As we continue with our study of the Book of Daniel, please turn with me to Daniel chapter five. Before we get into today’s study, let’s ask God’s blessings on our time of study.

PRAYER
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I would like to give you some background information that I believe will help you get a better understanding of what is going on in Daniel 5.

INTRODUCTION

(A) It had now been 70 years since Daniel and his fellow Hebrews had been brought into Babylonian captivity.

(B) Daniel was about 15 years old when he was brought to Babylon; he is now around 85 years old.

(C) After reigning over Babylon for 43 years, history tells us King Nebuchadnezzar died on October 7th in the year 562 B.C.

(D) Following Nebuchadnezzar’s death, Babylon had a series of really bad kings, most of whom met untimely deaths.

One was assassinated by his own brother; another was killed in battle; and another was captured by the Medes and Persians and lived out his remaining days as a prisoner of war.

About 25 years had passed from the end of Daniel chapter 4 and the beginning of Daniel chapter 5. Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, is now the King of Babylon.

For about four months the armies of the Medes and the Persians had
been advancing toward the capitol city of Babylon. Now Babylon was a fortified city with an outer wall surrounding the city that was 56 miles long, 80 feet thick, and 320 feet high. There was also an inner wall in the middle of the city that was approximately 10 miles long, but not as thick or high as the outer wall. The King’s palace was located inside this inner wall of Babylon.

Realizing the armies of the Medes and Persians are advancing toward Babylon, King Belshazzar has summoned all his political subordinates throughout the empire to his palace for protection. This would be like the equivalent of “Custer’s Last Stand,” but instead it is “Belshazzar’s Last Stand.”

Feeling safe and secure inside the double-fortified walls of the city, King Belshazzar decides to throw a big party one night as a way of “snubbing his nose” at the pursuing Mede-Persian armies.

This brings us to Daniel chapter 5. In this chapter I would like for you to note three things about that NIGHT in Babylon long ago.

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First of all, I would have you to notice........

I. It Was A Night of REVELRY (vs. 1-4)

1. There are two things about Belshazzar that especially stand out in these first four verses.

   (A) One thing that stands out is Belshazzar and his BOOZE.

   vs. 1,2a Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine........

   Picture this scene if you will. One thousand people are seated on the banquet floor in the King’s palace. King Belshazzar, who is seated at a special table on an elevated platform above the crowd, is leading the guests in offering toasts to their pagan gods.

   With every drink, Belshazzar is leading the crowd deeper and deeper into drunkenness. Himself included!

   This act in itself was totally beneath the dignity of
Kings in those days. If a king drank, it was always in private, never in public. For a king to drink in public was a “mark of weakness.”

To make matters worse, Belshazzar had invited women to this feast, setting the stage for a drunken orgy.

Now if you have ever been around someone who is intoxicated you alcohol effects behavior in a number of ways.

- Some drunks get very quiet and sullen.
- Some get loud and boisterous.
- Some become comical and do foolish things they don’t remember doing once sober.
- Some become mean, aggressive and vulgar.

And then there are drunks like King Belshazzar. The drunker he got the more defiant and belligerent he became.

(B) This brings us to the second thing about Belshazzar that stands out in these first four verses and that is Belshazzar’s BLASPHEMIES. (vs. 2-4)

2 While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.

3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them.

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

When one is drunk, every foolish idea that creeps into his cloudy, hazy brain seems like a great idea.
“Drunk as a skunk,”...Belshazzar says, “Hey, I've got a great idea!” “Servants, go get us those gold and silver goblets my grandfather took from the Temple in Jerusalem and bring them to us so we can drink out of them.”

Quickly the servants rush off to the vault where these holy vessels have been stored for over seventy years, untouched by any of the previous Babylonian kings. The servants blow the dust off the HOLY VESSELS and head back to the banquet hall.

Picture Belshazzar if you will, holding the holy vessels up like “trophies” for all to see. He then orders a servant to fill one of the goblets with wine.............he offers a blasphemous toast mocking the God of heaven. With wine dripping from his scraggly beard, Belshazzar declares........”Look what I have done......I, the King, have no fear of any foreign god! Here’s a toast to our gods!”

The crowd lets out a loud cheer and breaks into an all out drunken orgy.

BUT NOT ONLY WAS THIS A NIGHT OF REVELRY........

