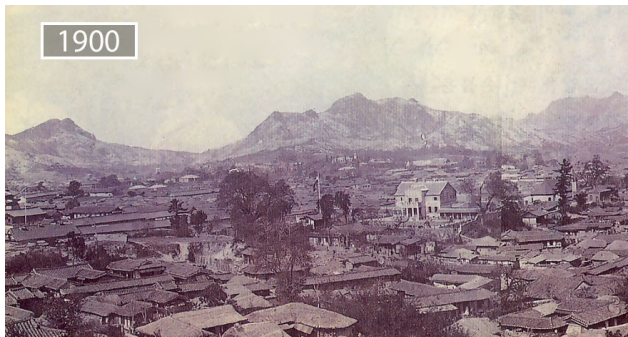


The Unchanging God – Daniel 5:1-31
Messiah Bible Church – June 3, 2026 - Adam Casalino

Introduction, “Then & Now”: Most people hate studying history. I think it’s because they don’t like reading books. These days, though, you can experience history thanks to a simple Google search. I spent some time compiling images of major cities and how they’ve changed over the years:

This is **Seoul, South Korea**, in 1900:



This is the same location today:



This is **Abu Dhabi in the UAE** in 1970:



This is the same coastline today:



This was **Singapore** just 26 years ago:



Here's that same spot today:



The most shocking might be this region, **Shenzhen, China**, in 1964:



Pretty pastoral and charming. Here it is today:



You can't stop progress! In the blink of an eye, those rural places were transformed. Most of that was within just one lifetime.

Things change, but we don't like change: These photos are a reminder of just how dramatically the world around us changes. Throughout your life, you'll see lots of things change. Presidents will come and go. Farmland will morph into metropolises. You might live long enough to see entire countries rise and fall.

But the honest truth is: people don't like change. We like consistency. We want the ground to be firm beneath our feet. Change bothers us because it makes us think there isn't *anything* in life we can count on.

God never changes, nor his promises: But there is One who never changes: the Creator of heaven and earth. Nearly everything else in your life will change, but your Lord and Savior stays the same. **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8).** What God has promised us is the firm ground beneath our feet. He never falters, never fails; he can't even lie (Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18). And if you trust in him, you don't have to fear this changing world.

Daniel saw many changes, but he never wavered: The man at the center of the book we're studying, Daniel, knew this full well. During his life, he saw a lot of things change. His nation, Judah, fell to invaders. He was taken captive to a foreign land. He watched rulers rise and fall.

But Daniel never wavered. He's the same kind of man, young or old. Why is that? Was he some kind of "*super saint*"? No, it was because he counted on the One who was always there for him. His rock. His fortress. The Lord God Almighty, who never changes.

Recap chapter 4 and move to chapter 5: Last time, we read how this never-changing God changed the heart of a proud king. But as we turn to Daniel 5, we discover that King Nebuchadnezzar is gone. Things have changed yet again. A new king rules Babylon, and things

are *very* uncertain. Yet, despite the chaos around him, we see a man who is unmoved. Daniel is not shaken by world events, even ones that closely affect his life.

Because his trust is in an unchanging God. God's character, nature, and power never change. What he says doesn't change. **The things he cared about thousands of years ago, he cares about right now.** That is why he is the only One we can truly trust and obey. My message for tonight is "*The Unchanging God.*" We are going to learn three unchanging truths about our God from Daniel 5.

Point 1: "What God makes holy, stays holy" (Daniel 5:1-9)

Read Daniel 5:1-4

So, Nebuchadnezzar is gone. We know from history that a man named Nabonidus was king. Belshazzar, the man called "king" in our text, was Nabonidus's son. Scholars have concluded he was likely the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.^{1 2} He co-ruled with his father Nabonidus; so, he shared the title "king" with him. Most of the time, Nabonidus lived in another city (Tema),³ leaving his son to govern from Babylon.⁴ That was not a good idea.

As we see from this passage, Belshazzar was a piece of work. But it's worse than you think. We know from history that the Persian army had already captured most of the Babylonian Empire. Only the capital city remained, and the Persians--at this very moment--had surrounded it.⁵ Instead of trying to devise some kind of truce with Persia, the king was partying. Belshazzar

¹ Ferguson, Sinclair B. *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), "Daniel": "Belshazzar was possibly the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar ('father' in vs 2, 11, 18 and 'son' in v 22 would have been readily understood as elastic terms by the original readers)."

