

The Handwriting Is On The Wall

Daniel 5

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Let's read verses 1-4, beginning in Daniel 5:1. "Belshazzar the king made a great feast," whenever a Babylonian king threw a feast it was indeed great, and "a thousand of his lords," were there "and drank wine before the thousand. 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. 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. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."

It's interesting when you come to Daniel 5, we have a new king but we have old sins that never change. Do you know that man, the heart of man, doesn't really change? We may be more educated, more sophisticated, modern, have new means of travel, and all the information that we have; but man, as to his very basic nature, that is, being sinful and in rebellion toward God and idolatrous, has not changed. Isn't it fascinating with all the advancements and areas of man's knowledge, both scientifically and culturally, we still haven't changed the heart of man. We haven't been able to change men's hearts—only the gospel of Jesus Christ can do that. Amen?

The Bible says, "If any man be in Christ, he is..." what? "a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." You can actually become a brand new person by knowing Jesus Christ; and having a relationship with Him, your life is transformed. So, a new king, Belshazzar, but same old sins: pride, rebellion, stubbornness, idolatry, resisting and defying the God of heaven, the God of Israel.

There is a time gap of quite a few years between chapters 4 and 5, about a quarter of a century. From the time Nebuchadnezzar passes off the scene, there are several kings in Babylon until we come down to this last king. His name is Belshazzar. For many years, critics of the Bible (those who deny its inerrancy, infallibility, and divine inspiration) were attacking Daniel 5 because prior to 1854 the name Belshazzar was not found on any archeological artifacts. They mocked the idea. In this chapter it's also clear that Belshazzar is the last king in Babylon when it's overtaken by the Medo-Persian Empire. Up to that point in their records they only had knowledge of a king by the name of Nabonidus, who was the last king of Babylon. The fact is, in 1854, archeologists were digging in southern Iraq and unearthed a pot. On this pot there was an inscription to the great king Nabonidus and his oldest son Belshazzar. From that day forward critics had to eat crow and realize the Bible is an accurate book.

Whenever you find people saying, "Well, this isn't historic," or "That isn't historic." If it hasn't been proven by archeology or found in an archeological dig, you just wait. All it takes is time, and the more the archeologists dig, the more evidence we have for the historicity of God's

Word. The issues and concerns we have over time have not increased, they have decreased. The problems that many people have with, "That's not historic," or "That person has never been found," or "We don't know if that guy really existed," all you need is time and someone with a spade in the holy land doing a little digging and eventually it surfaces.

I don't need archeology to believe the Bible is the Word of God. As I mentioned a minute ago, my life has been changed by the power of God! I know God exists because I had a front-row seat in Him changing my life. We used to sing a song, "Ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart and He's changed my heart." It's interesting that all this criticism is unfounded when in reality there was a Belshazzar (the Bible tells us so) and it's substantiated by the archeologists in their discoveries. What happened was (and let me just mention this, I don't want to get too technical or confuse you with names, dates, and stuff like that) Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus. At this time, Nabonidus was actually the king of Babylon and his son was co-regent so what you had was two kings. Nabonidus was gone from Babylon for a short period of time (actually 17 years) and during that 17 years his son became king of Babylon. His kingship was just of the city of Babylon. It's what we call a co-regency, a co-reign—Nabonidus and Belshazzar. There were two kings. This is why twice in this chapter you're going to find that Daniel is made the third ruler in the kingdom, not second after Belshazzar but third; Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and then Daniel—one, two, three. They criticize the references to "third ruler in the kingdom," but we discover that there was a co-regency taking place at this time.

Belshazzar is the king, and what does he do? He makes a great feast and invites a thousand of his lords. Archeologists in this area have actually found large banquet halls. They have unearthed the ancient city of Babylon. Some of its artifacts can actually be seen in the British Museum in London, England. It's fascinating. They have unearthed this room, this large banquet room, that could hold a thousand people. He invited his lords and they drank wine. What else do you do when you're king—get drunk and have a big party. This was a party of all parties. This was a party to worship the pagan gods of Babylon. They would get drunk and worship the god Bacchus, the god of wine, and would get involved in all kinds of vile licentious practices. It would become a big drunken orgy is what actually would take place. While Belshazzar tasted the wine, he commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken.

