

X. Daniel in Biblical Perspective
A Party To Remember
Daniel 5
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Our text for this study is Daniel 5. There was the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4 and I'd like to start at Daniel 4:37 which says, "*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride (Nebuchadnezzar) he is able to humble.*" That was the converted Nebuchadnezzar. Now we come to Daniel 5 and I'd like to set the stage for us before we read from the text of God's Word. The stage is Babylon and Israel has now been in captivity almost 70 years. In fact we have fast forwarded quite a distance from Daniel 4. The Nebuchadnezzar of Daniel 4 is now dead. In fact, he has been dead for over 20 years now. He died in 562 BC. Daniel is in semi retirement. The Daniel whom we have looked at for four chapters is now, if we've done the work right, 83 years old. He came into captivity at about age 13 or 14 and now he is about 83 years old. Daniel has gone into at least semi retirement. He is not present when they call out the people of whom he had been the head scholar of in Daniel 5 and has to be sent for by one who is still aware of him. She is the queen mother of the land. We are at about the 100th year of the revitalized Babylonian empire and it's about to end the night of Daniel 5.

Not many miles outside of Babylon, Cyrus the Persian, who is the emperor of the Medo-Persian Empire, has already defeated the king over all of Babylonian Empire and his name is Nabonidus. Nabonidus has retreated to Borsippas. Nabonidus had been ruling Babylon for 17 years and less than a fourth of that time did he spend in Babylon itself. He had an oasis which was a place called Tayma where he stayed most of the time and a couple of other places. He would only come to Babylon periodically. In place of his presence in Babylon he would set up his son Belshazzar. Belshazzar was the number two co-regent of the Babylonian Empire. Belshazzar is interestingly identified both within the Scripture and then extra Biblical literature as not only the son of Nabonidus but the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. How could he be when Nabonidus is not related to Nebuchadnezzar? That will be solved for you here very shortly. So he has been given the title of King of Babylon and its district. In other words, the immediate capital city and its district is what he rules over in reporting to his father, Nabonidus. He is in place and his father has been defeated and gone to Borsippas. Now with the Persian army just five or ten miles outside of Babylon Belshazzar throws a party.

I want to walk through this with you. I want to start with the party and then I'll go to the party crasher. I'm highly indebted to one of my pastor friends for giving me some insight on this. Then there is a party pooper and the fourth part of this text will be the party is over. So here is the party in 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.
So that's the party that is going on in Babylon, the wonder of the world.

We very blessed to have uncovered in the last 50 to 60 years through archeology a number of things that have greatly helped us. There is the history of Herodotus. There is the history of Josephus, the Jewish Historian funded by Rome who made great use of another historian named Berosus. Berosus is one who recorded much about Babylon that Josephus records about Babylon. According to Berosus and Josephus, Babylon was 14 square miles in size. It had buildings up to four stories in height. The god of Babylon, the god of all their gods was named Bel. That's why you see that name showing up all the time. It had even been given to Daniel when he was called Belshazzar.

The temple Bel was eight stories high. This is nothing new because this is the location of the tower of Babel back in the book of Genesis. So here is this monumental city and running through the middle of it is the River Euphrates. It has 100 bronze gates with the famous hanging garden seemingly suspended in air that actually had full trees growing in them. It had eight large gates that were decked with gold and silver. Its walls were 350 feet high or what we would call 35 stories high. The widths of the walls were 87 feet thick. You could easily ride four chariots on the highways on top of the walls to defend it. It had been besieged on many occasions but it had never been taken for 1,000 years.

It is within this mighty, seemingly unconquerable fortress that Belshazzar has now gathered his people after a seemingly disastrous defeat of king Nabonidus who was over all of the area of Babylon. Belshazzar was the vice regent. This is a party that is very distinct, isn't it? It is a party that has 1,000 people of his court, his lords but not just them. By the way, in recent archeology there is about 14 acres of archeology that they have been working on and they have uncovered the room out of the palace where this likely had taken place. If I remember correctly, the main room is 173 feet long and right at 57 feet wide. Right in the middle of the length of the room is a carved niche that's elevated with a plaster wall behind it. This elevated place half way in the wall would have been the place where the king would have sat with this plastered wall behind him. Now all over the walls would have been these many drawings and paintings to the gods that they worshiped of the day. All of the people, these thousand lords plus his wives and his concubines which would be the entertainers who would have been there in a lascivious way using the King James language. The wine was flowing very pointedly throughout the party.

