

# Faithfulness To God Over Kings

**Kyle Swanson**

**Chapter 5**

**June 9, 2024**

So far, we've been able to get through four chapters of Daniel in an introduction in our summer series. I hope you've been well served and I hope you've enjoyed it. I certainly have, and I've learned a lot along the way. I think our pastors have done a pretty wonderful job. But now we're moving into chapter 8, or I'm sorry, chapter 5.

We've seen some pretty amazing things play out in these first four chapters. Daniel God's chosen mouthpiece being taken away into captivity, being established in positions of authority in Babylon in order to serve God faithfully in front of the kings of empires. We see his friends be put to the test and challenged with whether or not they were going to capitulate to cultural pressure to dishonor the Lord in false worship and we've seen the greatest and most wicked king to ever rule be humbled before God.

Now, as we turn to chapter 5, we have to note a couple of things. Otherwise, we'll be confused about the context of what is happening because chapter 4 ends with Nebuchadnezzar praising God, and then it says in King Belshazzar in the first verse of chapter 5. So what is going on?

Well, this is the first place in the book where it's not chronological, where we jump forward in time, roughly 60 years, and if we don't see that, then we'll be shocked and misunderstand the picture that we're looking at.

So King Nebuchadnezzar's humility and his humiliation by the Lord took place in 603 BC. About seven years he lived like an animal, a wild animal imitating an ox eating grass, right? So that ended in about 596 BC and now we fast-forward to the year 539, the final year of the Babylonian Empire, and that is the timeframe in which Daniel 5 is taking place.

You see, Pastor Dave in the opening message of this series reminded us of or actually showed us that Daniel doesn't necessarily go perfectly chronologically through the book. Chapters 1 to 4 have been chronological. Chapter 5 and 6 jump into the future, and then chapter 7 and 8 jump backwards in time, kind of into that time gap. Then 9 through 12 finish out the book in the final three years of the captivity giving us Daniel's last prophecies up until Cyrus shows up to decree that the people of Judah would return and rebuild the city and rebuild the temple as we see in Ezra and Nehemiah.

So we approach this scene and we see it historically out of order, but we see this as important because scholars have noted that Daniel chapters 2 through 7 form what is called a chiasm and what that means is the chiasm comes from the term chi in the Greek language. So the letter X. And what you can see is these two lines point to the middle, right? So we have chapter 2 and

chapter 7 mirroring each other in content pointing to chapters 3 and 6 that mirror each other pointing to 4 and 5 as the central focus of this section.

As Pastor Jeremiah so brilliantly let us know last time that chapter 4's theme was the significance of the sovereign control of God over the nations and that is what we are also going to see in this chapter. Chapter 5 serves as the second half of this theme. The reason it's taken historically out of order is to show both the beginning and the end of this empire's reign with the captivity of Jerusalem under their control and showing that God is perfectly sovereign the entire time.

But again, here, instead of looking at the sovereignty of God and the control of the heart of a king who would repent and trust in the one true God, what we see in chapter 5 is God's sovereign plan of fulfilling the prophetic dream that Nebuchadnezzar had where Daniel explained to him that Babylon as an empire would be conquered by another empire and then another and then another.

We see that in the structure of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as a giant statue with a head of gold and a chest and arms of silver and kind of midsection and thighs of bronze and legs of iron, and then feet of iron mixed with clay and a giant stone comes and crushes the whole statue.

So we've seen that play out in history for us as the Babylonian Empire, the golden head, the most glorious empire the world had known be conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire, which is then conquered by the Greek Empire, conquered then again by the Roman Empire. Then the Roman Empire splits into two weakened halves and we have yet to see Christ's final kingdom coming, but we will.

So our setting begins on the eve of the downfall of the most glorious city empire that the world had ever seen. Some 50 plus years again have passed since Nebuchadnezzar's repentance and a new king has come onto the scene and he's actually not the king that we read about in chapter 5.

You see, as was common in ancient nations, regency or kingship was often shared between the king or the rightful king, sometimes called the king of kings and someone else like a governor or his son or a co-regent. So this rightful king of Babylon that we come to know through the pages of history, and in fact, the final king of Babylon was named Nabonidus. He ruled over Babylon from 556 BC to 539 BC. However, when we look at the biblical text, we see a different name. We see Belshazzar reigning over Babylon from 553 BC to 539 BC.

