

Daniel 5

Sunday 1/6/2019

We are going to deviate one week before we get back into the book of Proverbs. As you know, we have been in the book of Proverbs; we are up around Chapter 23, going through it verse by verse. We just finished last weekend over the New Year's, probably one of the greatest Bible conferences that we have ever had. It was a whirlwind weekend; it was just packed with preaching and fellowship and great times. Jim and Joe did a fabulous job. We came back to New Year's Eve and just had a great New Year's Eve service of preaching and testimonies and baptized eighteen people. It has just been a great, great, great weekend. I wanted to take today because I wanted to close it out. They did a wonderful job, but I felt like I wanted to bring it back into a focus of where we want to go and talk about some things today. I could not really find a better passage today than Daniel. Daniel 5 is where we will be when we finally get moving along here.

Last year was a great year for us. It is almost like every year it gets better. The church is growing; people are growing spiritually. I just could not be happier with what God is doing in so many of your lives. We have our Lincoln Church up there, the Wichita crowd, and people on YouTube, literally around the world, that we are supplying the Bible to, that they are teaching little groups in their cities, in their towns, in their homes. It is just a great blessing what God is doing. I looked back at last year and just thought about how it could get any better. But obviously, with God, it always gets better.

One of the things I just want to say, I do not very often do this, but this means so much to me. Thomas and Elena came into our church not even quite a year ago, I do not believe. Both got saved and really just got started. They lived in Leavenworth, Kansas, which is an hour and a half away, and they were faithful every Sunday, coming to church. Aaron and Kelly began to disciple them and work with them, and it was so great to watch you guys grow. Aaron told me this the other day, that last week or the week before last, Thomas got all of his family around the kitchen table and sat down and said, "Okay, I am going to start teaching my family the Bible." That is one of the greatest blessings. I have people in this church that have been here for ten years that will not teach their kids the Bible. I cannot tell you what a great step forward that was for this next year for you. It is things like that that just overwhelm me, what God will do in your world if you allow Him to do it. This is going to be my New Year's message today. Dr. Ruckman used to have a series of tapes called "Plain Preaching." You are going to get some plain preaching this morning, so I hope you are up for it.

I. Introduction and Context of Daniel

The Book of Daniel, Daniel 5 in particular, is probably the greatest key book in all of the Bible, certainly the Old Testament, that brings us up to the second coming of the Lord Jesus. It actually brings us up to the first coming, but then we know that that gets postponed because of Israel's indifference, and then it moves on from there.

One of the important things to remember about Daniel is that Daniel writes during the captivity of the nation of Israel. You remember in our people ministry yesterday, we were in the Book of Ezekiel, and we are soon to come to the Book of Daniel. I told you that those two books are books that deal with Israel after they go into that captivity. That is an incredible historical thing to study. At some point, you probably had to go back to 2 Chronicles 36 or even the Book of Daniel and put all that information in there. It is such an important part of history, but an important part of biblical history of what God is doing.

God used Nebuchadnezzar to come down and to chastise the nation of Israel because the nation of Israel had completely forsaken God and went their own way. Nebuchadnezzar was the world power in Babylon. Babylon comes down three times to take Jerusalem. He comes down once in 606 BC, then a little later in 597 BC, and then finally comes back in 586 BC. We count it, whenever you hear the captivity, it is always given to 606 BC because that is just the date they picked. But actually, he came down three times. The last time he comes down, he encircles the city, he lays siege to it; nobody can come in, nobody can come out. It took two years for the city to finally collapse and for him to take that city. That is what they did back then. It was easier for them just to wait it out so they did not lose 20,000 or 30,000 soldiers. They would just encircle the city, the wall, so nobody could come out, nobody could come in, no food could come in, no supplies. You were going to dwindle away. It took two years, and finally, the city falls on July 19, 586 BC. It was one of the most bloody points in history. When Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian soldiers finally broke through into that city, it was unbelievable the carnage and the death and the brutality that took place.

Daniel goes in the first captivity. He was already in Babylon when all this happened. Of course, a couple of weeks later, after they take the city, they destroy God's temple. They took all of the vessels, the holy vessels that God had laid up and that were in the temple, and they carried all those away to Babylon as spoils for their great victory.

The Book of Daniel will introduce us to what we know from Romans 11:25 and again in Luke 21:24, a term called the Times of the Gentiles. It is a time beginning in history when the nation of Israel ceases to be the world power, and now the Gentile nations begin to come on the scene. We find that it is a great book because it shows us where history is going.

II. Structure and Significance of Daniel

The book simply breaks down into two sections. Chapter 1 through Chapter 6 deals with a historical perspective, and that is where you get Daniel and all the things that are going on in a historical account. But when it picks up in Chapter 7 through Chapter 12, the end of the book, now we move into the prophetic section. Everything here is going to look toward God coming back and establishing His kingdom. In fact, in the Book of Daniel, you will find the word "kingdom" fifty-seven times, and it all points to the second coming of Christ.

Every student of the Bible, certainly sooner or later, is going to get into prophecy. Prophecy is the big thing that most people want to get into. But sooner or later, if you are going to get into the Book of Daniel and the book of prophecy, Daniel is going to be the book that you are going to

have to really get into and understand. There are some great books on Daniel that have been written many, many years ago. Sir Robert Anderson was one of the greatest Bible teachers of the 1800s that you will ever find. He wrote a book that to this day is a classic, where he talks about Daniel in the lion's den. It was an incredible book; I read it as a young guy many, many years ago. Sir Robert Dick Wilson, who was the Semitic Language Professor at Princeton University around the turn of the century, in the 1900s, understood and spoke forty-five languages. His expertise was the Old Testament, and he wrote extensively on Daniel, and his great book was *Studies in the Book of Daniel*. Absolutely incredible. We have in our bookstore the books by Clarence Larkin. Larkin did a book on the Book of Daniel, also did one on the Book of Revelation, and he also did his *Dispensational Truth*, which covers much of the time of Daniel.