² Miller, Stephen R., *Daniel. Vol. 18. NAC*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), Section V, Apple Books: "Less complicated is the proposal that the terms "father" and "son" in this passage mean that Nebuchadnezzar was the predecessor, "father," of Belshazzar and that Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar's successor, "son."

³ VanGemeren, Willem A., *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), "Daniel": "Upon Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562, the ruling power changed hands in quick succession due to assassinations and court intrigues. Nabonidus (556-539 B.C.) witnessed the growth of Persia on the east, but was unsuccessful in restraining Cyrus. Having been defeated in the field, he retreated, leaving the defense of Babylon to his son, Belshazzar ("May Bel protect the king!")."

⁴ Miller, *NAC*, Section V: "...abundant evidence has come to light that demonstrates not only that Belshazzar did live but that he was both the son of and coregent with Nabonidus... thirty-seven archival texts dated from the first to the fourteenth year of Nabonidus now attest to Belshazzar's historicity. His father, Nabonidus, resided at Tema in Arabia (about five hundred miles south of Babylon) for most of his seventeen-year reign, apparently for religious reasons. During these long absences, it was Belshazzar, the crown prince, who ruled the empire."

⁵ Walvoord, John F. *Daniel, The John Walvoord Prophecy Commentaries*, (Chicago, Ill: Moody Publishers, 2012), 144: "On that final fateful night, the whole territory surrounding the city of Babylon and the related provinces had already been conquered. Only Babylon with its massive walls and fortifications remained intact. Nabonidus had been defeated in battle and fled, leaving Belshazzar in charge of the remaining forces in the city of Babylon."

was arrogant, trusting in the security of his city. He was shirking his responsibilities to host a massive feast for 1,000 rulers.^{6 7}

Who throws a party when the wolves are right outside the door?

Belshazzar profanes God by drinking from his cups: But the text tells us Belshazzar doubles down on the stupidity. You might remember from Daniel 1:2 that Nebuchadnezzar took gold and silver vessels from Solomon's temple. These were the cups and bowls the priests used while worshipping God. Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar never touched them. He left them in a store room for years. Then, Belshazzar got a look at them.

He saw these beautiful vessels made of precious silver and gold, and he ordered his servants to bring them to him so he and his drunken guests could use them.⁸ Gentile idolaters drank from cups that were once used in Solomon's temple to worship and honor the Lord. This might seem like a small thing to modern people, but let me try to explain why this was so heinous.

In Exodus 30, God commanded Moses to make a special anointing oil for the articles used in the tabernacle. God said that whatever was touched by this oil became holy.⁹ This was a precious, sweet-smelling oil made from frankincense and other spices.¹⁰ Nobody was allowed to make this oil and use it for something else. Now, years later, when Solomon made the vessels for his temple (1 Kings 7:48–51), he would have anointed them with the same kind of oil. It was the oil used to anoint Aaron and his sons and every priest who served.

It marked these men and the tools they used as devoted to God. The oil represented God's presence and favor on those who served him. These cups and bowls were as precious to God as the men who used them. Now, they were being used to worship Satan. Can you imagine God was thinking in this moment? Let's find out.

⁶ Miller, *NAC*, Section V: "Large feasts of this kind were not uncommon in ancient times, and Jeffery comments that "the great feasts given by Oriental potentates were notorious for their extravagance."

⁷ Stevenson, Kenneth, *Ancient Christian Commentary of Scripture*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), "5:1–9 HANDWRITING ON THE WALL", Apple Books: "Jewish interpreters suggest that the banquet was arranged to mock the Jewish expectation of release from captivity as predicted by Jeremiah (JEROME)."

⁸ Miller, *NAC*, Section V: "Belshazzar now commits an incredible act of sacrilege against the God of Israel... Belshazzar brought them into his drunken orgy so that he, his nobles, his wives, and his concubines might fill them with wine and drink toasts to the pagan gods of Babylon. This, of course, was a blasphemous act against Yahweh, the God of Israel. Although Lacocque points out that 'it was a custom to offer libations to the gods after feasts,' such an attack upon other deities was not routine."

⁹ Alexander, T. Desmond, *New Bible Commentary*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1994), "Exodus": "Special oil was to be made for the anointing of the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the priests who served there (22–30). Since everything touched by this particular oil became holy, restrictions were placed upon its production and use (31–33)."