Now historians, secular historians will use this information to discredit the Bible. They'll say, "See, the biblical writers got it wrong. The Bible's not trustworthy." They believe that Daniel was written several centuries after the fact, negating all the power of Daniel's prophecies because after all, what is a prophecy told after the fact, if not just a recounting of history. If I prophesied to you the Napoleonic Wars, you'd be like, "Duh, they happened like 200 years ago." That would not be special.

So they want to do that. So they look at this author of Daniel, they would claim as pseudo-Daniel, and he's writing under the name Daniel, and he's looking back at history. He just simply got the list of kings wrong. So it's not trustworthy.

But the answer to that objection is so incredibly obvious it's almost silly and it pains me to even take the time to have to answer this, but we do. First of all, we want to understand this about God's word. That God's word is perfect. It is trustworthy. It has never been proven wrong and it has never been shown to be historically inaccurate. In fact, history, whatever that is, has had to correct itself a number of times as archeologists dig biblical truth right out of the dirt of antiquity. So why this apparent contradiction then? We do need to answer that question.

Well, again, we noted that in ancient times, kings often appointed a co-regent for themselves so that when they went off to war or when they went off to advance political diplomacy for their kingdom, their kingdom could be left with a person in charge and somebody who answered to them and in this case, Nabonidus was a capable politician. He was a skilled warrior. He spent much of his reign outside of Babylon promoting Babylon's interests either in war or forming political alliances.

So Belshazzar called the son of Nebuchadnezzar is most likely Nebuchadnezzar's grandson. Nabonidus would've married one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters, probably a gal named Nitocris. It's a pretty name and would've given birth to Belshazzar.

So this king who most likely grew up either knowing his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar or very much knowing about him and about his whole reign would become co-regent in the kingdom of Babylon alongside his father, Nabonidus. According to Daniel chapter 7, that happened in 553 BC, some 14 years prior to the events of Daniel chapter 5, establishing Belshazzar as a late middle-aged co-monarch whose sole role it was to act like a king.

Now, we see royalty in other countries doing this, don't we? They don't really have a functional role. They have a ceremonial role. They throw parties, they throw tea, they go to horse races, and they make the country feel better and they show off how lavish the lifestyle of a royal is because of all the resources we have and that was really Belshazzar's job.

So we find this, Belshazzar is entertaining. He's throwing parties, he's livening spirits, and he's living a lavish palace life. In Daniel chapter 5, we see him throwing a large feast for a thousand of his nobles. But what history adds to the scene is that the Medo-Persian Empire was at that very moment in the midst of conquering the Babylonian Empire.

Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father had been on the battlefield in the city's surrounding Babylon. What Belshazzar might not have known is that Cyrus, the king of Persia, had effectively wiped-out Nabonidus' army and had conquered the nearby cities. But if he did know it, then he was holding this feast for one of two reasons. He was either bragging about the impenetrable nature of Babylon's walls or he was just trying to boost morale. Maybe it was a combination of the both. But these citizens of Babylon who were behind their walls were celebrating along with their licentious co-regent king, believing they were safe and believing their gods would protect them.

So as Babylon is literally crumbling around them as an empire, we see this scene of Belshazzar, this vassal king to Nabonidus having a drunken orgy party in the royal throne room of the greatest city that man had ever seen, trusting in the safety of these massive walls and in the protection of their gods of gold and silver and bronze and iron and wood and stone.

So that brings us to our text. It's a long chapter, a lot of information. We're going to survey the chapter and we can't cover every detail, but what I do want us to remember is to keep the main thing the main thing and what we remember about Daniel is Daniel was faithful to God. He was faithful to God over the kings of the nations. He lived a life of no compromise and a life in the midst of serving wicked kings, only serving them the way the one true God would call him to serve them, and he would always be faithful in doing so.

As we get to Daniel 5, we want to ask this question then for our own lives. In light of what we see in Daniel, when you find yourself serving kings and countries that are dishonoring the Lord, what is your response going to be?