Daniel was an incredible book. The Book of Daniel really unfolds itself around three chapters: Chapter 2 with Daniel's image, Chapter 9 with Daniel's seventieth week, and then of course, Chapter 7 with the last four visions of the beasts that show up. From a prophetic standpoint, Daniel is an incredible book, and it will be the only book that will unlock the Book of Revelation, that will unlock the Old Testament, that will unlock the secrets to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Practical Applications from Daniel

Having said that, Daniel will be one of the greatest practical books in all of the Bible. I do not know of another book that is more in vogue, so to speak, with the time period that we live in today. Following our standard format of interpreting the Bible by letting the Bible interpret itself and letting the verses show us where it is going, Daniel will yield some of the greatest practical information for our lives that you will ever find.

You will find in the Book of Daniel that Babylon is a type of the world system. It was a literal power in history, but it is a type of the world system for us as we study the Book of Daniel. Then you will have Nebuchadnezzar, a little bit later you will have Belshazzar, then you will have Cyrus—these kings of Babylon as they come through. They will all be pictures of the devil himself, if not the Antichrist in the particular passage. Then you will have Daniel, and Daniel is a picture of every New Testament Christian that is alive today that has to live in the world system like Daniel had to be in Babylon.

IV. Daniel's Examples of Faith

When you come through the early six chapters of Daniel, it is incredible. In Chapter 1, you find Daniel going before Nebuchadnezzar. What a great story that is. You kids from camp know that I have preached that message many, many times: "Dare to be a Daniel." Daniel was taken captive by Babylon. He is of the king's seed; he is in the line of Christ. The devil, through the world system of Babylon, wanted to destroy that line of Christ by defiling Daniel and making him part of the wickedness of Babylon. The Bible talks about how they bring them a portion of food every day. They want to feed them with their food; they want to change them from their Hebrew diet to the Gentile diet. That was a picture of how in your life and my life, every day when you go to

work, every day when you step out that door, the world, the devil, has a serving of the world for you. They want you to eat it; they want you to digest it.

As you went on in Chapter 1, you found out that the devil was not satisfied with that. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to take the names that God gave them. Everything that God gave them in their names, when you go back and study it, said something about praising God, the God of Israel. But Nebuchadnezzar wanted to change those names. He took away the names that God gave them and he gave them the names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that we all know so well. Every one of those names takes the glory from God and now gives the glory to the gods of Babylon. I have told you many, many times, it is a picture that God wants to change your name. The devil wants to change your name. God has something for you; He sees you. When you get saved, the Bible says you have a new name down in glory. The devil wants to change that, and he changes that by giving you a diet of the world system. What a tremendous chapter, Chapter 1, is from a practical standpoint.

In Chapter 3, we all know this story: Daniel in the fiery furnace. What a great practical application that is. It is a picture of how the world system wanted to get rid of Daniel. It was a conspiracy behind Daniel and his friends to get rid of them because they knew that they represented God, and Babylon had no place for God, just like the world has no place for God. So they worked it out. Finally, they conspired against these Hebrew children, and they wanted to put them in the fiery furnace. The Bible says that they bound their hands. The Bible says that that furnace was so hot that when they opened the door, the very guys that opened the door got consumed by the fire. They took Daniel and those Hebrew children and they threw them in that fire. That is a picture of the world wanting to destroy you. It is a picture of the world coming after you to take away from you and destroy what God wants to do with you.

Nebuchadnezzar goes to bed that night. He has a very troubled night. He knows it was wrong to do what he did. He is up first thing in the morning. He runs down and has them open up that big old furnace door with the fire raging in there. He looks inside and he says, "Didn't we throw three guys in there?" "Yes, sir, we did." "Well, there are four in there now, and the fourth one looks like the Son of God." That is a great practical lesson for you. I will tell you something else: when he looked in there, the only thing the fire did was burn off the rope that they bound them with. You know what that tells me? Going through the trials of this old world and having Jesus go through with you will set you free, brother. It will take the bonds off of this old world that it wants to put on you. Many times, we look at the trials and the fires that we go through. When you go through the trials of life, we always look at it as some terrible thing. There is a reason why God put them in the fiery furnace. He wanted Nebuchadnezzar to see that their God was greater than any god that he had because you could throw any of them in there, and they would still be in there in the morning. Great pictures.

When you get into Chapter 6, you will find another great familiar story: Daniel and the lion's den. It just seems like Daniel was getting it all the time, and he will. You will too when you take your stand for God. The Bible says in Daniel 1:8 that Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. Anytime you say that and mean it, you are going to have some problems in your life, but it is okay.

They take Daniel, throw him down the lion's den. That was a standard practice in some of these places because they all stand around, and the lions, they did not feed them. They threw people down there, and they were so hungry they would just fight over them and literally rip them apart. It was a very graphic, gory concept. One time, when they had the Colosseums and they were killing all God's people, one of the guys came up to the keeper of the animals and he says, "We have to do something about these lions." He says, "Why is that?" He says, "Because they are eating up all our prophets."

I will tell you what the great memorial is out of the Book of Daniel 6. It is okay for you to get thrown in the lion's den as long as the Lion of the tribe of Judah goes in with you. Everybody else that got thrown down in that pit, those lions tore them apart. I am telling you right now, probably the best night's sleep that Daniel ever had was down there in that lion's den. There had to be eight or nine lions down there. They throw them down there, and they are all laughing, and they hit the bottom down there, and the lions are roaring and all that stuff. All there in the corner, there He stands. The Lord says, "Okay, boys, make a nice big circle. I want them to have a nice comfortable sleep tonight." You sleep with your dogs. They sigh; it is so refreshing. They will actually start dreaming; they think they are running, and they are barking. They will just make those sounds in there, and they will snore. When I sleep on the couch, I have one behind my back and one around my legs, and they are snoring. They are soft and they are warm and they are cuddly. Can you imagine sleeping in the midst of eight or nine lions, all positioned for you to be comfortable? I am telling you something: it is all right to go into the lion's den. You have the Lion of the tribe of Judah that goes with you. I will tell you something else: I would rather be in a lion's den with Him than safe home in my bed without Him. Great practical lessons.