¹⁰ Hannah, John D., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), "Exodus": "Its formula was as unique as the product was holy: about 12½ pounds of myrrh, 6½ pounds of ... cinnamon, 6½ pounds of cane, 12½ pounds of cassia (from the fragrant bark of a tree), and about four quarts of olive oil. When mixed, these would make a fragrant blend."

Read Daniel 5:5–9

Immediately, God responds to Belshazzar’s disgusting act. Out of all the angelic appearances in the Bible, this might be the most disturbing. Perhaps you’d expect a powerful being to appear in the air, or a loud booming voice. Instead, just a hand appears. Imagine these long, slender fingers just floating in the air. They move to the wall and carve mysterious words into plaster.¹¹ You can almost hear the sound they made; maybe it was like nails on a chalkboard!

What would you do if you saw that? We know what Belshazzar did.¹² The literal language in verse 6 is that his “loins gave way.” When he saw the hand of God, the man wet his pants! Serves him right.

Belshazzar can’t read the message, but he knows he’s in big trouble. He’s about to learn that the God of Israel does not change. The things that mattered to him in the past, matter to him today. This brings us to our first unchanging truth about our God, write this down: **What God makes holy, stays holy.**

That’s hardly a small statement. To appreciate the gravity of it, we need to remember what “holy” means. Something God calls holy is “set apart.”¹³ Unique. Special. Consecrated or devoted to God. When something is holy, it means it is sanctified; it belongs to the Most High. Would a man presume to steal from God?

Yet Belshazzar stole and misused the vessels from God’s holy temple. But why does that matter to Americans in the 21st Century? As Christians we don’t use special cups and bowls to worship the Lord, but there are plenty of things in our world that God still considers holy. And it doesn’t matter how crass and secular society has become, you do not mess with what God calls holy.

God calls marriage holy. For generations, our country has treated marriage as if it were a dirty thing that they can crumple up and throw away. Most people don’t even get married. And when they do, they have no problem getting divorced when things get hard. We’ve fallen so far that a man can marry a man or a woman can marry a woman; the world calls that “love.” And if you disagree, they’ll call *you* the evil one.

God calls family holy. God created the family, not the U.S. government. But our society looks down on traditional families. Some states usurp parents’ role in raising their children,

¹¹ Goldingay, John, *Daniel, Vol 30 Word Biblical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), chapter 5, Apple Books: “5.b. usually refers to the palm—which would be hardly visible during writing, even to someone below it (Bentzen)—but essentially it denotes the hand itself as opposed to the lower arm and hand, effectively referring here to the back of the hand or knuckles (NEB, Plöger, comparing Gen 37:3). It thus suggests merely a hand (unconnected to an arm) (cf. Hartman). The hand writes on the wall above the high table, illuminated by the candelabra (cf. GNB).”

¹² Ferguson, NBC, “Daniel”: “The divine intervention was as dramatic as it was terrifying for Belshazzar. Already presumably in a near-drunken stupor, the startling appearance of a hand writing on a wall had a sobering effect on him and transformed him from a proud reveller into a petrified and pathetic figure.”

¹³ Youngblood, Ronald F., *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), “Holy”: “The Hebrew word for “holy” denotes that which is “sanctified” or “set apart” for divine service.”

undermining what they teach them through public schools. Some people in our culture even despise children, thinking they are a burden, not a gift.

God calls our bodies holy. God forbade murder in the Bible because we are made in his image (Gen 9:6). Our very lives are sacred. Yet there are people in our country who see nothing wrong with taking an unborn child's life. Many more see the human body as a commodity to exploit or traffic for profit.

God calls Christians holy. If you think God only anoints cups, you are mistaken. That anointing oil Moses made was a symbol for the Holy Spirit. Every single person who puts their faith in Christ is anointed (2 Cor 1:21). *You are holy.* The true oil has touched you, and you are set apart for God. We don't have OT priests because the Bible says everyone who believes in Jesus is a priest (1 Pet 2:5). You are just as holy as Moses, Aaron, or anyone who served in the temple.

Should we take someone devoted to God and use them in an unclean way? Should you take your body--the temple of the Holy Spirit--and use it like a common thing? Never. You actually have a greater reason to call yourself holy, because you've been washed in the blood of Jesus and his Spirit lives in you always.

The wicked people of this world do not understand holiness. Those who continue in unbelief and profane the holy things of God will face his judgment. And when the people of this world discover their ultimate fate, they'll break down worse than Belshazzar.