You see, it's crucial for us to maintain our witness as ambassadors for Christ showing no compromise, speaking the truth in love as Daniel did when he witnessed God preserve him through the destruction of the Babylonian empire and his sovereign judgment over them at the hands of the Persian Empire that Daniel would begin to serve. So again, because of the nature of the text, it's a little bit too long to read all of it. I'm going to read us through it. I would encourage you to go back and read through and pick up some of the details we'll discuss, but I do ask that you would pray with me for our time in the word.

Father, we're so thankful for your instruction and Lord, I've heard it said that preaching without prayer is like smoke without fire. It's useless. It does us no good. You are the one who illumines our mind, who teaches us through your words. So please, Father, teach us to rely on you every time we open the word and study. Lord, we want to ask on behalf of Countryside Bible Church in Fort Worth, Texas and our dear brother, Tom Pennington, who recently suffered a heart attack, we got news that he's awake and he's responding to his family, and that is wonderful news. Father, we would ask for your hand of kindness over that family that you would heal Brother Tom. He's been such a faithful preacher for so many years. Please bless them. Give comfort to that church family. Just let them know that we stand alongside them. We ask this in Christ's name, Amen.

Well, as we transition now to our survey of this text, I want you to remember with me the setting. I want to ask you to do an exercise with me. I want you to close your eyes and I want you to imagine with me this scene. Okay, transport yourself back to 539 BC, ancient near East in Babylon, in between the Tigris and Euphrates River, Middle East culture 2,500 years ago. Familiar scene from our readings of the Bible, but I want you to see it with fresh eyes.

It's now evening time. It's a nice desert evening. The greatest city that man had ever built. Behind the greatest walls that man had ever constructed, the king and thousands of his guests were partying in the grandest throne room the world had ever seen. Yet, the armies of the Medo-

Persian Empire had conquered the nearby cities of Sippar and Akkad, great grand cities. Cyrus and his warriors were literally at the gates of Babylon's mighty walls.

Surely, they say, "Nobody could breach these walls. We're safe behind these walls. The walls are 85 feet thick and over 300 feet high. Who can conquer us? Let us mock our invaders and revel in our safety by throwing a huge party. We can withstand any attack and by the way, even if it's an extended attack, sieges were often over the course of months or years. We have plenty of resources in the city. We can survive this. Our gods will protect us and our walls will save us." But little did Belshazzar know he was not contending with the king of Persia. He was contending with the king of heaven, and the king of heaven was about to arrive.

So as we get to the text to see this setting now unfold into a sovereign picture of how God judges the judges, God exercises vengeance even over those who God used to exercise judgment over his own people. You see, all things will be brought to justice before God. We're going to watch what happens in this text. What we're going to see are four spectacles, four spectacles that demonstrate for us God's complete sovereign authority over all things.

So these four points we're going to jump into *point #1*), the first spectacle is this, *A Spectacle of Foolish Pride, Spectacle of Foolish Pride*, and we see that in verses 1 to 4. It says this, "King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of a thousand. 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 kings and his lords and his wives, his concubines might drink from them." Skip down to verse 4. "Then they drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver and bronze and iron and wood and stone."

So what we see in this little section are three pictures, verse 1, the fool's feast, verses 2 and 3, the fool's sacrilege, and verse 4, the fool's worship. Belshazzar, this cushy, soft, middle-aged royal who was given a life of party and ease, thought it wise and did only what he knew what to do, was to throw a party in the midst of his empire crumbling around him. Trusting in the might of his walls and in his gods, he and thousands of his friends ate and drank to their hearts content. But that wasn't enough. Instead, Belshazzar had remembered that his father, his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, had conquered Jerusalem and had taken vessels from the temple and stored them safely in Babylon.

Now he thought Yahweh was humiliated at that point. He didn't know that Yahweh had actually called Babylon to come and he was using them to judge his people. But nevertheless, in Belshazzar's mind, he thought, "I'll further humiliate this God and I will exalt my own gods in the meantime." Verses 2 and 3 say he gave the orders for those gold and silver vessels from the temple designed for worship to be brought into their royal orgy, to be drunk with wine and to celebrate their own gods. Verse 4 says, "They drank the wine out of those vessels and praised their gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone."

Belshazzar, who had probably never known war, he's a cushy, snotty bureaucrat, did not understand the powers with which he was meddling. His fat royal life kept him from inquiring about his uncles or his grandfather's rather own experience with this very true living God that he was now mocking.