II. It Was A Night of REVELATION (vs. 5-29)

This section takes in VERSES 5-29, but let’s just read VERSES 5-9 for now.

vs. 5-9 5 In the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

6 Then the king’s countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.
7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, “Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

8 Now all the king’s wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation.

9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.

1. Now I want you to get the picture here:

   *The armies of the Medes and Persians are crouching just outside the walls of Babylon.

   *King Belshazzar and a thousand guests have gotten all liquored up.

   *They have mocked Almighty God and desecrated the holy vessels from the temple in Jerusalem.

   *There’s boisterous laughter, and music and dancing, AND WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE WAS GOING ON!

   And just as this immoral drunken orgy is getting into full swing, the party suddenly comes to a screeching halt!

2. Out of nowhere a man’s hand suddenly appears; no arm, no body, just a hand. And the hand begins to write something on the large plaster wall in the most well-lit part of the room so everyone can see.

   Several years ago archeologist uncovered the ruins of that ancient Babylonian palace. They discovered this banquet hall to be remarkably well-preserved.

   Three walls in the giant banquet hall were made of blue brick. The fourth wall was covered in white plaster.

   It measured 170 feet in LENGTH and 56 feet in HEIGHT.

   Think of this plaster wall as the world’s first giant movie screen. It was upon this plaster wall the hand of the LORD wrote a prophetic message that night.

   In less than a minute, BELSHAZZAR went from being stone-
drunk to sober…….probably an all-time world record for sobriety!

Verse 6 tells us “the King’s countenance changed.” That’s just another way of saying, “God WIPED THE SMILE right off BELSHAZZAR’S face!” His KNEES started knocking together and he became so weak he couldn’t even stand up!

3. Like a young teenage boy going through puberty, you can almost hear BELSHAZZAR’S voice break as he calls for “the wise men and magicians.” You remember those guys don’t you?

BELSHAZZAR promised them ROYAL PURPLE GARMENTS and GOLD CHAINS and a promotion to the THIRD HIGHEST GOVERNMENT POSITION in Babylon if they could READ THE WORDS and REVEAL THEIR MEANING.

Well time had not improved “the interpretation skills” of these wise men. They didn’t have a clue what the words SAID or what they MEANT. You see, BELSHAZZAR could have promised them “the moon” and they would never have figured out the meaning of the words written on the wall in a million years. WHY? Because it was a message written by the hand of Almighty God!

4. Well we read in VERSE 10 that about that time THE QUEEN MOTHER entered the banquet hall. Many commentators believe this was the DAUGHTER of the late King Nebuchadnezzar, making her BELSHAZZAR’S grandmother.

Although she had obviously not been in attendance at this drunken feast, her royal bedroom was somewhere within “ear shot” of the banquet hall.

Perhaps she heard the all the commotion coming from the banquet hall created by “the handwriting on the wall” and curiously ran from her bedroom to see what was going on.

5. In an attempt to soothe the “troubled heart” of her son, the Queen Mother told BELSHAZZAR about DANIEL.

She told BELSHAZZAR Daniel was a man who had
the Spirit of God in him, and that he had the ability to interpret dreams and explain enigmas. (enigma = is simply a mystery that cannot be explained or understood.)

6. Now keep in mind, Daniel was now about 85 YEARS OLD. And in all likelihood after Nebuchadnezzar’s death, DANIEL had been “forced into retirement” or “pushed into the background” by the subsequent Babylonian kings.

At any rate, it appears as though KING BELSHAZZAR had never HEARD of or at least had never MET Daniel.

But now that he has seen this “handwriting on the wall” BELSHAZZAR is more than eager to meet “this Daniel.”

7. Let’s pick up the scripture record beginning in VERSE 13.......Daniel 5:13-16 (NKJV)

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, “Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? (“father” in this sense means “forefather” or “ancestor” rather than “biological father.”)

14 I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.

15 Now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing.

16 And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

8. Well Daniel quickly let’s BELSHAZZAR know he’s not interested in his gifts or the position he is offering him in his government.

   Daniel then proceeds to remind BELSHAZZAR what kind of a man his grandfather, NEBUCHADNEZZAR, had been.
Daniel told him how THE MOST HIGH GOD had raised his grandfather up to become the KING of BABYLON; and how GOD had blessed his grandfather with majesty……and glory…….and honor.

Daniel went on to tell BELSHAZZAR how his grandfather became PROUD and ARROGANT over time and forgot that it was the GOD of heaven who had given him his throne.