This party had been well planned in that who had been invited meaning the leaders who obviously needed to be encouraged in light of the defeat that had just taken place. This was another way to thumb their nose at the Persians as they retreated behind this unconquerable fortress. "You're gathering out there but look what we're doing! We're partying. That's how little we think of you and your army. You can't touch us!" So in their pride and their arrogance they throw their party and there's a side benefit. It's a way for Belshazzar, the king of that district, the city of Babylon, to say "Look at how powerful I am. I can throw a party right in the face of my enemies!" So here is this party going on.

Not only is it the people he has invited but he has the program planned for the night. First of all there is the feast that they eat and then the wine begins to flow. In the

text that I just read it said, “When the wine tasted good...” which means that they could have cared less at this time what it tasted like. It was at that time that he intentionally to where his grandfather king Nebuchadnezzar had stored, with some propriety, the vessels of the temple from the city (Jerusalem) that they had conquered and the nation of Judah. So the vessels that had been stored there for all of these years (40 plus years) are now pulled out and Belshazzar pours the wine in these vessels in which he is making a statement by doing this. “You need not fear the Persians. Our God is so great that we’re drinking from the vessels of the God of the Jews. If our God is able to let us defeat them and use them as a vassal state and we drink from their vessels then we need not worry about the Persians and their gods – the Medo-Persians and their gods.” He is very pointedly doing something and what we would see and what would be taken as a sacrilege and blasphemy of using the temple vessels, he sees as an effort to embolden those who are with him.

So it is a very deliberate scenario - first the food, then the drink and all in sensuality. By the way, doesn’t this seem familiar? When you live without the One true and living God what do you do in order to deal with life? You do know that people can’t deal with life without meaning in life, don’t you? So what does the book of Ecclesiastes tell you that you will do? It says you’ll eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die. Here you see this feasting of arrogance in the face of depending doom even to the blasphemy of the One true and living God in the use of all of those things that is there. So the party is being thrown with a very specific purpose and then all of a sudden in the midst of this party with its deliberate agenda a party crasher shows up.

Daniel 5:5-12 says, *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, (actually means his hips went out of joint) and his knees knocked together. (When I read this in the original language I thought this is an Elvis moment where his hips went out of joint and his knees gave way...) 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.” (They would be the third because he was already the second and his father Nabonidus would be the first ruler.) 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. 10 The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, “O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father (meaning Nebuchadnezzar), light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, 12 because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”*

So this hand shows up as a party crasher. It says it's a bodiless hand with the fingers showing and there at that niche on the plaster is the writing. I would love one day to visit this archeological site just to look at that spot because it's right there upon that plaster. There is a writing that stood in contrast to everything else that would have been around the room. It caused the color to drain from the face of king Belshazzar and it caused him to almost dissipate as he watched it. So he immediately assembled the fox panel of all stars. He needed experts, right? So he calls the CNN panel, the fox panel. That's what we do today right? The experts show up and say just like today we really don't know what's going on. We'll be glad to talk for 30 minutes so you'll pay us a salary but we don't have the slightest idea of what's going on. Now he's at the end of himself.

They bring in the queen mother. Now is the queen mother his wife? No. His wives and concubines would have been there but this is not his wife. So who would this be? There would only be one of two possibilities. To do this I have to step back and give you the line of what's happened since Daniel 4. In Daniel 4 there is the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar and then whatever time he had left in his reign. He died in 562 B.C. The man who replaced Nebuchadnezzar was a man by the name of Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach). You will find him referred to in the book of 2 Kings 25:27-30. He only had a 2 year reign and then he was killed by his brother-in-law. Then he was replaced by his brother-in-law Neriglissar. Neriglissar then ruled for five years. He then was also done away with and his son came into power yet his son was a mere boy but was considered a very evil person. His son's name was Laborosoarched and he only reigned for nine months as a boy and then he was killed. Of the gang that killed him, a man who is not of blood line any longer, Nabonidus came into power. He will then be in power for 17 years and he will have a son name Belshazzar. He will put Belshazzar in second place as his ruler when he is absent and he will call him the king of Babylon proper, the city and the district.