You see, he should have known, he should have known better. Of all people, the grandson of the great Nebuchadnezzar. Everyone knew Nebuchadnezzar's story. Everyone in the empire would've known of his seven years of humility and then his restoration at the end and what the God of heaven had done for him. He should have known. This foolish king was foolish because he didn't know. His pride, his ignorance of the truth and his ignorance of God's grace upon his family made him a fool and this fool is now about to experience the very presence of that God that he was mocking.

We see that in point number two, which says *Spectacle #2) is A Spectacle of Divine Judgment, A Spectacle of Divine Judgment*. We see this one of the most famous scenes in the Bible. Immediately as they start to worship their gods with these stolen artifacts from God's house, it says this in verse 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. Then the king's color changed and his thoughts alarmed him. His limbs gave way and his knees knocked together. The king called loudly to bring in his enchanters and Chaldeans and astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, 'Whoever reads this 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.' Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed and his color changed and his lords were perplexed."

So again, in this picture we see three simple pictures here. In verse 5, the divine handwriting. In 6 to 9, the desperate hysteria and third in verse 8, kind of tucked there in the middle, divination humiliated.

In one of the most famous and well-known scenes of the Bible, verse 5, we find the literal hand of God writing on the wall. If you've ever heard that term and wonder where it came from? Right here, and in the midst of their drunken revelry and worship of their demonic gods, the very hand of Yahweh envisaged as the hand of a man emerges from behind the heavenly veil and sends Belshazzar a personal note, response to his royal impudence, his royal hubris and vanity, shoving it in the face of God, his own glory and very quickly we see the true metal of Belshazzar.

What is this bloke really made of? He shows us he is a royal who is a paper king. He's nothing. After all of his peacocking and bragging and bloviating in front of his noble friends, mocking the God of heaven, before the very mighty righteous hand of the one, true, living God, he melts like wax. Nothing.

Isaiah 52:15 says this. "Kings will shut their mouths because of him." Couldn't be more true here. The text says that the blood left his face. He became like a corpse. His knees gave out, they

began knocking together. This is true cowardice and fear masked behind a royal facade and completely left exposed by the true hand of God.

Now, in a picture of desperate hysteria, the room becomes filled with panic. Are you still there in your mind? Can you see what's going on? These people, by the way, would've been worshipers. They'd be deeply spiritual. Now they're worshipping the wrong gods, but they would've known that something real and something divine had just happened. By the way, their gods were vicious. They would've known that this was a dark portent of something and they're freaking out trying to wonder what in the world just happened and what does this mean for us?

So the desperate king called aloud, probably shrieking in fear. "Get the conjurers in here. Get the magicians in here. Get the Chaldeans, interpret what we just saw. I'll reward you with a purple robe and a gold chain. You'll be third in the kingdom."

Now that's interesting, isn't it? Why did he say third in the kingdom and not second? Because he's number two, right? Now the question is, now by the way, this does not mean third in command. This means it's me and my dad. It'll be me, my dad, and you, tri-regent. That's what this means.

Now, did Belshazzar actually have the right to give that away? No, he's in a desperate state of hysteria right now. He doesn't know what to do. He's offering something he can't even offer to accomplish this. But instead what we see is all of these conjurers, all these Chaldean magicians and diviners were humiliated before the people.

This was a simple message and it was a message by the way, in their own language. It's written in Aramaic, and yet they couldn't even decipher the text, let alone give an interpretation. Now, some would argue that's because maybe it was written in Hebrew. I would argue I think it makes simpler sense that God just didn't allow them to understand, right? The king thinks they are the wise men, and God is shaming the wise right in front of his eyes.

The words were clear, the meaning that was reserved for God's chosen mouthpiece that we're about to meet in the next scene. That leads us to *point #3* in our outline, and that is this, *A Spectacle of Humble Obedience, A Spectacle of Humble Obedience*. I don't have time to read all of these verses. I wish I did. But what I'll give you is a simple breakdown and you can go back and read them later and we'll talk through all of them.

Part number one, the queen's interjection, verses 10 to 12, the queen's interjection. Part number two, the king's insistence in 13 to 16. Part number four, Daniel's interruption in 17 to 24, Daniel's interpretation in 25 to 28.