Daniel then proceeded to tell BELSHAZZAR about those seven years his grandfather lived like an animal, eating grass, and dwelling among the “wild donkey;” and how it wasn’t until his grandfather humbled himself before GOD that God restored his sanity and his rightful place as king.

9. But then in VERSE 22, the tone in Daniel’s voice changes as he shifts the focus away from Nebuchadnezzar to BELSHAZZAR himself.

In vs. 22-29 we see Daniel do two things:

(A) First, Daniel gives an INDICTMENT against Belshazzar. (vs. 22,23)

Daniel 5:22-23 (NKJV)

22 “But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.

23 And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.

Basically in this indictment, here is what Daniel told Belshazzar: “I’m not telling you anything about your grandfather you don’t already know. He was a humble, godly man, and YOU are nothing like him. YOU are a proud, arrogant, profane, blasphemous king. You have shook your fist in the face of Almighty God and turned
to worthless heathen gods. You are so blinded by your own pride you don’t even realize your very life breath is in the hands of Almighty God!”

(B) After giving him this scathing indictment, Daniel then gives BELSHAZZAR the INTERPRETATION of the handwriting on the wall. (vs. 25-29)

Daniel 5:24-29 (NKJV)

24 Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.
25 “And this is the inscription that was written:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

26 This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it;
27 TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting;
28 PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

MENE  “Your days are numbered Belshazzar!”
“Your are finished!” “You are history!”

TEKEL  “You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting!” “You are not worth your salt!”

PERES  “Your kingdom will be divided between those Medes and Persians who are waiting just outside your city gate!”

BELSHAZZAR now sees “the handwriting on the wall”....... literally! Realizing disaster now awaits him and his kingdom and that there’s not a thing he can do to stop it, BELSHAZZAR
gives the promised GIFTS and POSITION to Daniel, as his final act as King of Babylon.

It Was A Night of REVELRY
It Was A Night of REVELATION

Finally and briefly............

III. It Was A Night of RETRIBUTION (vs. 30,31)

Notice how brief this account is........

Daniel 5:30,31 (NKJV)

30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.

31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

1. History records, that for many nights, General Ugbaru of the Persian army had his troops digging a trench to lower the waters of the moat surrounding the city of Babylon. And on the night of the drunken feasts, the Mede and Persian soldiers secretly entered the city through a tunnel they had dug under the main gate leading into the city.

On the very night BELSHAZZAR saw “the handwriting on the wall” his life and his kingdom were taken away from him.

2. And just like that, on OCTOBER 16, 539 B.C. the Babylonian Empire fell and the MEDE-PERSIAN EMPIRE rose. This was exactly what Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream of the giant image decades earlier.

C O N C L U S I O N

What does this tragic event that happened thousands of years ago have to do with us today? Well let me give you “the bigger picture” and then we'll close.

According to Revelation 18, 19, there is coming a time when a “new Babylon” is going to emerge on the world scene.
Revelation refers to it as “Babylon the Great!”

Babylon the Great will be governed by a man far more evil, rebellious and blasphemous than King Belshazzar. The scriptures call him “the Antichrist”…….”the man of lawlessness”…….”the beast”…….”the son of perdition” and “the wicked one” just to name a few.

In those days the new holy Temple in Jerusalem (which is yet to be built) will be desecrated when the Antichrist sets up the “abomination that causes desolation” inside the temple. (Mt.24)

In those days, people will profane and blaspheme the precious Name of God and His Son, Jesus Christ, as never before. During those days the world will descend into a cesspool of drunkenness, drug addiction and sexual perversion unparalleled in human history.

But guess what? THE HANDWRITING IS ALREADY ON THE WALL! According to REVELATION 18 and 19, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE KING OF ALL KINGS AND LORD OF ALL LORDS WILL COME WITH HIS MIGHTY ARMY FROM HEAVEN and completely destroy the Antichrist and his kingdom, Babylon the Great!

At the feast of Belshazzar
And a thousand of his lords,
While they drank from golden vessels,
As the Book of Truth records,
In the night as they reveled
In the royal palace hall,
They were seized with consternation
At the hand upon the wall.

So our deeds are recorded,
There’s a hand that’s writing now.
Sinner, give you heart to Jesus,
To His royal mandate bow,
For the day is fast approaching,
It must come to one and all,
When every sinner’s condemnation
Will be written on the wall.