Make a little footnote here. Nebuchadnezzar was his grandfather not his immediate father. You say, "Wait a minute, Pastor John, it says 'father.'" That's because at this time in this culture they didn't have a word for grandfather. They didn't even have that word in their vocabulary, so the word "father" was used for anyone that you were an ancestor to. That's why Jesus was called the son of David. He wasn't the son of David as we would refer to that, He was the great, great, great, great, great grandson of David. The word "father" is actually your grandfather which "... had taken out of the temple that was in Jerusalem." That was something we read about in chapter 1 where he laid siege to Jerusalem and carried the golden vessels to the city of Babylon.

They began to drink in these glasses. There was no need for doing that. Wine tastes like wine

no matter what the goblet or cup is. It doesn't matter if it was in a red plastic party cup, it's going to taste the same. I wouldn't know from experience though, by the way. Some of you are, "How do you know it tastes the same, Pastor John?" This is a big party. They bring these cups and are drinking. This was an act of defying the God of Israel as He is referred to in this chapter, the God of Heaven and the most high God. He was actually trying to defy God saying, "Our gods rule over your gods." It was kind of a battle of the gods. They drank the wine in the house of their gods and in verse 4, "They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."

It's interesting that while they were having this great big party going on and everybody's having a good time (they think they are), it's going to be short-lived. Do you know the pleasures of the world are short-lived? Remember your party days before you got saved (hopefully before you got saved and they are not happening anymore) when you were living like the world and you thought, "Wow, we're having a good time!?" I think, "How stupid that is!" You know, "Let's get together and let's get wasted." Think about how stupid that is and the stupid things you did and you thought, "I wish somebody could have got to me about how dumb what we're doing really is." Here they are worshiping these false gods. They are getting drunk and partying. The truth is outside the walls (that had been taking place for about three months) the city was actually in process of being taken siege by the Medo-Persian army. Basically, they were under siege and they're having a party. They had this false sense of security. They were in the walls of Babylon and thought, "No one can touch us. No one can attack us. No one can reach us. We're secure. Lock down the gates. Make sure the guards don't drink (we'll do the drinking), they stay wide awake, and we're having this big party." They had this false sense of security, but this was going to be the night that the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's image was going to be removed and the breast and arms of silver, the Medo-Persian Empire as God predicted many years before, would actually take the place of the Babylonian Empire.

The walls around the city of Babylon were massive. They were 350 feet high—that's huge! They were 86 feet wide. You could put six chariots on top of the wall and race around the walls of Babylon. The outside of the wall had a moat, a large water moat. It was right on the Euphrates river and ran diagonally through the city of Babylon. There were brass gates down into the water that kept it secure. They had the moat, the high walls, and there were 250 towers on that wall that shot up another hundred feet above the wall itself (which was 350 feet) so 450 feet high were these guard towers. All inside the city had the hanging gardens, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was just a big, strong, massive, gorgeous, beautiful and seemingly secure place for the king of Babylon; but when your days are over, your days are over. Even the walls of Babylon can't keep God out when it's time for you to be judged for your sin.

The walls of their security were a false trust. It's sad that so many today have a false security. "We can't be attacked. We can't go down. We're in the United States. We're safe and secure," or "I'm okay because I'm a good person." It's a false trust. It's a false sense of security. The Medo-Persians under Darius the king were coming to take over the city of Babylon.

I want you to notice what happens in verse 5. We first have the king's feast, verses 1-4, and now we have God's finger, verse 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," or lampstands. They actually didn't have wax candles in those days. They would be similar to Aladdin lamps filled with oil. They had this lampstand against the wall of the palace and a hand shows up and starts writing on the plaster of the wall. It says "and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." Wow! Wow! Wow! Wow! This is radical! I believe this actually happened. They are all just bombed out of their minds, and they probably thought, "Hey, this is probably too much wine here." They see this hand. How they knew it was a man's hand I don't know, but it says with a finger it was writing on the wall. I believe this is the same finger of God that brought the plagues upon the Egyptians (Exodus 8). I believe this is the same finger of God that wrote in the tablets of stone (Exodus 31) and gave us the Ten Commandments. It's the same finger (Luke 11) that cast out demons, and (John 8) when Jesus knelt down with His finger wrote in the dirt as though He heard them not. I believe that is the finger that wrote on that wall in Belshazzar's palace—none other than the finger of God Himself. God was coming to bring judgment upon this wicked king.