So what happens then as we see this hysterical scene unfolding, this fearful meltdown of the king and the failure of the diviners to help him is that the queen shows up. Now, this would not have been Belshazzar's wife. Other texts interpret this as the queen mother, and that is more appropriate. This is most likely Nebuchadnezzar's wife. How do we know that? Because the next

verse says that she's giving first-hand account of something that happened over 50 years ago and how this man, Daniel, had helped Nebuchadnezzar.

She says that there was a man in the kingdom who had served Nebuchadnezzar and who had great insight, who she describes as a spirit of one who has the spirit of the holy gods, or rather somebody sent by the one true God, and that Nebuchadnezzar had trusted him to solve these difficult problems. How did she know this? Because she was there. That this man had illumination and insight and wisdom. There was no one else like him. That's a first-hand account.

She recommended to her grandson then to bring Daniel in to answer these questions because he has no idea what to do. You might ask this though then, "Why?" I mean, I asked this question. Why doesn't Belshazzar know who Daniel is? I mean, he's like the main character, right? Well, as some people say, we're all the main character in our own story, and Belshazzar is definitely the main character in his own story and as we noted before, he's a party king. He's a paper monarch, co-regent. He's dwelling in a city of 200,000 plus people in an empire of millions. He was keeping his own counsel, he had his own advisors, and he would get advisors, not that would give him godly wisdom, but that would teach him how to party better, that would teach him how to be a better royal. He's forging his own path. He wasn't seeking wisdom.

So Daniel, this servant to his grandfather would probably have been looked at as like an old statesman, and I don't need any of those guys. Let them serve somewhere else in the kingdom. There's plenty of room in a giant administration like this for people not to know each other.

If you don't believe me, what are the names of all the advisors to the mayor of Gilbert and the mayor of Mesa? Do you know? Exactly. This is the way it works. In a large city we don't all know each other. So it makes sense still that Daniel would be there and he wouldn't know him. But the queen knew him and she invites Daniel in.

So Daniel is escorted into the royal banquet in the throne room, and this is where we see the king's insistence. In verse 13, Belshazzar says, "Hey, you're that Daniel. I've heard about that, that my grandfather brought in with the captives from Judah and I know that my grandmother said you have insights and that you can solve puzzles and that you have illumination. I need your help. I need you to read this inscription and I need you to tell me what it means. By the way, I'll offer you the same thing I offer to these losers over here who can't help me. Purple robe, gold chain, tri-regency in the kingdom."

But as we come to Daniel's response, I don't want us to misinterpret Daniel's tone. Have you ever misinterpreted tone before? You get an email or a text. You're like, "That was kind of rude. That was kind of short. Who do they think they are?" Then you build up a picture in your head and then you respond in anger based on what you think the tone was. Well, I don't think any of us are ever guilty of that. But what we don't want to see, because it's very easy at first glance to look at Daniel's response and say, "That was kind of rude or disregarding." But what do we remember about Daniel?



Daniel from his youth was a bright mind. He was a humble soul. He was gentle. He was kind. He was wise in dealing with kings. Ezekiel the prophet called him one of the three godliest men to ever live.

So we see Daniel's answer in verse 17 and following only in the light of Daniel's character, we want to only read the tone in there that is appropriate for Daniel's character. So we see Daniel's interruption. In the midst of the king offering, Daniel this tri-regency with himself and his dad, he says to the king, "Keep your gifts king." Right? That's kind of how I want to read it. "I'm better than you." That's kind of what I see.

But what we have to understand if we're not careful, so we see Daniel instead saying, "Keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else." We remember Daniel's humility, his godly character, his respect for his office. He's been serving in the royal administration now for 60 plus years. He's most likely in his mid-70s. Okay, so this is what I want you to picture, Pastor Darryl DelHousaye. That's Daniel right here, okay? He's witty, he's wise, he's gracious, he's kind, and he's giving an answer, not that is coming from a position of I'm better than you.

"So in gentleness and humility, he quietly says to the king, 'You don't need to reward me. I will interpret this inscription for you because that's what God sent me to Babylon to do, to give God's words to the kings.'"