V. The Handwriting on the Wall - Daniel 5

Then in Chapter 5, this is where we are going to be today. This is my New Year's message. This is going to look forward to what God has for you in the future based on what God has done with you last year. In Chapter 5, you have one of the greatest pictures of Christianity, but in particular, American Christianity and America itself as a great nation.

I hardly ever title my messages. I really do not. There are guys who have a title for everything they preach. I usually do not do that. But sometimes the message just wraps itself around a theme that it just screams to be said. If I did title this one, it would be called "The Handwriting on the Wall."

Now I want to read for you Daniel 5:1-8. Follow along here, and then we will get into our time together here, looking at this.

Daniel 5:1

Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

Daniel 5:2

Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein.

Daniel 5:3

Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

Daniel 5:4

They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

Daniel 5:5

In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

Daniel 5:6

Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

Daniel 5:7

The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Daniel 5:8

Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

Father, we do thank You and praise You today for the Lord Jesus. We ask You, Father, and we thank You for the great weekend we had, not only the great year but the great ending to our year as we, as a church family, came together, enjoyed the preaching of the Word of God, enjoyed what God had to say to us to prepare our hearts for what God wants to say to us in this next year. I pray today as we look at this passage that You will touch our hearts and help us to see what this great passage has for us, and we will be careful to give You the honor and the glory and the praise. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it, Amen.

VI. America and the Handwriting on the Wall

This is one of the greatest truths found anywhere in the Bible in God dealing with nations. But also, it is one of the best in reference to God dealing with you and me as a Christian. This would be a great message for the United States of America today.

I was blowing through the YouTube thing. When you get ours, it gives you a list of other things, and a lot of them were preachers. I found a message that Billy Graham had preached in 1955. He was very young back then, full of fire. The Neo-Evangelicals, the liberal crowd, had not got their fingernails into him yet. He was still preaching the Bible and preaching it hot and heavy. He preached a message that I listened to, and it was an incredible message. The message was to America, and he was preaching to America that the handwriting is on the wall for America. I thought that was one of the most telling messages. In 1955, things were still relatively stable. But he saw the beginning seeds of the handwriting on the wall, to where it was going. Too bad he lost the vision, but in 1955, he had it.

There is no doubt about it for certainty that the handwriting is on the wall for our country. America is fast approaching that dark abyss that all nations have fallen into who reject God and reject His Word. We are experiencing in our own country, in every phase of culture, a complete moral breakdown of our society. Our moral compass of the Word of God, which once kept us on track, is now spinning around and giving us false readings because we have lost the Word of God.

In Daniel 7, you have that great pivotal verse that brings these last four kingdoms into focus. Most people completely miss a couple of key words, and they try to make these four go back to Daniel 2 and line them up there. Of course, if you read it in sixth-grade English, that cannot work. But what you do have now is in Daniel 2, remember the Times of the Gentiles. In Daniel 2, he starts with Babylon in the image, then Persia, then Greece, and then Rome. He gives us the beginning of the Gentile nations. But we have a gap because Rome ended around 400 AD and never became a political power again. A religious power, yes, but not a political power. So then Daniel 7 fills in that gap. There you have four more beasts. The first one there in Daniel 7:4 is like a picture of England, who becomes a world power from 1600 up to 1900. Then you have in Daniel 7:5 the one that is like a bear; that is Russia. When the Russian Revolution takes over in 1917 and Marx comes in and communism comes in, it literally runs the world. In the 1950s and 1960s, after World War II, we had what we call the Cold War. The Cold War was about almost every country on this planet going under communism.

But in 1985, or 1987 somewhere in there, President Reagan was president then, we began to see the end of the great bear. The world is moving toward the second coming of Christ. Where England was a great power and then Russia was a world power, now Russia fades off the scene. Most people looking at history, even the history they are living in, many of you were alive in 1987. I was. I was in Kansas City; I was pastoring. Some of you were not born yet, but many of you were. I remember when Ronald Reagan went to Berlin, and he preached his famous message in Berlin. He was preaching to Prime Minister Gorbachev, who was the commander of Russia, the president of Russia. He made that famous speech which men have said is probably the greatest speech of the 20th century because he was preaching right there at the Berlin Wall. The Berlin Wall, as you know, was put up by the Russians in Berlin after World War II to keep

everybody from going back and forth. They wanted to dominate the world. But Russia was falling apart; Russia was coming to the end. Ronald Reagan, without ever knowing it, was used of God, just like Cyrus was, just like Nebuchadnezzar was. When he got up there and he preached, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” And the wall came down. When the wall came down, Russia was finished. She was split and divided into four or five different pieces of land. Putin today is trying to regain the great time that Russia had. But Russia was done as a world power. Oh, she still had influence, but the nation was gone. It was broken up; it was busted up; it was in fractions now.

What emerged from that in the 1980s up to now, the rapture and the tribulation, was the United States of America coming on the scene as the greatest world power that there ever was. Unfortunately, the fourth beast that comes out of the last one, or America, is the Antichrist, which firmly tells you and me that when the Antichrist shows up, he will be fostered and put forth by this country. It is an incredible prophetic concept.

I always love to look at God’s sense of humor in things. I am an American. I am a Christian, but I was born in America. I was in the military; I fought for my country once; I would fight for it again. I am not somebody who bashes my country, but I am always on God’s side against any country. I cannot help but read down here when you get into Daniel 7, around verse 6, when it talks about this great nation who becomes this nation like a leopard, which is a picture of the United States of America. It says she has the wings of a fowl. The official bird for America is an eagle. You see it on your money; you see it on flags; you see it on everything. There was a time in America where America was truly an eagle. But America has dumped the Word of God; she has dumped God. In our politics, which I care nothing about—I am neither a Democrat nor a Republican; I am a Bible-believing Christian—what has happened is America has gone from the great eagle nation to the chicken nation.