Hope in God's forgiveness: Now, let me give you some hope: all of us here have violated God's holy standard through sin. We've mistreated our own bodies; we've harmed others; some here might have broken relationships and divorces in their past. Maybe someone here once had an abortion.

The good news is you don't have to fear. As I said, if you believe in Jesus Christ, you have been washed. All your sins have been forgiven. And today, you are holy. Because you are holy, you can live holy.

Point 2: “God’s wisdom never grows old” (Daniel 5:10-16)

So, Belshazzar called in his “wise men,” but they couldn’t even read the handwriting.¹⁴ Thankfully, someone shows up and provides this fool with some much-needed advice.

Read Daniel 5:10–16

The queen of Babylon arrives on the scene. Now, this can’t be his wife, since verse 2 says his wives were already there drinking it up.¹⁵ This is either his mother, Nabonidus’s wife, or maybe even his grandmother.¹⁶

The text is making a point to say this woman did not participate in Belshazzar’s profane feast. And her tone kind of says she didn’t approve of it. Notice how she emphasized, “your father--your father *the king*”--almost as if to say, “You know, the *real* king of Babylon, who would have *never* drunk from those vessels.” She’s helping Belshazzar, but she’s also kind of scolding him. Sounds like a good mother to me!

I love what the queen says about Daniel. I hope that people say this about us! None of Belshazzar’s gurus can read the handwriting. But tucked away, somewhere in the kingdom, is an old man who has wisdom that surpasses them all. She says in Daniel¹⁷, there is the “Spirit of the Holy God.” The word is *elohim* in Hebrew, which can be translated either as “God” or “gods.”¹⁸ I think it’s fitting to render it “God” and some Christian scholars and translations agree.¹⁹ This woman knows Daniel is wise, but not wise in human earthly wisdom.

¹⁴ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 149: “The large reward that was offered, however, was to no avail, for the wise men who assembled could not read or interpret the writing. This implies a twofold difficulty. Some have claimed that the text does not plainly indicate the language. Charles, for instance, suggests that the writing was in unfamiliar ideograms. This, however, is mere conjecture. The probability is that the writing was in Aramaic and therefore not entirely unknown to the wise men. Goldingay offers a simple suggestion. ‘It is not specified what made the words unreadable as well as unintelligible (v. 8)... But most straightforwardly the story envisages them written as unpointed consonants: being able to read out unpointed text is partly dependent on actually understanding it, and Daniel later reads the words out one way and interprets them another.’ 17”

¹⁵ Miller, *NAC*, Section V: “This queen was not Belshazzar's wife, for as Young observes: “The text explicitly states that the wives of the king were already present.” Yet she must have been a highly prestigious individual to enter the banquet hall uninvited, and when she arrived, she seemed to take charge. For these reasons most commentators since the time of Josephus (first century A.D.) have identified her as the queen-mother, either the wife of Nebuchadnezzar or the wife of Nabonidus.”

¹⁶ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 150: “The crisis produced by the wise men's inability to interpret the handwriting on the wall is met by the entrance of one described as “the queen.” Since the wives of the lords and the king himself were said to be already at the banquet (v. 3), the queen would most probably be Belshazzar's mother, who had not attended the banquet. This would be understandable if she were older and not physically up to, or interested in, a night of drunken revelry.”

¹⁷ Ferguson, *NBC*, “Daniel”: “Her apparent respect for him was underlined by the use of his Hebrew as well as his Babylonian name and in the reference to his outstanding gifts (12; cf. Is. 11:2–3).”

¹⁸ Mounce, William D., *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 894: “אֱלֹהִים *elōhīm* 2,602× God (plural of majesty: plural in form but singular in meaning, with a focus on great power); gods (true grammatical plural); any person characterized by greatness or power: mighty one, great one, judge [430] See angel; God; judge.”

¹⁹ Stevenson, *ACCS*, 5:10-31: “JEROME: All the authorities except Symmachus, who adheres to the Chaldean original, render ‘the spirit of God.’”

Contrast human and godly wisdom: Humans have worked very hard to become wise. The earthly process of learning involves testing, experimentation, and observation. It's a hard-fought process that depends on our natural intelligence; so, our conclusions are often wrong. But Daniel's wisdom didn't come through such means. It was given to him by God. He blessed Daniel with wisdom as a demonstration of grace: favor that Daniel didn't earn. And, it should come as no surprise that this God-given wisdom was superior to human wisdom. Which is why the queen is recommending him for this task.