So Daniel is able to remain faithful to God in the moment. No compromise. He still serves the king, but he only does so in faithfulness to God's direction for his life. Isn't that amazing? God always orchestrates a path to honor us when we honor him. He always expects our obedience to his plan and when we do, he is honored and we are honored. So in the midst of our Babylon, as we traverse the culture that is rejecting the God of heaven, will we be faithful to give the message from God and not be tempted by cultural acceptance and by the current sociopolitical dogmas that drive everything that are all fleeting by the way.

This is something to deeply consider from this text. But I want us to note something. Humility did not keep Daniel from being bold. It's not that humility means weakness or shyness. Humility and boldness can go hand in hand. In this section we see Daniel boldly speaking the truth to Belshazzar. He reminds him that his grandfather had been a great king, but that he had been humbled because he stood in opposition to Almighty God and he received a lesson in humility and then was restored. This is a lesson Belshazzar should have learned from him.

But Daniel takes a turn here and makes it personal in verse 22, and he says to the king, "Yet you, his son." Now what does that mean, right? We call Jesus the son of David. Does that mean he was his literal born son? No, it means he was a member of his line. So it makes sense grandfather-wise, still calling him his son. "You Belshazzar have not humbled your heart even though you knew all of this." By the way, it's been decades. This is not a one-time offense. You've been living this way in rejection of the true God for your whole reign, in your own pride and arrogance disregarded your familiarity with your grandfather's story, and you thought you were better than God.

So Daniel 5:23 says, "You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven and they brought the vessels of his house before you and you poured wine in them and worshiped your own gods." Like what do you want to happen? Daniel says, before the inscription is even read, before the writing on the wall is even translated, the charges are read. That's what the prophets do. They don't just come and, bah, fire in brimstone. This is what you've done. This is why this is happening. Here's what's going to happen.

Daniel lays out for the king, his idolatry, his divine insolence and the stealing of God's own glory for himself and what does God say of himself? "I am the Lord and I share my glory with no one."

So from Daniel's interruption, we go to Daniel's interpretation. It's the final picture from this little section verses 25 to 28. Daniel not only recognizes the words, but he gives the interpretation, only God could do that. But this is something we want to note, and this is interesting. Daniel doesn't get up and say, here's what I think the text means. Here's what it means to me. What does it mean to you? It's all relative to your circumstances.

No, he gets up and he says, "Thus says the Lord," and that's important for all of us, that when we look at the words of God, we figure out what God meant by what he said. I don't care what I mean by what I say. I don't care what you think the text means. I care what God thinks the text means, and I hope we all agree on that.

So we go now to the word so familiar to us, and yet I hope we see them in a fresh light. Daniel in verse 25 says this. Now, this was the inscription that was written out: Mene Mene Tekel Parsin or and Parsin it says. Then he explains the interpretation, again, something only God could allow for him to do because these words on their own don't really mean much, but he says this, Mene, and it's repeated twice for emphasis. God has numbered your kingdom and put it to an end, period, end of discussion. Said twice, there's no doubt this is happening. Following this and coupled with it the word Tekel, which Daniel says, "You have been weighed on the scales and found deficient." We put these two words together. God has numbered your kingdom and found you deficient. This is an imbalanced transaction. Therefore, God must come and rectify the books.

"How's he going to do that," you ask. Daniel gives us a final word. Interestingly enough, he changes the word a bit. He doesn't change its meaning, but he does something. He says in verse 28, "Peres, your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians." Now, the previous verse, the word was Enparsin or and Parsin. So why the difference? Well, I would argue it's because Daniel is an expositor. He's a preacher. He's taking the word that God has given and he's pulling it down to its root meaning, showing its plural expression. So Enparsin or and Parsin is the plural form of Peres, meaning Persians and with the uniting of the Median and the Persian Empires, the plural form of the who would divide the kingdom and the why it was divided makes sense with this dual partnership of empires knocking at the gates of Babylon.

Effectively, Daniel just told Belshazzar that the very armies that were at the gates would conquer him, end his reign and take his empire. Not the best of news to give in your first meeting with the king, not the words you might want to speak if you're trying to win affection or honor from the king, not the words you would speak in compromise and not the words you would say if you chose to be faithful to a king over God.