I do not know if you know your history. Back in 1867, Cuba was in the middle of a civil war. They arrested an American citizen who was down there doing contract work and accused him of espionage. They were going to take him to trial, and they were going to find him guilty, and they were going to execute him. He showed up to trial that day, and this is a true story. When he stood up to make his defense, he wrapped himself in an American flag. He pointed to the prosecutor and the judge, and he said, “Dare shoot this flag!” They let him go. He stood for the symbolism of the greatest nation that Cuba knew if they violated it, they were going to get clobbered. Try that today. There are people in this country who will burn our flag. Are you kidding me?

America is not the great feared nation that she once was. You have third-world dictators over there, who President Obama draws a line in the sand and says, “Don’t cross that.” They cross it. He draws another line. His whole administration was redrawing the lines. Nobody was afraid; nobody was scared. You have third-world dictators. You have Putin in Russia who defies the United States, who takes the Ukraine, who basically does what he wants to do. We do a lot of saber-rattling; we talk a lot of words, but at the end of the day, America has lost her punch. We have ISIS and Al Qaeda. The greatest military might on the planet, the greatest powerhouse of military hardware the world has ever seen, is in the arsenals of the United States of America. We can bomb you off the map, and it does not have to be a nuclear attack. We can send jets in with

canister bombs that will each hold four hundred, five hundred little bombs that will just pepper five hundred square meters. It will just kill everything in its path. We have bombs that they can drop by parachute that will explode two hundred yards over a target, and for a quarter of a mile, suck all the oxygen in, and anybody in it dies. That is America. We have warships that can be forty miles off the coast, fire their big guns, and hit a garbage plate at thirty miles. That is America. We have planes that you cannot even see that are watching you and will drop a bomb right down your pickle shoot. That is America's power. And yet we are being kicked around in the Middle East by a bunch of rag-tag militia who do not even wear uniforms, who are not very organized, but they are not afraid of America because America is afraid of them.

We could have won the war in Vietnam in two years. We could have won that war, but we could not. There were aircraft commanders that, going over the bridge from Laos to Cambodia to Vietnam, they were coming over, and they wanted to bomb the bridges. The commanders were told, "Well, you can't bomb the end of the bridge over in that other country. You can only bomb the south side of the bridge." The commander said, "In all my thirty-five years in the military, I never learned how to bomb just half a bridge." Our boys were out in the front in a firefight, being attacked. They had to call for permission before they could shoot back. They call it rules of engagement. I will tell you the rules of engagement that work in any war: kill them all and let God sort them out. But we are not there anymore. We are not. I am as American as apple pie.

President Trump, when he became president—and I am not political one way or the other; I could care less—but I like what guys say because I always bounce it off the Bible. He got elected on the idea that he wanted to make America great again. But let me tell you how impossible that is. You will never make America great again when you do not know in the first place what made America great at the beginning. It was the Word of God that we had. It was the power that the King James 1611 Authorized Version had, that every nation that had it down through history, every nation that cherished it, every nation that preached it, every nation that believed it, had the blessings of God on them.

America today is a paraplegic nation. We are paralyzed. Look at Washington. The government right now is shut down. You cannot go to Yosemite. You cannot go to the great monuments or the great museums. It is shut down. I just hope they get this fixed before the income tax checks have to come back. That is another thing while I am on this. The government is shut down. You will not get your check for ten years, but if you do not send them the money you owe them, you are in jail. Something is wrong with that. While our country falters back and forth, you have guys in Washington who have a political agenda that they care nothing about where you and I are. All they care about is their own agenda of what they want to accomplish. I am telling you, this is a great message, and I am not even preaching that today. I am going to preach to you. But I am just telling you, this will be a great message for America: that America, the handwriting is on the wall.

VII. The Handwriting on the Wall for Christians

The message of the handwriting on the wall is a great one for you and me today, for us as God's people, especially going into the New Year, 2019. I am going to tell you right now, across

Christianity, for many of God's people—men and women who are saved, born again, men and women who consciously and knowingly took God's salvation—they then basically thumbed their nose at God. Today, they live their lives for themselves. They live their lives as a self-serving identity for them and not God. I am going to tell you right now, for many of God's people across this nation this next year, the handwriting is already on the wall for you.

In any church, it is true in our church, you see people that last year were here at New Year's, and by the time we get to this next year, they are not here anymore. Some you see, where they used to come all the time, now they show up every six or seven or eight weeks. They have been saved from the world; I believe that. But what has happened is the world has reclaimed them. I do not mean they have lost their salvation. I just mean they took what God gave them, and in defiance to everything that God did for them, they allowed the world to come back in, swallow them back up again. Now they are saved, born again, blood-washed, on their way to heaven, the aristocracy of heaven, and you could not tell them from the unsaved people. The picture here is so very clear, and yet unfortunately, it is all too familiar with God's people today.

In our text today, Babylon, as I have already told you, will represent the world system. Belshazzar will represent the devil. This whole system here is a picture of a corrupt world system. In our study today and throughout the Bible, we know that we are up against three things. The Bible alludes to this all the way through; it is almost in every story you read underneath the surface. But you know that the three greatest enemies that we stand against are the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world system that is run by the devil wants to destroy you and your flesh. That is the plan. It is just that simple. It is not a very complicated plan; it is not a hard plan; it is not something you have to sit down and search through. It is simply this: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world system is run by the devil, and he wants to destroy what God is doing in your life through your flesh. It is just that simple.