Why does the queen have to tell Belshazzar to go find Daniel? We don't know what happened to him after Nebuchadnezzar died. It is likely that Daniel had been demoted.²⁰ That must have been the case, because Belshazzar knows nothing about him. That's an ongoing theme with this guy: his ignorance of things he *should* know about. Belshazzar doesn't know about the most important man from his grandfather's kingdom. Unbelievable!

But notice how, when the chips were down, Daniel's name came up. All the young, fashionable "wise men" were useless. So, good old Daniel is being called out of retirement to help yet another helpless, Gentile king.

That brings us to our second unchanging truth about God. *What God makes holy stays holy*. And write this down: **God's wisdom never grows old**. Daniel might have gotten old, but all that wisdom and truth he received from God is just as fresh and powerful as it was when he was a young man.

Today's wisdom is failing us: We're living in a time when things are changing at a rapid pace. So-called "artificial intelligence" has puffed up some people's pride--thinking they have unlocked the secrets to wealth and eternal life. Technology has deluded men into believing that they are more advanced, more well off, and more powerful than their ancestors. But listen to me when I say this: all their wisdom, all their "intelligence," all their technology is failing them. But the person who receives God's wisdom will outlast all of them.

This book... this simple, old book has more wisdom than all the AI servers, databases, or apps combined. I don't care what Sam Altman or Elon Musk say; their technology is a waste of time, money, and energy. My friend, maybe you're in a situation where you're craving some advice, wisdom, or direction. And it's so tempting to rely on the intelligence of the world instead of going to God. Don't do it!

You know, I've used these AI tools. Guess what, they're often wrong. It couldn't even get a simple curry recipe right; it screwed up the measurements! You'll notice that at the bottom

²⁰ Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible, Vol 1*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), "Daniel": "As Daniel was probably, according to Oriental custom, deprived of the office to which Nebuchadnezzar had promoted him, as 'master of the magicians' (Da 4:9), at the king's death, Belshazzar might easily be ignorant of his services."

of these AI chatbots, there is this small print that says, “So-and-so AI can make mistakes.” No kidding! These guys are promising AI will cure cancer, but it can’t even get a curry recipe right!?

Of course, AI makes mistakes; it’s made by men! All the man-made wisdom in the world has not helped the rich and powerful, especially when it comes to their personal lives. Nearly every “successful” person in this world has broken marriages, estranged children, and miles of lawsuits trailing them. College degrees, technology, and teams of “experts” can’t really help you where it counts.

But if you put your trust in Jesus Christ and fill your mind with his word, you will have light, understanding, and wisdom from heaven above. It doesn’t matter how much the world changes. God’s wisdom is eternal. It is perfect. It will keep you from making terrible mistakes. And even in your old age, you will be filled with life and joy that people half your age wish they had.

God’s wisdom is often the opposite of what we expect: One of the great things about God’s wisdom is that it produces insight and decisions very different than what we would have come up with on our own. In fact, it’s often the opposite of what makes sense to our natural minds.

I once heard a story about an American pastor who was invited to speak at an event in Costa Rica. He had been there the year before and everybody loved him; so they wanted him to come back. He agreed, bought the tickets; the community over there even spent money advertising the meetings. But a few weeks before he left, God impressed on him not to go. It didn’t make sense to his natural understanding, but he knew after prayer about it, that the Lord wanted him to cancel his plans. So, he called up the organizers and told them he wasn’t coming. They weren’t very happy and apparently never invited him back. Later, found out that the plane he was going to take had a layover in another country and as it was preparing to take off, crashed, killing everyone on board.

Had he not heeded God’s wisdom and just did what made sense to him... he would have died.

God’s wisdom will help us avoid disaster: That doesn’t mean if you follow God’s wisdom you’ll never die! But it does mean you will avoid unnecessary problems, traps, and headaches. Life is unpredictable. You can’t go by what makes sense to you. If you depend on the wisdom God provides, you won’t have to fear what will befall you.

And here’s some good news: you might not be very smart, naturally. That’s okay. In fact, that’s a benefit. Why do I say that? Because people who excel in the natural rarely see their need for God, his grace, or his wisdom. But those who recognize their lack, their natural weaknesses,

can receive all the help God is willing to provide. Even if you start out in humble positions, you will grow and succeed according to God's plan for your life.

Daniel started out a prisoner, yet God gave him wisdom and he thrived in an evil age. He faced plenty of challenges, that's true. He faced life and death situations, seemingly every day! But thanks to God's wisdom, he was able to navigate them expertly and do his will.