Yet despite Daniel's boldness, Belshazzar does something very strange in this scene, strange for a human anyway, brings us to our final point in the outline. That is *point #4*), final spectacle, *A Spectacle of Sovereign Control*. Verses 29 through 31, see three things in one in each verse. God honors his servant in verse 29, he humiliates his enemy in verse 30, and God highlights his agent in verse 31. So as we read that, this is what it says here now that we go down to verse 29.

It says, "After Daniel gave the interpretation here, then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed in purple and 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 very night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king was killed and Darius the Mede received the kingdom being about 62 years of age."

So we see Belshazzar's response here to Daniel's interpretation first, and I might think reading the text, it says, so Belshazzar gave the command and lobbed Daniel's head right off of his shoulders. How dare you speak to me like that. Do you know where we live? Have you seen the walls around this city? You think we're going to be conquered by? They just got here. We got months or years of siege ahead of us. They're not going to beat us.

But Daniel knew the God that he served. Daniel knew that God moved the hearts of kings and that God would not allow Belshazzar to respond that way unless it was his plan. Even if it was his plan and even if he was going to do that, Daniel wasn't worried. God would preserve him and keep him from harm so long as he had a mission to accomplish and once that mission was done, he would escort Daniel safely home. Home doesn't necessarily mean Judah. Home means heaven.

So without fear, without compromise, Daniel was bold with the truth. So verse 9 tells us that despite what we thought could happen, that Belshazzar actually fulfilled his promise to Daniel. He robed Daniel in purple and he gave him a gold chain, most likely signifying his new office as the tri-regent of the entire empire. No matter the motivations of Belshazzar, whether they just be pride or fear or ignorance of the historical significance of what was happening or an over-trust in his walls, God used Belshazzar in that moment to place Daniel in the exact spot to have a massive role of influence in that future empire that was about to take over. God honors his servant.

With Daniel as tri regent, and by the way, with no desire to rule or be in charge of really of anything, the Medo-Persian kings would step in and see Daniel. They'd meet him and they'd see him as this incredible resource who had been with Nebuchadnezzar 60 years ago. So they can use him as an advisor, and that's exactly what happens. They would honor him.

Not only that. We see the true end of this wicked and prideful king Belshazzar. God humiliates his enemy. In verse 30 it says, "That same night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king was slain." By the way, this is interesting. For those of you who know the history of this, the city of Babylon, again, impregnable, impenetrable walls, 85 feet thick, over 300 feet high. But you know what the problem it had? It had a river flowing through the city.

How does the river get in and out of the city? Big archway with bars and gates, right? Very simple. Divert the river. Now you got a road right in. Every system has a flaw. So in their pride and arrogance, they trusted in these walls and they ignored the fact that the army snuck right in through the dry riverbed.

What an ignominious end for a king who glorified himself over the king of heaven. Matthew 23:12 could not be more true for any individual. "He who exalts himself will be humbled."

Even from a useless life we can learn gospel truths though, right? What's the truth? Don't be like Belshazzar. Sounds simple, right? But he grew up knowing the truth about God. This is not just some random guy who threw a party and God's mad. This is a grandson of the greatest king who repented and knew and was trying to usher in reform in his kingdom, and his grandson is spitting in the face of God. He rejected God's mercy and grace. Nebuchadnezzar did not.

We must understand that God's redeeming grace through faith in Christ Jesus who paid the penalty for our sin in order to forgive us and adopt us into his family, if you would, but repent of your wicked ways, that is living wisely. Believe as Nebuchadnezzar did. Don't be like Belshazzar who died in condemnation even knowing the truth.

Well, our story wraps up in chapter 5 with one final anecdote. God highlights his agent, verse 31 we read. "So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at the age of 62." In this seemingly insignificant historical footnote, the Bible is yet again maligned for being historically inaccurate, and again, easily remedied with about five minutes of study. So for anyone who comes and tells, "Oh, the Bible's full of all these inconsistencies. Look at this. See, this says Darius. History says Cyrus." Let's look at what is actually going on here, because history does record that Cyrus was who conquered Babylon and became the next king and the book of Ezra actually says the same thing.

But what have we learned about Nabonidus and Belshazzar? There can be two kings at the same time, can't there? Co-regency. This was common. By the way, we had the Median Empire and the Persian Empire working together to conquer Babylon. Make sense there's two kings and by the way, the Median Empire was bigger and more powerful at the time. So it makes sense that the Median King Darius rightfully took control of Babylon. Then you know what happened after the fact. Cyrus took control of the Medes. Very easy. This is what happens. Ultimately, Cyrus as God's chosen agent prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah and seen in the life and times of Ezra, would be the king that God would use to change his heart, to send the exiles back home, ending their captivity and restoring them to himself.