By the way who is the queen mother? It is probably Nitocris who is known for having a canal built for the River Euphrates. Tuck that away for a minute. Nitocris was a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and had been taken by Nabonidus as his wife. One of the great ways you can consolidate power is by taking a relative of one who went ahead of you. So Nabonidus marries Nitocris the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar therefore when Nabonidus and Nitocris have children and one would be Belshazzar, Belshazzar through Nitocris would have Nebuchadnezzar as a grandfather. One may say, "It says 'father' in the text." That's because in the Chaldean language, like the Hebrew language, there is no word for grandfather or grandson. It's the same word for father. So a grandfather would have the name father just like the immediate father would have the name father. So his immediate father is Nabonidus and his grandfather through his mother's side, the queen mother, Nitocris, is Nebuchadnezzar. That explains the situation in which we now find ourselves.

This is very interestingly found out in something that has been uncovered called the Nabonidus Cylinder. In this you can read about the history of these kings and begin to put all of this in place.

So now his queen mother comes in she would know of whom? It is someone who has been forgotten. She would know of Daniel. She said, "There is a man..." (dare I put words in for her) "He's in retirement right now but let's call him out." She then uses a

phrase that her father would have used. She says, “He has a spirit of the gods and he will be able to give the interpretation” because she already knew that from what he had done for her father, Nebuchadnezzar. So she has them call out Daniel who had served in the days of Nebuchadnezzar but now has moved into retirement in these 17 years of Nabonidus’ reign and has been forgotten.

It’s interesting how we think we are building these extraordinary reputations and yet Daniel was pretty well forgotten by 17 years, but he hadn’t been forgotten by the Lord. He’s still breathing so what does that tell you? He may be in retirement but the Lord doesn’t have him in retirement. The Lord has something else for him to do. So He calls Daniel out of retirement through the queen mother calling for him because she thinks he can solve the problem at hand. This Daniel called Belteshazzar is called out. The hand is the party crasher. God’s presence in the writing on the wall is the party crasher but now here is the party pooper.

Daniel 5:13-19 says, **13** *Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, “You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah (I have heard about you because you’re in the history books), whom the king my father (he recognizes his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar) brought from Judah. 14 I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. 15 Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. 16 But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.” 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.*

Before we look at it further I want to add something here. Notice how whenever Daniel is brought in before Nebuchadnezzar he very kindly and respectfully acknowledges his authority. He will say even in the words of the queen mother when she came in “O king live forever” but watch when he comes in for Belshazzar who has just made sacrilege of the vessels of the temple. You find no plea for his long life but he says in Daniel 5:17 “*Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another.*” He’s going to be a preacher and I’m not going to be beholden to you and he goes on to say, “*Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation.*” Then he says, “O king” but no ‘live forever’ as present and then he goes into his sermon. This is a moment like Nathan in front of David and John the Baptist in front of Herod. He has come to a man that can end his life but notice how he preaches the Word to him.

Daniel 5:18-23 says, **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.

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.

Daniel has just preached a bold sermon. He says, “Remember your grandfather. He lifted himself up and God humbled him. Then he repented. You have lifted yourself up but you have not humbled yourself. On the contrary you have made sacrilege and blasphemy. You’ve taken the vessels of the temple of the One God who has put you in place in Whom you live and move and have your being, your very breath as well as your position. You have not only used those in a sacrilege and blasphemously but you have used those to worship pagan gods. You have not humbled yourself as your grandfather Nebuchadnezzar did.” So what will happen? Now comes the message.

Daniel 5:24-28 says **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.”* What a party pooper! Here is all of this revelry, sensuality, the dancing of women, the wine, the eating, the arrogance of taking the vessels from the temple of God from Jerusalem and using them for further drunkenness and in false worship of false gods. Then they bring in Daniel. Daniel says, “Your grandfather lifted himself up and God humbled him but he repented. You have lifted yourself up but you have not humbled yourself and you have not repented therefore let me tell you what God has written on the wall.”

These are economic terms. These are terms of trade – mene, tekem, parsin. Mene is that he then proclaims to him that because of what he has done God has said your days are numbered. You have been weighed and found in the bar of God’s justice as wanting. Therefore God is about to bring an end to this kingdom that He has raised up for His purposes and it is going to take place right before you. God will then divide it and it will be given to the Medes and the Persians. It will then be destroyed. Of course the one that God is going to use is right outside the gates of Babylon at this very moment. His name is Cyrus the Persian.