So, how did Daniel get this wisdom? How can we? Daniel knew he could not trust in circumstances. He didn't trust in himself, the kingdom of Judah, he certainly didn't trust in Babylon. Instead he continually put his trust in the Lord. When everything seemed uncertain, he kept looking to God. He sought him in prayer and in the scriptures (Daniel would have had access to the Torah and perhaps the entire canon of OT written up to that time; he did have Jeremiah's writings). Through the written word of God and the Spirit, Daniel gained wisdom.

How did he live out that wisdom? How did he put it into action? As we've seen again and again, when faced with problems, Daniel made decisions based on his faith in the Lord. When he refused to eat the king's meat, he knew he could have very well been killed. But, he just trusted God and obeyed. When the king wanted to kill every wise man, Daniel could have been killed. But he trusted God, prayed earnestly for an answer, and he received it.

When Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind and was driven from the kingdom, anything could have happened. Another man could have taken the throne and killed all the Jews. Didn't matter; Daniel kept trusting in God, not in the stability of a king or kingdom. And now, in chapter 5, Daniel continues to trust in the Lord.

Trusting God has nothing to do with your willpower, endurance, or passion. It has everything to do with how much you are depending on the wisdom and power that God has promised to provide.

That's faith. And today, you can draw from God's limitless grace to receive help, wisdom, and guidance. All of it is found in Jesus Christ. Because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, taking on our sins and dying in our place, we all have access to the same Spirit of wisdom who comes from the Father. You can have the wisdom of Daniel, because God will put his Spirit into you when you believe in Jesus.

In fact the Bible calls Jesus our wisdom:

1 Corinthians 1:30 (ESV) — 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

When you abide in Jesus, meditating on his word and fellowshiping with him through prayer and worship, his wisdom will grow in you. And that wisdom will outlast all the fads, trends, and quick-fixes of this fallen world.

Point 3: “God always has the final say “ (Daniel 5:17-31)

The king finds Daniel and tried to butter him up. But he’s heard all that before. Do you think he’s impressed? This is what he says:

Read Daniel 5:17–31

Wow. That happened fast. Let’s start at the top, Daniel’s response. I love how he says, “Keep your fancy baubles, I don’t want ‘em!”²¹ Man, he’s coming in hot! And rightly so. When Daniel heard that Belshazzar was drinking from the *temple* artifacts, he would have been outraged. And he gives this king the dressing down of a lifetime.

Daniel starts by reminding Belshazzar about a story he knows full well. He talks about Nebuchadnezzar, saying he was the greatest king who ever lived; nobody could resist him. He had power over all the earth. But Daniel makes it abundantly clear that it was God who gave Nebuchadnezzar all this prestige.²² He didn’t do it himself; it wasn’t because Nebuchadnezzar was a master tactician. And he didn’t get it from a pagan god. The God of Israel made him great... and at one point, he took it all away.

Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind and was driven from human society. He got proud and had to be humiliated by God. But Nebuchadnezzar repented and glorified God after all of that. You need to understand, that was a *big deal*. If you were with us last time, you know the full account. When the king of the world loses his mind and becomes like an animal, people are going to talk. And when he comes back, praising the God of the *Jews*? This would have sent massive shockwaves across the empire.

²¹ Stevenson, *ACCS*, 5:10-31: “JEROME: We should follow the example of a man like Daniel, who despised the honor and gifts of a king and who without any reward even in that early day followed the Gospel injunction: “Freely have you received, freely give.” And besides, when one is announcing sad tidings, it is unbecoming for him willingly to accept gifts.”

²² Walvoord, *Daniel*, 149: “Daniel first reminded Belshazzar that God gave Nebuchadnezzar his great kingdom and the honor that went with it. In verse 19, Daniel described graphically how Nebuchadnezzar was feared and had absolute authority of life and death over his people and, accordingly, was an absolute sovereign. As Young points out, however, the very character of this absolute authority delegated to Nebuchadnezzar by God also made Nebuchadnezzar accountable.”

Yet Belshazzar, his own grandson, thought nothing of it. He was so hard-hearted and carnal that he dismissed Nebuchadnezzar's testimony and insulted the very God his grandfather publicly honored.²³ He stole the holy vessels that belonged to God and used them to worship false gods.²⁴ How dumb was this man?²⁵

God fulfills the prophecy that very night: After rebuking Belshazzar, Daniel reads the handwriting, and reveals the sobering message from God: Belshazzar you have been weighed and found lacking, ooh!²⁶ Meaning, God has tested him and found him to be nothing like Nebuchadnezzar. So, he's taking the kingdom from Belshazzar and giving it to the Persians.