Now again, history tells us there was no one named Darius the Mede in 539 BC. There were guys later in this line of kings named Darius and so maybe it was one of them and they just got the timeline wrong. The Bible got it wrong. But this is what we want to know. We want to know about the Persians. They had names and then they had kingly names. This happens in the British royal family too. We see them take names, they have names, and then they take a different royal name. Now, the last two haven't done that, but it happened a lot over the years. They'd be named one thing, and they would take a royal name like Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. His name is also Xerxes. That's how they know him in the world.

So these names are repeated then through the family ages. So we would see multiple Ahasuerus's, multiple Dariuses throughout the line. So there's no problem here. This first man, a lot of people think Darius and Cyrus are the same individual, and that view holds water. But I think there's a better answer because you do have to fudge with the timeline a little bit.

Ancient historians, Herodotus and Xenophon, again, if you need boy names, those are good names, both recognize this is the strongest of possibilities that Darius the Mede according to the historical timeline of Median kings who ruled over the Median Empire was most likely a king named Cyaxares II. There's another one, wonderful boy name, Cyaxares. He was the final Median king before the Persian Empire took over. There was one king after him, but he served under Cyrus, not co with him. So his regnal name or his kingly name as the new ruler of Babylon, he called himself Darius the Mede. That's his kingly name that he chose. So this Cyaxares II historically matches up with every detail that we see in the book of Daniel and his name is Darius according to the text here and we'll come to know him very well in chapter 6.

I'm sure you've heard of him and read this tale, but we'll see that because of Daniel's new position given to him by Belshazzar as the tri-regent of the kingdom, Darius sees him, meets him, is so impressed with him, he makes him one of the three commissioners over the entire Persian Empire where all other rulers would answer to him.

To think a little 13, 14-year-old Judean royal youth stolen away to Babylon, serving for 60 plus years, enduring multiple kings, multiple trials. Yet what happens? He's proven faithful. God prospers him simply because he is faithful to God over the kings.

So God establishes Daniel as this hopeful bridge between going into captivity and coming out of captivity. His whole life spans that time. God faithfully ushers them out just like he promised he would, and by the way, just like Daniel knew that he would, according to chapter 9. He had consulted the writings and he had seen the appointed time, and Daniel trusted God and he was faithful to God.

Though he may have been tempted, he never actually considered it, but he may have been tempted to not deliver this devastating message because like, "This king is volatile. He could do whatever." He remained faithful to God over kings and so God honored him and accomplished his will despite what the circumstances might've looked like.

Church, will we learn from Daniel's example? Will we follow in his footsteps? Will we see that God used Daniel's life here as a roadmap for how to be faithful and endure even when it looks like the entire world is against you? Now, I'm not sure if Daniel was a poet and if he recognized that chiasmic structure as he was writing, but I do believe that he purposefully told this part of the story coupled with chapter 4, to show a bookend, the beginning of the captivity and the end of the captivity. God is perfectly in sovereign control over.

We serve a God who not only can accomplish his word, but he absolutely will fulfill every last promise he's ever made. So we want to be like Daniel. We want to trust God and trust his word. Follow Christ with all of your heart, and don't worry about what is going on in the world around you. Your sovereign king is in control.

I'll leave you with the words of Paul. I believe these words from the Holy Spirit were somewhat echoing in Daniel's mind. Think of Daniel speaking this in his own context. Philippians 1:6, "For I'm confident in this very thing that he who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus." Daniel knew that God would bring him safely home. We know the same. As God's people, all of us can echo that reality with a hearty amen. Right? Amen. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for this study that we've been able to undertake in Daniel. What an incredibly encouraging picture that this man has provided for us, that your sovereign care for him in his life, that his obedience to you, that his example would be something that would embolden and strengthen us in our ministry, in our service to you as our one true king. So Father, may the church be encouraged. May Christ be glorified through the preaching and teaching of your word. May we leave this place knowing Christ more because we looked at Daniel's life. We ask in His name, Amen.