those sins before Jesus comes again. And, you don't have to be a bible scholar to see that our nation is drunk with the wine of Babylon. The Spirit of this age is the spirit of Babylon. Prophecy is being fulfilled right in front of our eyes.

Just this last week, our state board of education passed a rule restricting teachers in 3rd grade and below from teaching children about homosexuality and transgender issues. And the headlines that covered the story described that ruling as “controversial.” What does it say about the sexual morality of our culture when it has become controversial to say that 5- and 6-year-old children should not be taught about sex in their schools?

What about materialism and idolatry? Does the average American value God more than the stuff of this world? What about blasphemy? Is there any concern in our culture for the sacredness of God? Friends, we are living in Babylon. Daniel 5 is not just a look back in time...it's a warning about our future. The writing is on the wall...

Daniel 5:5-9

5 Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. 6 Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. 7 The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.

Verse 5 starts with the word "immediately." That's emphasizing the suddenness of this. In a moment, you could say "in the twinkling of an eye," God shows up. And the drunk king got sober in a hurry. He didn't know what was going on, but the mere presence of God's finger was enough to make his knees knock together and cause him to fall to the ground. So, he yells for his wise men to find out what the writing means. And this is about the umpteenth time in Daniel that the so-called "wise-men" of Babylon have no idea what's going on. There's a sermon here that I don't have time to preach about the voices of wisdom from our culture. Their as clueless as a vegetarian at Sonny's BBQ.

I'll summarize the next little section. The queen hears all the commotion in the banqueting hall and comes in to find the king flipping out and his wise-men standing around useless. She remembers Daniel and his God-given wisdom. Once Daniel comes before the king, he is promised money and power if he can interpret the writing on the wall.

Daniel 5:17-23

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O king, the Most High God gave nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. 19 And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. 21 He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.

I love this scene. It's been almost 70 years since Daniel came to Babylon, so he is in his 80s. He's just been offered money and power if he can interpret, but he tells the king to keep it. Then, he agrees to interpret the writing on the wall. But he doesn't interpret the writing on the wall at first. In typical old-man fashion, he tells a story from when he was younger. He recaps the events from 30 years ago that were recorded in the last chapter. But this isn't a case of an old man rambling or trying to re-live his glory days. He's setting the stage for the writing on the wall.

Notice what he reminds Belshazzar about Nebuchadnezzar.

- In verses 18-19, Daniel says that everything Nebuchadnezzar had was given by God.
- In verse 20, Daniel says that Nebuchadnezzar's heart was proud. He didn't bow in humility before the God who made him what he was and gave him all he had. He stood in pride, thinking he was the reason for his greatness. And that's why God taught him a lesson.
- And verse 21 says that lesson was that "the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will." In other words, God is God, and we are not.

God is the source of life and breath and every good thing. God will bring humility to every proud heart. One way or another, every knee will bow before the Lord God Almighty. That's Daniel's preface to the interpretation. Then, he says one more thing before he tells what the writing on the wall means.

Daniel 5:22-23

22 And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, 23 but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

Verse 23 tells the story. Belshazzar did not humble his heart even though he knew everything we just said. He grew up in Nebuchadnezzar's family. He knew that Nebuchadnezzar had lost his mind and was humbled by God. He would have read Nebuchadnezzar's letter to world. No doubt he knew God prophesied that the Medes and Persians would overthrow Babylon.

He knew what was true, yet he persisted in pride. The root sin of Belshazzar was pride. As a matter of fact, when Daniel confronts him over his pride, he includes all the descriptions of sin from verses 2-4. Pride was the root of sexual immorality. Pride was the root of idolatry and materialism. Pride was the root of blasphemy. Pride was the root of all Belshazzar's sin...because pride is the root of every one of our sins.

In essence, sin is what happens when we think we know better than God. And what will happen to those whose hearts persist in pride, those who do not lay themselves and their lives down before the Lord? The writing is on the wall!

Daniel 5:24-28

24 "Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. 25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; 27 TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; 28 PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

Daniel explains the meaning behind the three words that were written on the wall.