Belshazzar trusted in the walls of Babylon. He was the king of a great, glorious empire. But there was nothing he could have done that would thwart what God said. This is our final unchanging truth about God. *What God makes holy stays holy. God's wisdom never grows old.* And write this down: **"God always has the final say."**

That very night Babylon falls to the Persians. According to history, the Persian army diverted the Euphrates River, which ran through Babylon, so they could slip under the walls of the city.²⁷ They captured great Babylon without a battle. They found the elites partying. The king was in his chamber with a knife in his hand--as if he was about to take his own life. But historical records reveal that the Persians killed him.²⁸

²³ Baldwin, Joyce, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Daniel*, (England, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009) Part 1: "Belshazzar had not learnt the lesson of history and was in all the greater danger than his father because he had deliberately defied the Lord (Aram, mārē': see note on 2:47) of heaven (23) by profaning what had been dedicated to him, worshipping lifeless gods, and giving not even a passing nod to the God to whom he owed his very existence."

²⁴ Stevenson, *ACCS*, 5:10-31: "EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "You have exalted yourself against God." ... Certainly, he says, you were brought to such madness that you placed yourself above God and overcame your father in arrogance and luxury. Indeed, [Nebuchadnezzar] thought that nobody among humankind was equal to him, but you believed that the Lord of heaven was inferior to you. COMMENTARY ON DANIEL 5.16."

²⁵ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 149: "These facts were pertinent to Belshazzar's situation because the king knew all of this. The difference was that he had not humbled himself the way Nebuchadnezzar had done. The contrast between the supreme power of Nebuchadnezzar and the very limited power of Belshazzar is also evident."

²⁶ Stevenson, *ACCS*, 5:10-31: "JEROME: The inscription of these three words on the wall simply meant "Mane, Thecel, Phares"; the first of which sounds forth the idea of "number," and the second "a weighing out" and the third "removal."

²⁷ Miller, *NAC*, Section V: "The walls surrounding the city of Babylon were formidable. In the previous chapter was the explanation that there were two sets of double walls extending for miles (the outermost system being seventeen miles in length). The outer walls were approximately twenty-five feet in width and rose to a height of at least forty feet. These fortifications were too difficult to challenge, and so according to Herodotus and Xenophon, the Medo-Persian army diverted water from the Euphrates River (which ran under the walls of Babylon) into a marsh. With the level of the water lowered, the soldiers were able to wade the river under the walls and enter the city"

²⁸ *Ibid*, Section V: "Xenophon added that the city was invaded while the Babylonians were feasting in a time of drunken revelry,101 and Herodotus also related that a festival was in progress.102 As a matter of fact, Xenophon cited the festival as the reason the Persians chose to attack Babylon on that particular night.103 He further mentioned that Gobryas, commander under Cyrus, led his soldiers into the palace, where they found the king holding a dagger, evidently with which to take his own life. According to Xenophon, the king and his attendants were overpowered,104 and the invaders "avenged themselves upon the wicked king,"105 which obviously means

Many scholars agree that this man “Darius the Mede” is known as Gubaru in Persian records.²⁹ He was the governor put in charge of Babylon by King Cyrus, that very night, thus fulfilling Daniel’s prophecy.

Our world, by comparison: You know, I started tonight showing you pictures of the incredible development of man-made cities. If you think about that, it seems pretty impressive. All these uncultivated regions transformed into huge cultural centers, seemingly in an instant. You might get it in your head that man *really* knows what he’s doing.

Look at how fast we can turn farmland or deserts into booming cities! Aren’t we amazing! But, like I said in my first point, human wisdom is flawed. Sure, we have all this technology and wealth, but it’s nothing compared to the finger of God. Everything God says, is going to happen. It doesn’t matter how long it takes. It doesn’t matter how unlikely it seems. God has the final say. In life. In death. For all eternity.

That’s good or bad, depending on you: And, you know, that’s either good news or bad news, depending on the condition of your heart. For Belshazzar, that was bad news. Unlike his father, he doesn’t show a shred of repentance--even though he knew his nation was about to fall. History says that Cyrus, the Persian king, reached the city days later and was welcomed as a hero.³⁰ Cyrus was a wise and just man; he *could have* spared Belshazzar, sending him into exile. We don’t know what would have happened if Belshazzar humbled himself and begged God to forgive him. If you stubbornly oppose God’s word, you have nothing to look forward to but death.