So here is the declaration and here is the moment. Very likely while Daniel is speaking, Cyrus, through his general whom I’m going to tell you about in the next study, has diverted the waters of the Euphrates that run through the middle of the city of Babylon off into a canal that had been built by the queen mother years before. The river level was being lowered and as Herodotus, Berosus and others tell us, it was lowered far enough that the Medo-Persian army could come in through the river and then unexpectedly come up over the banks into the city. And they would now take the city. The party is over. This happens that very night. So let’s look at how it ends.

Daniel 5:29-31 says **29** *Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.* (That will be the shortest rule anybody ever had and that's probably one of the reasons it didn't matter much to Daniel.) **30** *That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed.* **31** *And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.*

So the party is over. The kingdom falls and it is now given to Cyrus the Persian and delivered to Darius the Mede. One might think, "You've explained everybody but who is Darius?" I look forward to telling you who he is in the next study but suffice it to say the man in command at this moment is Cyrus the Persian who is over the Medo-Persian Empire. Through his leadership, Babylon is conquered and the capital city is taken. Nabonidus will be brought back in just a few months and will formally turn it over. Cyrus will let Nabonidus live but Belshazzar is killed that very night as the Persian troops come in through the river and take over the city.

What are some lessons we can learn here? I want to give you five. The first lesson is this. Here is another demonstration of the sovereignty of God in the affairs of the world. If I'm down there looking at this party and Cyrus the Persian I'm kind of thinking do I go with Cyrus or with Belshazzar and Nabonidus. Who am I going to go with? I'll tell you who to go with and that's God. He is the King of King and Lord of Lords. He raises up kings and brings down kingdoms at any moment He so desires. He has Berlin walls fall. He has bamboo walls fall. He has iron curtains go up. Whenever God so decides to accomplish His purposes He does do as He pleases among the nations of the earth. His Will, will be done in the heavens and upon the earth. This is merely a sovereign God over the affairs of nations to accomplish His purposes even as He raised up Babylon, a revitalized Babylonian empire, for 80 to 100 years. Why? It was because He had discipline for His people for 70 years and He raised up this nation. When He finishes with that nation that nation is then brought to an end – Babylon.

This is merely fulfillment of Scripture written literally scores and hundreds of years earlier. Let's take a little trip here. What had just been said here in Daniel 5 about the kingdom being divided? Back under Nebuchadnezzar, he had a dream that he couldn't interpret that Daniel had to interpret. This is found in Daniel 2 which is almost 40 plus years prior to Daniel 5. Here is this amazing dream and the interpretation of Daniel. It's about an image of gold, silver, bronze and iron. Daniel 2:36-39 says **36** *"This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation.* **37** *You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory,* **38** *and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold.* (Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire) **39** *Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.*

Who is that kingdom that arises that will take Nebuchadnezzar's place? Daniel 2:31, 32 says, **31** *"You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening.* **32** *The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver...* There are two arms. The next kingdom inferior to you which is silver inferior to gold but will conquer you is a

divided kingdom. It is the Medo-Persian kingdom. Thus the Scriptures decades later is fulfilled. But even Babylon is a fulfillment of Scripture.

Let's look at Deuteronomy 28. This goes all the way back as the people of God are being delivered out of Egypt and they are being brought to the Promised Land. God is going to make them a nation. In this Scripture He gives them the blessings if they walk in obedience and then in Deuteronomy 28:15 He begins to give the curses if they walk in disobedience. I don't have time to read it all but I want to read a couple of verses. God says "When you serve pagan gods and disobey Me..." then what will He do? Deuteronomy 28:36-38 says, **36** *"The LORD will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. 37 And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the LORD will lead you away. 38 You shall carry much seed into the field and shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it.*

In other words, God will raise up a nation that you do not know in order to bring you to judgment and you won't have Me as king. You will set up your own king. When that king leads you astray then I will bring a nation and a kingdom to bring discipline into your life. Let's look at what they will do. Deuteronomy 28:52, 53 says **52** *"They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land. And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the LORD your God has given you. 53 And you shall eat the fruit of your womb...* He then describes the horror of their conduct as they are under siege.