Daniel 5:1 is an incredible picture of that world system today. It says in Daniel 5:1, "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." That is a great picture of the world. That is exactly what God saved you from. You will have to answer for yourself, because I surely do not understand it, nor do you have to answer to me. But if that is true, and that is the world system, and you were truly saved from that, why did you celebrate New Year's the way you did? That is the question. You do not have to answer to me, but I am telling you, the world is a pagan, drunken, godless system that people involved care nothing about God or the things of God. It is a self-serving, self-absorbing system that completely serves the flesh: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

I want you to see that there is a monotone behind the world system. Just like you have Babylon, who is the world system, and then you have the architect that runs it, Belshazzar, you have the world system, and then you have the devil, who is the architect who runs it. Look at Daniel 5:2-4. "Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine." Oh, they are having a great time. Can you just close your eyes and see it? Everybody is there. It is New Year's. They are having a great time, and they are laughing and all this stuff, and they are tasting the wine. They are drinking; they are having a great time.

Daniel 5:2

Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein.

Daniel 5:3

Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

Daniel 5:4

They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

I just have to tell you something. Those golden vessels are the dedicated things. Those are the things that God gave the nation of Israel. There were things that God gave them through great victories. God gave them as a treasure. They are holy; they are dedicated. Nobody gets to mess with them. They are something that God gave to Israel, and Israel kept them in a special place that was their relationship. God showed the whole world how great they were by the treasure that they had that God had given them. Do you see what is happening here? The devil was not just content with a bunch of unsaved pagan people drinking and boozing it up and having a great time in the concept of Babylon. He was not satisfied with that. No, no, no, no, no. He has an agenda. He had to make it a God thing. He had to defile God even more by giving that old pagan king the idea, "Oh man, we are having a great time. I have an idea. Let's drink to our gods from the very vessels that God said were so holy." He was not satisfied with just drinking as the world. He wanted to bring the holy vessels of God into it and defile God even more.

Those treasures were locked in a room. They were under guard, and the king could go in and he could look at rooms and rooms and rooms filled to the ceiling with great vessels of gold, silver, things that God had given them that made them the richest nation on the earth, the things that God dedicated and they dedicated back to God. They were holy things. Nobody drank from them. Nobody touched them. They were from God to them. The king could go in and sit down and look and walk among that treasure and know how great and good and perfect and precious God was by His gifts to that nation. They represent the goodness and the blessings of God to Israel like no other nation ever had.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:7 that you and I, in a spiritual church age, not a literal physical thing, you and I, your body being the vessel of God, the temple of God, the Bible says that we have this treasure in earthen vessels. The holy things that God has given us, the promises that He gave only you, the principles that He laid out only to you, the miracles, the blessings that you can stand up here time after time after time. Thomas, the miracle that God did in your life to bring you from where you were and your wife to the place that you want to take your family and sit down and teach them the Bible. That is a treasure that God gave you. It is in your temple. Lock it up. Keep it. God in every one of your lives has given you special blessings, things that you and I did not deserve. God gave them to us. We keep them under lock and key. We hold them close.

They are holy things. They are dedicated things. They are things you do not share with somebody else. They are things that God did for you when nothing else came through. Just as the king of Israel literally walked through that treasure room and looked at all of those things in the temple, New Year's for you and me, for many of God's people, it was a drunken fest. But what it should have been is you walking through last year and looking inside your temple at all the holy, dedicated, special things that God has given you. You want to know what will keep you from quitting coming to church and getting back into the world? I will tell you what will keep you: never lose sight of those holy things, those dedicated things inside your temple, those special private things that God has put into our lives that are locked up for you to see, for me to remember who He is, what He has done for us.

The devil, Belshazzar, through the world system, wants to take those vessels and fill them with the devil's cup. He wants to take and defile your temple by the whole of the world. The holy things that are inside you that God gave you, he wants you to take those things and give them to the slop of this godless pagan world. God's people today are standing in line to do it.

Look at Daniel 5:4. Do you want me to continue plain preaching, or do you want me to revert back to an amalgamated, soft-spoken, kind, little degenerate preacher that I am? Look at Daniel 5:4. Here it is. Here is New Year's Eve. Here is when you get with that worldly crowd. Here is where you are at. "They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." Translation: we are all together New Year's. Good friends, good food, low and brow. We are all there, drinking Bud Light. We are all going to be one-third less calories and less filling so we can drink more. We are all having a great time, and we are all standing around. Here it comes. Here we come, praising the gods of gold and silver. "Well, you know what? You know how much money I made last year? I made over a million dollars last year. Wow. Yeah, business is great. You see my new car? That is the best money can buy. That does everything but drive itself. I could go through a stop sign, and somebody comes through, it has the little sensors that stop you." God is saying, "Hmm, did not know that. I will have to unhook those for you next time you drive that car." "Look at my house. This is a \$300,000, \$400,000 house. We just, we just, we got a pool. We got a tennis court. Look at what we have got." Somebody else said, "Yeah, we just bought our house, and oh, you like this car? I got that." All you do is praise the gods of the things of this world. That is where it is at: your house, your car, your possessions. You are going to be happy. Your life story: "Well, yeah, we can go anywhere we want. We can buy whatever we want. We are going to go here. We are going to go there. Oh, you know what? We are having a great time. We are doing all this stuff." The world system, by design, will always get you to praise your possessions of this world that you have that you think make you happy. Belshazzar is sitting there, waving his hand, wives, concubines, all of his friends. He has got it made. He thinks he is praising the gods of this world: the gold, silver, brass, iron.

But wait. Daniel 5:5-6. We do not have anybody on the lights back there or nobody on the soundboard that could do this for me. But right now, we need to lower the lights and bring up the music. Spooky time. Lights down. Party. And then somebody, "Ah, ah, ah, ah!" And then

somebody else, “Ah, ah!” And then finally, Belshazzar. And on the wall. Oh, the fingers of a man, handwriting on the wall.