MENE means numbered. God numbered out the days Babylon would be a kingdom. He also numbered out the days Belshazzar would live. In other words, those days were limited. They wouldn't last forever. They were always destined to come to an end.

TEKEL means measured. The picture is of a scale that measures weight. On one side is Belshazzar and his life. On the other side is God's standard for right. The Bible word for that is righteousness. At the end of the days God had numbered for Belshazzar, his life was weighed in God's balances. And, because He was proud and never humbled himself before God, he was found wanting, or lacking.

PERES means divided or torn to pieces. God isn't saying Babylon would be torn in two and part would be given to the Medes and the other part given to the Persians. He is saying that it would all be destroyed, and that Belshazzar would be destroyed along with it.

So, put all of that together and you get the interpretation. The writing on the wall said that God had numbered the king's days. And at the end of those days, his life was measured and found lacking. So, God would bring judgment that would destroy him. And that's exactly what happens next. Look at verse 30 again.

Daniel 5:30-31

30 That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

True to His word, God brought judgment on the foolish king who knew the truth but refused to humble himself before God. And remember, this isn't just a story of something that happened 2,600 years ago. It's foreshadowing the future, a future you and I will have to face. The spirit of Babylon is alive and well and the writing on the wall still stands.

Hebrews 9:27 ...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

Like Belshazzar, our days are numbered...not just the days of our nation, but yours and mine. The end is coming. It could be today. And God's judgment is coming with it. We will all be weighed in the balance of God's righteousness and our eternal destiny will be determined by what we do between now and then. Will we persist in our pride, like Belshazzar? Or will we repent from our sin and turn to Jesus for mercy? And that's our big idea for today...

Big Idea: God's judgment is coming, so humble people repent while there is still time.

Friend, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the end will come...the writing is on the wall. And all of us are in Belshazzar's place. We know the truth. We just read it in the Bible. We are without excuse. So, the application is for every one of us. It is easy for us to see the sin of our nation and be grieved that America lives like a godless nation, but what about us? It is easy to point our finger at the culture at large and condemn the people of this world for the pride of their sin, but what about us?

The painful truth is that many so-called followers of Christ are taking part in the sin-filled party this world is hosting.

Revelation 18:4 Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues;

Listen to what God says to His people. He says, "Stop living like you are part of Babylon. Don't take part in her sin or you will share in her plagues." This is a sober call to us. It's a word to every person in our nation who considers themselves a follower of Jesus: stop living like you are part of Babylon...

- What about your moral purity?

In 2020, the Barna group conducted a survey and found that 65% of non-Christian men view pornography at least once a month. The same survey found that number to be 64% among professing Christian men. Men, I don't share that to shame you or shock you. I share that as a wake-up call to renew your fight against the seduction of Babylon by turning to Jesus in humble faith and repentance.

This fall, we launched an initiative of small groups for men. In January, we are going to invite you to a men's fellowship where we will renew the call for men to step into God's holy design for their lives. But will you start this morning by confessing your sin before God and turning to Jesus to deliver you from sin by His power?

- What about the idolatry of materialism?

Does your life mirror the materialism of our culture? Do you live in pursuit of the stuff of this world or for the glory of Jesus? Are you working for money so that you can live out the American Dream or so you can advance the kingdom of God?

- What about blasphemy?

You are the temple of God. Your life was designed to worship Him. For followers of Jesus, our whole life is called to be sacred...which means it is blasphemy to use our lives for anything but the glory of Jesus.

What does humility look like for you today? Lord, I belong to you...my life and my choices belong to you. So, what do we do? How do we fight the seduction of Babylon?

Hebrews 12:1-2

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

We don't fight sin by relying on our own power. That would simply be another form of pride. We fight sin by looking to Jesus. He went to the cross for our sin. He rose from the grave to give us resurrection power to live a brand-new life as He lives in us. So, turn from sin by looking to Jesus. Call on Christ to live in you by faith.