Deuteronomy 28:64 says **64** *"And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other..."* The Lord will scatter them and send them out and that will happen under the Assyrians and then the Babylonians as Deuteronomy 28 is fulfilled. God raises up Babylon and Assyria for this very purpose. Assyria is raised up for the ten Northern tribes and Babylon for the two Southern tribes.

Let's look at how that is chronicled in fulfillment with Babylon. This is found in 2 Chronicles 36 which is the last chapter in 2 Chronicles. What shall happen and what happens to Israel? They worshipped false gods and disobey God to go to the false gods of this world and the God of Gods brings the promised discipline upon them. 2 Chronicles 36:17-21 says **17** *Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans (were from Babylon), who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. 19 And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. 20 He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.*

They did not honor the Sabbath years seventy times so God took them out of the land for seventy years. He brought discipline because of their worshipping of the false gods and disobeying Him. So He raised up a nation called the Babylonians to take them

away and to bring the hand of judgment upon them. Then He will bring judgment upon the Babylonians through another nation that He raises up who were the Persians or what we call the Medo-Persian empire and that would be prophesied before it happened. This is found in Isaiah 13:1 says *“The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.”* For the sake of time we will go to Isaiah 13:17-21 says **17** *Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them (Babylonians), who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold. 18 Their bows will slaughter the young men; they will have no mercy on the fruit of the womb; their eyes will not pity children. 19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them. 20 It will never be inhabited or lived in for all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there; no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there. 21 But wild animals will lie down there, and their houses will be full of howling creatures; there ostriches will dwell, and there wild goats will dance. Etc..* So here He says, *“I will not only raise up the Babylonians but I will raise up the Persians and they will bring destruction upon the Babylonians whom I used to discipline My people.”*

Let’s look at Isaiah 21. This is a more lengthy passage but again I’ll just read a few verses from it. Isaiah 21:2 says *“A stern vision is told to me; the traitor betrays, and the destroyer destroys. Go up, O Elam; lay siege, O Media; all the sighing she has caused I bring to an end.”* So here He raises up Media which is right below Edom and He brings them against those who will stand in that day. What will happen? Isaiah 21:9, 10 says **9** *And behold, here come riders, horsemen in pairs!”* *And he answered, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the carved images of her gods he has shattered to the ground.” 10 O my threshed and winnowed one, what I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I announce to you.*

The fall of Babylon by Jeremiah, even in the reign of Babylon and the nation that will do it, the Persians and the Medians, is identified in Isaiah and also in Jeremiah. Let’s look in Jeremiah 51. Jeremiah 51:1, 35-37, 41 says **1** *Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon...35 The violence done to me and to my kinsmen be upon Babylon,” let the inhabitant of Zion say. “My blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea,” let Jerusalem say. 36 Therefore thus says the Lord: “Behold, I will plead your cause and take vengeance for you. I will dry up her sea and make her fountain dry, 37 and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins, the haunt of jackals, a horror and a hissing, without inhabitant. (The waters will become dry and through them will come their destruction.) 41 “How Babylon is taken, the praise of the whole earth seized! How Babylon has become a horror among the nations!* So this declaration continues and it goes all the way to Jeremiah 51:58.

Jeremiah 51 52-55 says **52** *“Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will execute judgment upon her images, and through all her land the wounded shall groan. 53 Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify her strong height, yet destroyers would come from me against her, declares the Lord. 54 “A voice! A cry from Babylon! The noise of great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans! 55 For the Lord is laying Babylon waste and stilling her mighty voice.* So here He has raised up the Medes and the Persians to accomplish His purpose to judge Babylon which has brought judgment upon His people which He has used for their refinement. God is sovereign. He fulfills His Word, His prophesies and He is Lord of the nations.

I took a lot of time with this and I want to tell you why. I live in a nation. This nation is a prescribed boundary. It had a beginning and it will have an end. Its continuation, I believe, will be blessed by two things. One is a church that functions as salt and light to restrain her from evil. The second thing is only so long as she welcomes the things of God. We are the temple of God. You are the vessels of the Lord in the New Covenant and in the new Temple of Israel – the Israel that God has gathered from all the nations which is His church. Any nation whether it's Sudan or America or Uganda in the day of Idi Amin and Obote that sacrileges the Holy Temple of God or their vessels will not long stand. We look at our nation that we enjoy so much and don't realize that we enjoy it because of the blessings of God's redeeming grace and His common grace that has come through His church for over 200 years and because His people have been welcomed here for 200 years. When they are not and God's purposes are fulfilled then any nation including this one, the party is over.