Daniel 5:5

In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

Daniel 5:6

Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

Ah, the message from God. Now, if you do not hear anything else I say for the rest of the message, or for what I have said before, hear this: this is the message. God did not care about the world system drinking itself into oblivion. God did not care about the world system drinking its way to hell. That world system has always been the devil’s playground.

John 8:44

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

So God was not upset about that. God could care less. But when you try to take and mix the temple of God with the things of this world, God is going to get in it. When you try to mix this filthy, godless world system with the holy vessels of God, and you take those very things that are inside you that God gave you that were precious, that you should have held on to, and now you display them before the world, there is going to come a time in God’s people’s lives, if they continue on that path, there is going to be a time when God is going to say, “Enough is enough.” If you wanted to drink, if you wanted to party, if you wanted to fornicate, if you wanted to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, that is okay. Then you should have just stayed unsaved, enjoyed it, put up with hell for eternity, and just went your way and had a great time. But you took God’s name. You took God’s salvation. You took the greatest gift that God ever gave man. You let the Holy Spirit of God fill you inside and begin to give you those blessings of the vessels and the holy things. Then what did you do? You filled it with the filth of this world.

Plain preaching, can I? Are you sure? In this world, there is a filthy gesture that people give other people that is a sign and an act of defiance against somebody else. You probably know what it is already. It is not, “Hi, how are you?” It is a filthy worldly gesture that has been used for years and years of giving somebody the finger. That is a picture of the spirit of defiance. It suggests a defiance to whatever somebody is trying to tell you, do for you, or who has upset you. Somebody pulls out in front of you, or you pull out in front of somebody on a freeway accidentally, and you do not mean to, what do you get? You talk to somebody who is in defiance of authority, try to reason with them, what do you get? I will tell you what you get. I want to tell you something plainly, and here it comes: this is exactly what God’s people who have taken His salvation, taken

everything that He has given them, taken all the blessings, and in defiance, when God calls you on the carpet, God calls you to attention, you spiritually give Him the finger. It is over. It is okay, baby cakes, because in Daniel 5, now God gives you His finger, and it is the handwriting on the wall. You are done. You are finished. It is over. You have defied Me enough, and the handwriting is by the finger of God.

Now look at Daniel 5:7-8. Belshazzar is troubled. His countenance has changed. His whole world, which once, just twenty minutes ago, ten minutes ago, was full of life and partying and drinking and laughing about the vessels of God that you are defiling in the Jews, and what great victory you had, and praising your gods of gold and silver and stone. What happened? I will tell you what, folks. You are a saved person, and you are on your way to heaven if you say you are, and you are, and you want to give your temple to the things of this world, it only takes a split second for God to ruin your day. He is like so many of God's people today. He is so incredibly stupid that he cannot see the world. He cannot say, how could you ever honestly, openly, rationally, if you are truly saved, how could you ever think you could take the holy things of God and mix them with the pagan, godless stuff of the world and still be okay? Now the handwriting is on the wall, is it not? It will be on the wall for some of God's people next year. Last year, you saw the handwriting on the wall for marriages. You saw the handwriting on the wall for health. You saw the handwriting on the wall for children. The handwriting is on the wall for most of us to the fact that someday we are going to stand before Almighty God, the judgment seat of Christ. We are so incredibly stupid to keep defiling God and keep demeaning God and keep filling what God has given us with the godless things of this old world.

VIII. The Interpretation and Consequences

Now, there is only one thing to fix it. Oh, excuse me, I got ahead of myself, almost forgot the message itself on the wall. Daniel 5:25-28.

Daniel 5:25

And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

Daniel 5:26

This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

Daniel 5:27

TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

Daniel 5:28

PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

I will tell you something. There is going to come a time in God's people's lives when God is going to say, "Enough is enough." God is a gracious God. God is a God of love; He is a God of grace. I get it. But if you think God does not have a limit to what He is going to put up with, when He died for you on that cross, and His Son said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and God wanted to stop it right there and send down ten thousand angels and wipe out everybody on planet earth, you know why He did not? Because He saw you. He saw every one of you. He saw me, who if He had done nothing, would have been lost and spent eternity in the lake of fire. God allowed His Son to pay that price for you and for me, and then you and I are going to take those holy things and fill them with the filth of the world? And God is going to say, "That's okay"? You want to be part of the world system? That is fine. But you should have just stayed out of the salvation world and just went on to hell and had a great time.

I have a message for you, and there are three parts to this message:

1. God has numbered your days; you are finished.
2. God has weighed you in the balance, and you have come up short. That balance is you in His hand and Jesus Christ in His hand.
3. God is going to take everything He has given you; He is going to take it from you, and you are done.

Look at Daniel 5:30. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." Translation: our day is coming. The handwriting is on the wall. For many of God's people, 2019 will be their undoing because you can already read where it is going.

Going back to what I started to say before I so rudely interrupted myself, there is only one way it can get fixed, if it can get fixed at all. In this case, it is Daniel. In any case, it is the man of God with the message of God. Daniel is elevated in Daniel 5:7 to the third person in the kingdom. That makes Daniel the greatest type of the Holy Spirit of God in the Bible. The second type, the greatest type of God the Son, is Joseph, and the greatest type of God the Father is Abraham. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Daniel is the third person in the kingdom. He matches up to the third part of the Trinity as far as interpreting and understanding and giving explanations. He is a picture of every one of you who are saved here this morning, that you have the Holy Spirit of God inside you. He is a picture of every preacher that stands in every pulpit who claims to be saved and has the Word of God in his life and the guiding of the Holy Spirit of God. The message that they should preach should be the man of God with the message of God.

For America, the handwriting is on the wall. For many of God's people today, the handwriting is on the wall. You look back at your life, and all you see is more involvement in the world system. All you see is more being swallowed up. You do not see more time with God. You see less time coming to church. You do not see more time in your Bible. You see less time studying it. You now have everything else in your world stepping over the things that should be in your world, and you are fine with that. You have lifted that middle finger and said to God, "I am not doing it." I preach to you every Sunday morning, every Thursday night. Across this city, men are standing in a pulpit preaching to their people: "There is a holy God who demands a holy life, and

your body is the temple of God. Don't defile that temple." And they say, "I am not going to do it."