But for those who respond differently, knowing that God has the final say is very good news. Faith in God isn’t about having perfect theology or knowing all the answers to life. Faith in God is rooted in knowing that he does not change. That he’s faithful to do what he said he’d do. The Bible says Jesus died for our sins and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4); and everyone who calls on his name will be saved (Romans 10:13). It doesn’t matter how badly you sinned, that promise applies to you.

that they executed him.”

²⁹ Miller, *NAC*, Section VI: “A great many scholars (e.g., Whitcomb, Leupold, Wood, Archer, Albright, Wilson, Delitzsch) have identified Darius as Gubaru (Gobryas), the governor of Babylon mentioned in the Nabonidus Chronicle and other ancient texts.⁶”

³⁰ Miller, *NAC*, Section V: “The Cyrus Cylinder also records that Babylon was captured without a battle and that the citizens received Cyrus warmly.”

Trusting God in the midst of uncertainty: It also applies to what we see in the world today. Life is unpredictable. And it is easy for Christians to become overwhelmed by what they read about online. But God always has the final say. His word stands firm. It doesn't matter whose president, whose opposed to the president, what's going on in the Middle East or Europe; how expensive gas gets! God promised that Jesus Christ is coming back and when he does, he will rule in peace and righteousness forever.

Doesn't matter how many people disregard that. Doesn't matter how "modern" the world gets. It doesn't matter what AI has to say about it! *God has the final say*. He does not change. And one day, soon, Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives (see: Zechariah 14:4) and bring an end to all the evil and chaos around us. Are you ready for that day?

What do we do with all this? Daniel 5 is a fairly short chapter, but things move very fast. It kind of feels like our heads are spinning. That's probably what it felt like for Daniel. You might be sitting there thinking, "What do I do with all this?"

Sometimes life moves at a rapid pace. Other times, life might feel like an agonizing drag that never seems to end. No matter what your life is like right now, remember: God doesn't change. He was faithful to Daniel *then*, he is faithful to us *today*. It is his unchanging nature that makes him trustworthy. He doesn't promise us one thing today, then change his mind tomorrow.

Let me remind you of our 3 points for tonight:

What God makes holy, stays holy. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you never have to fear losing your holiness. You are forever marked as a child of God. You belong to him. The world's opinion about you may change. You may fall in and out of favor in the eyes of people. But you will never lose God's favor. Why is that? Because you were made holy through the shed blood of Christ. As John wrote in Revelation:

Revelation 1:5–6 (ESV) ...To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

Never forget who you are, in Christ. Don't let anyone rob of you this truth. God made you holy and you remain holy.

God's wisdom never grows old. Many times in your life you are going to be tempted to chase after the latest fad or trend. The people of the world are constantly inventing new strategies, tactics, and schemes to save themselves. But it's all snake oil. No AI chatbot can best the timeless and eternal wisdom that God promises to those who put their faith in Jesus. And God is giving this wisdom freely:

James 1:5 (ESV) — If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

When you face problems in life, when you are seeking answers, always go to God first. Don't be quick to trust the wisdom of unbelievers or even your own knowledge or know-how. When God gives you an answer, when you know what his wisdom says about a matter, do not deviate from that for a second. God's wisdom will always win out, no matter what.

God always has the final say. Right now, there are all kinds of "gurus" and so-called experts who think they know better than God. From universities to social media, there are people who scoff at the simple truths of the Bible. They question creation, the Incarnation, Christ's death and resurrection. They mock people who still consider this book to be the unchanging word of God. But they are in for a rude awakening. Paul warns us that God is not mocked (Gal 6:7). His word stands firm. Everything he said, will come to pass. The people who trust in him will never regret it. As Peter said:

1 Peter 2:6 (ESV) — "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

You might be in a season of uncertainty in your life. What you see doesn't match what the Bible says. But God always has the final say. Whatever he's promised to you in his word, will come to pass. We often face setbacks and disappointments, but he's promised to never leave us nor forsake us. That is the firm ground beneath our feet.

Remind them of Knotical wisdom Marriage series: June 24th - August 5th from 6:30 - 8:00.

Benediction: *Ephesians 3:20–21 (NKJV) — 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*