I know not what the leaders of my nation will do but I do know what the church of Jesus Christ is to do. If you long for God's blessing to continue upon this nation our God is not the tribal God of the United States of America. He is God. The question is – is He welcomed in this nation? He doesn't exist for America to be great. He is not the hand maiden of the Republican party or the Democratic party. He is not the hand maiden of Washington. He is God and He is to be honored as God. While certainly our forefathers were right in that you do not prescribe the worship of God by legal coercion, He is to be welcomed. If He is welcomed with His people and His temple in the New Covenant which is His people where He dwells and His people which are His vessels in the New Covenant, then the hand of God continues. If not, the party is over.

Let me give you the other lessons now. The second lesson is the inevitability of change in a world full of sin and grace. There's one unchanging fact in all the world and that is there is going to be change. Grace brings change. It's called transforming, renewing, growing. God's grace brings change. If you're a new creation in Christ God's grace is changing you. He's growing you. Sin brings change. Grace transforms you into being like Christ. Sin distorts you, destroys you and will utterly dismember you. It happened right here, didn't it? Just 20 something years from the great days of the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon can't even remember Daniel. Just 2 decades went by and they can't even remember Daniel. Sin blinds and destroys but God's grace will change. It took Daniel to remind Belshazzar of the true heritage of his grandfather and his conversion that had been conveniently vacuumed out of the history books of Babylon. Yet by God's grace it was declared afresh and anew.

The third lesson is the One unchanged change agent is God Himself. He never changes. Sin brings destruction. Grace brings growth. God is the same yesterday, today and forever and is Lord of all the earth and all of the nations.

The fourth lesson is not only is He the One unchanged change agent, but so much for retirement. Can I tell you everything the Bible has to say about retirement? Did you hear the quote from Acts 13:36 that I gave in this morning's sermon? David after he served God's purpose he fell asleep. If you're breathing then God has you here for His purpose. You may get the chance to step back from the job you have been doing, but God's job you are still doing. If you're here He has purpose for you. Daniel may have thought he was in retirement. God says, "Daniel do I have a sermon and a congregation for you to preach to at 83 years old." He brings Daniel out and Daniel preaches this

sermon to Belshazzar and he announces the judgment of God. This is the God who had saved his grandfather but the God whom this one has turned against.

So what's the difference between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar? Belshazzar was proud. So was Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar had a lot of power. He wasn't even close to the power Nebuchadnezzar had. Here is the difference. Jacob I have loved, Esau I hated. I can give you the human side of this. Nebuchadnezzar repented and humbled himself. Belshazzar refused to humble himself. He would eat, drink and be merry. There is a lesson here. It's the fifth lesson. If you and I don't know Christ as Lord and Savior then we live in a world of materialism with a materialistic origin which means I don't know where I came from or where I'm going. Therefore why in the world am I here? I know what I'll do, I'll have a party. Eat, drink and be merry. Why not sensuality? Why not drunkenness or gluttony or all of those things? Find some reason to live because it's meaningless. But when you know the true and living God you now know why He made you and why He saved you.

It's not eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die. It is glorify God and enjoy Him forever and He'll satisfy your soul. When God's grace sovereignly lays hold of your heart then you lay hold of God with humility and repentance. I am His and He is mine. If not, then you go the way of Belshazzar – I am god and I am mine. And that night he died. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together. Thank You for the privilege to be in this Your Word. Would You speak to our hearts? There is so much to learn from this text. There is one thing I want you to think about before we close. What's the difference between Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar, the converted pagan king and the one who is brought under the hand of God's judgment? It is the grace of God. Why do you know the Lord today? It's not because you're better than the guy next door or the woman that you're a friend with. You are what you are by the grace of God. Let us humble our self and with confidence with Him, serve Him and may the world see in us the God who goes into fiery furnaces to save us who needed Him but did not want Him. He who did not need us wanted us. O sovereign God of grace thank You, in Jesus' Name, Amen.