IX. A Personal Illustration of Defiance

When you have been in a ministry for as long as I have, almost fifty years now—and I am only thirty-five, I put in a lot of overtime—there are things that stick out, events that happen that stick out in your mind that you just never forget. There are things that God allows you to be part of or puts you in the middle of, but as long as you live, if you live to be one hundred, you will never forget those things. They made that much of an impact on your life.

Around 1980, early 80s, I had a guy that was coming to my Sunday school class. His name was James Shaney. I have never forgotten this situation, as I have several I will just never forget. He was one of the nicest guys that you would ever meet in your life. He had a great personality, friendly, never knew a stranger. One of the nicest guys you would ever find, ever meet anywhere in your life. But he just could not get past the world. He got saved in one of my Monday night Bible studies. You remember the old Monday night Bible studies way back in the day when Washington crossed the Delaware? He got saved in a Monday night Bible study years ago, early 80s. He got disciplined, and he came and got involved for a while. But his desire for the things of the world, for money, possessions, for the things of the world, he could never overcome it. He had a great job; he made lots of money. But he just never had the ability to see the value in anything more than what was in front of him. Slowly but surely, he slipped back into that dark hole of the world. He got married, a nice gal, had some kids, drinking and partying.

He was a Royals fan. I remember it was in 1985 that the Royals won the World Series. You would have thought it was key to the second coming of Christ. This guy was a Royals fan, unbelievably. It was more important than church and more important than the things of God. God and the church were the farthest things from his mind. It was everything that he was. He literally, like so many of God's people, he drowned in his possessions. They overwhelmed him; they overcame him, and he literally drowned in his possessions. He just could not part with the world.

Then, the party was over. The doctor's report came back: cancer in his pancreas. Six or seven months to live, maybe nine at the most. Handwriting was on the wall. God had had enough. I remember talking to him. All his possessions, all the money in his bank account, all the things that he trusted in that meant everything to him, now were worthless. He made every wrong investment that I have ever seen a man ever make. He died at the end of that same year. The reason why I remember it so much, it was right around December or January when he died, around 1987 or somewhere in there.

His wife asked me to do the funeral. I try to be everything to everybody. I do. I try to be a nice guy, a kind guy. I try to look for people who have problems and make them worse. I try to help everybody I can. Well, I have to tell you, there are some things that I just cannot do. I am not good at doing a funeral where everybody expects you to get up and tell them what a wonderful Christian guy this was, because that is what everybody wants. Funerals today have lost their punch as far as I am concerned. I enjoy doing funerals. I really do. I think they are some of the

greatest opportunities. Somebody asked me one time, “What do you like to do more, funerals or weddings?” I said, “Oh, I love funerals.” He said, “Well, that’s great. And why is that?” I said, “Because I have done hundreds of weddings, and some of them have not lasted. I have never done a funeral that did not stick.” But I do not play the game very well. I am sorry. I can fudge on some things because I know, but there are some things I just cannot. I am not good at playing that game. I cannot get up and talk and take God’s Word when everybody sitting out there knows that this guy was a Christian who cared nothing about God, thumbed his nose at God, and did not do one thing in his life for God. I just do not have it in me. I just cannot do that. I cannot get up and talk about God saving him and talking about that he is in heaven when everybody, his drinking buddies out there and all the people that he is running around with, are out there laughing at that. His life has made enough of a mockery of the things of God. I am not going to add to it by my sermon at his funeral.

As kindly, as tenderly, as lovingly as I could, to a woman who was having a moment of time, I said, “Look, don’t put this on me. He had not been to church for over a year and a half, maybe longer. The funeral home will have a wannabe preacher on call that you give him \$200. You can program him to say whatever nice things you want him to say. They all do that. I have been called by funeral homes. I have done funerals, and the guys will come up and say, ‘Man, that was a great one!’ I get a call three weeks later, ‘Hey, we got somebody here that doesn’t have a pastor. They’ll pay you \$300 if you’ll come in and do it.’ I always say the same thing, ‘Five.’ Why? Well, five is a number of death. If I am going to do this, I want to keep it biblical. I will not do it.”

Well, she said, “I understand, Bob.” She says, “But I am going to do it. That is just the way he was.” Now, I do not let anything slip. Maybe I should. My biggest problem is my mouth and the truth that is in it. I say things many times and make people mad. But you know what? I am sorry. When it comes to that book, the way things are, it is the way things are. I will try to make it nice, palatable, cushy, soft, fuzzy, warm. We will turn up the temperature. We will get you all set on a pillow. We will do all those things. But here it comes. I said, “No.” I said, “Since you brought it up, no, that is not true. You were the one person that should have nailed him and not allowed him to live the lifestyle that he lived. No, you are not a victim here, and it is just not the way he was. You were his helpmate. You are saved. You know the difference. You should have held the line for him when he could not hold the line for himself. Do not you parents hold the line for your kids when they cannot hold it? Do not I as your pastor hold the line for you when you cannot hold it? You husbands and wives need to hold the line for each other when they cannot hold it.” I said, “Instead of that,” and just let me speak freely, “you enjoyed everything along with it. You enjoyed the trips. You enjoyed the cars. You enjoyed the big house where you should have stood up and said, ‘We are not doing this anymore. I am going to church Sunday. I am getting involved. I am going to do it. You decide what you want to do. If you are not going to be the spiritual leader in this family, I know it is against all biblical principles, but in case scenarios like this, I will become the spiritual leader, and I am going to church.’”

It was Edmund Burke, the great pagan, unsaved philosopher, who gave one of the greatest biblical principles anywhere in history: “Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.” Her silence was his consent.

Well, she said, “Well, Bob, I understand. Will you please do the funeral? I do not want anybody else to do it. If you consent to do it, you say whatever you want to say, and you do whatever you want to do, and I will back you up.” I will tell you that was the hardest funeral I ever preached in my life. I preached a funeral here four or five years ago of a guy who murdered his wife, murdered his kid, and then blew his own brains out. That was a piece of cake compared to this one. That is clearly easy. This one, everybody at the other one, everybody knew what was wrong here. Man, I had his drinking buddies, his carousing buddies, his party buddies. I had everybody here that was coming to this funeral, and I knew how this was going to go. I have seen it after he is dead and buried. His buddies will come out and put a little beer bottle on his tombstone, like, “We are going to drink together, still drinking buddies forever.” It was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. I have never been afraid much in my life, if ever, about doing anything in the ministry. I just have it. I figured it is greater than me that is out there facing me. But that day, I have to confess to you, I was really sweating. Nobody wants to get up into a funeral where everybody is thinking you are going to make it like all funerals are, and then without any warning. That is the problem with funerals today. Funerals have lost their whole concept. You go to most funerals, it is on the card, or do whatever you want to do, “Come, celebration of their life.” We have lost the concept that the real celebration for a believer is not in their life; it is in their death. But you are stuck with that. I started with that. I started by saying everybody wants to celebrate his life. I want to celebrate his death in the right way because I want to talk about what is going on here, really. I am telling you. They laid him out in the casket with his favorite Royals shirt on, with a baseball that he had obviously caught, a foul ball whatever in the stadium, and a baseball bat that was signed by one of the ballplayers. A month earlier, I had preached the funeral of a dear old saint of God who had been saved for like sixty-five years, served God all of his life. When they buried him, he was in the casket. They opened up his Bible and put it on his lap and took his two dead hands and put them on each side of the Bible. I thought that that was probably, since I had the license to say what I needed to say, I thought that was probably a good illustration to start with. I used it. Then I asked them the question, “If you died today—you are going to die today, you will die today—what would they put in your casket? What would be the thing that you wanted everybody to remember you by? The Word of God that you live your life by, or a baseball bat and a ball and a shirt that the worms are going to eat holes in in about three or four years?”

Well, here is a rough sermon. For a moment in time, I felt like J. Frank Norris, that certainly I saw a pickup truck out there, and I thought I saw somebody making a rope. Normally, when I preach a funeral—and I need to confess this to you, I need to be honest with you about this—when I am done, here is the casket. People are right where you are at. I will go and stand by the head of the casket. I have always done that. Because what happens traditionally is they have the people file by. I like to look at the people. I like to get a read on whether they took what I said or not. My messages are pretty good, and they are easy, but they get the point across. I always watch them. That morning, I knew as sure as I did that, I was going to get killed. For a moment, I

thought, “You know what, I am going to do this, and I am going to go sit with the family and just pretend like I am consoling them. I do not want to stand here and get... I know what is going to happen.” Hey, I have seen the looks of people and comments when they have come through when I did a nice one. So I thought that thought for a second, and then I said to myself, “Uh-uh, no, Bob, if you are man enough to preach it, then you will be man enough to stand for it. You stand there. If they are going to die, you are going to die. Today is a great day. You have traced a great sermon. Let them know.” So I stood there, and they started to file by. As I walked through that thing, five of his drinking buddies got saved. They were coming through, and there were some nasty looks. I was standing there, and they were coming by, and some of them were crying. That is another thing I said. They were all crying during the service, and I just stopped and I said, “You know what? If you guys would have cried tears over him on your knees before this happened, we probably would not be crying the tears we are having now.” She said I could say whatever I wanted to say. Now you tell me to say whatever I want you to say, you are opening up a whole can of whipped cream. You are coming through here, and I am just standing there. A guy came up, shook my hand, put his arm around me, and pulled me close and said, “Preacher, can I talk to you after a moment?” I said, “Sure, absolutely. Let me get done here. Just wait over there.” A couple more came through. A big old guy comes through and says, “Preacher, can I talk to you?” Okay, go on, we are opening up again. Three more. There were some really nasty ones come through. Remember that gesture I talked about that was nasty? I mean, I did not get it that day, but that was only because they were going through like this. I know what they were doing in their pockets. A third guy comes through, “Preacher, can I talk to you?” After we were done, we got these guys aside. I led all five of them to the Lord. If I would have chickened out, I would have missed that opportunity. The moral for me was this: if you are man enough to preach it, then be man enough to stand for it, and let God be God and do what needs to be done.

Every one of those guys, in one form or the other, had said to me that they saw, they knew he was a Christian. One of them even said, “I asked him to go to church one time, and he just blew it off.” Every one of them knew that he was not what he needed to be. If it would not have been for that message being laid out clearly, those five guys would have probably gone on their way and never got saved. What a price to pay. All his life, he was in defiance of God and did his own thing. Then one day, the finger of God wrote on the wall, “It is enough. Come on home.”

As 1 Corinthians 11:30 so clearly says:

1 Corinthians 11:30

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

All his life, he never won one soul to Christ. He never won his kid to Christ; somebody else had to do that. It took the handwriting on the wall and God taking him home to make a soul winner out of him. I will tell you, 2018 and 2019 are going to be a whole new year. For many of God’s people, the handwriting is already on the wall because you are headed down the same road, and the handwriting is on the wall. The thing that you need to ask yourself is: are you going to be different this year than last year? What is going to change? What am I going to say no to this year that I was not willing to say no to last year? What line in the sand am I going to draw that

says, "The buck stops here, and this is where I am at"? You can see now that Daniel 5 is a great message. It is not only great for our tottering country that has just got her nostrils above the water, trying to breathe her last breath before she goes under, but it is also good for a lot of God's people who have taken the holy things of God and then for some reason think that they can defile them with the filthy, godless things of the world and still be okay. We will hold up there.