We move now to the king's fear (verses 6-9). "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him," he sobered up very quickly "so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." You could see his little knocked knees under his little skirt he was wearing. His legs were shaking and his spine was weak. He just sobered up immediately. Question: Why would the king be freaked by this? Well, a hand is writing on the wall with no body attached to it. It's obvious to the king that it's bringing judgment against him, and his guilty conscience was bothering him.

It's funny. When you're not right with God and you know you're out of fellowship with God (you're not ready to die), things freak you out. You're not really ready to live until you're ready to die. When things go wrong, "Oh, you know, God is judging me. God is after me!" You have this guilt because of your sin, and guilt results in your fear. "The king cried (verse 7) 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." There is the "third ruler" because of the co-regency that was going on in Babylon. 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."

Most Hebrew scholars believe that they knew what the letters were, they knew what the words were, but they didn't know what the meaning was. When it says they could not interpret it, it means they didn't know its significance. We're going to see what was written in just a moment and what it means, but evidently they had no idea what the words that were written on the wall meant, so "Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished." It kind of has a familiar ring. His grandfather Nebuchadnezzar tried to call the wise men, astrologers, soothsayers, and magicians in and they were unable to produce the dream and its meaning. Now, he calls these guys in. It's not a

dream. This time God speaks through this handwriting of judgment on the wall and because he wasn't right with God his guilt resulted in his fear.

Notice in verses 10-16 Daniel is called and we see the fame of Daniel. "Now the queen," this would be the queen mother. It would be Belshazzar's mother or possibly grandmother. He's having this great party and all of a sudden now he's sobered by this handwriting on the wall, and then his mom shows up—that'll bring an end to the party. "...by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever," which I put in the margin of my Bible, "Ha ha." He's going to die in just a few moments. Within hours he's a dead man and she's saying, "O king, live forever." That's just kind of what you would say to a king in those days, "O king, live forever." She doesn't know that judgment is going to come. "...let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom," again, "thy father" is a reference to Nebuchadnezzar, your grandfather, "like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy (grand)father, the king, I say, thy (grand)father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; 12 Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation. 13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king."

Isn't it interesting that he first turns to his astrologers, his wisemen, his soothsayers, his magicians, and they can't produce for him. When you're really down and out, call for the man of God—call for the Christian. Now, where Daniel has been during this time we don't know. He was probably living more of a private life. He was probably semi-retired. He was probably studying the Word of God and the prophecies of the Old Testament. It's interesting that when everything is going well in the world they don't need the believer, especially the preacher, but when the handwriting is on the wall, "We need to go to church this Sunday. Do we have a Bible around here?" "Well, I think there is one somewhere. Let's try to find it," and they dust it off from the shelf somewhere. "Don't we know any Christians? Can we call them over and ask them what's going on?" When you hit on hard times...I've noticed how many times even unbelievers, if they get sick or if they're out of work, or maybe they're on their deathbed and know they are going to die, "Uh, could you call the preacher for me?" They haven't been to church in 50 years, but now it's time to call the preacher because the writing is on the wall. It's time to turn to God.

Let me say, it's better to turn to God in a time like that than never to turn to God. If you're here tonight and you've been running from and rebelling against God, you're not following God, you're basically in the party with Belshazzar, and that's kind of your focus. You're praising the god of gold, silver, and all of these things. You're idolatrous, worshipping materialism. Maybe tonight you need to surrender your heart and life to God. He's calling you by name. Tonight is your night.

Belshazzar calls for Daniel (verse 13), and he comes before the king. A little footnote, Daniel is

80 years old and he's still serving the Lord. There's hope for you tonight. You think you're getting old and should be led out to pasture? There's still hope for you. Moses was beginning his ministry when he was 80 years of age. "And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? or Jerusalem or Judea? "I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. 15 And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing," there is no help from the world, "And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom."

I know the story. You know the story, but I can't help when I read that Daniel is thinking, "Big deal. Like I really want your gold chain. I really want to look like Mr. T or something like that. This is stupid." "Daniel, if you give me the meaning of the writing, I'll give you a gold necklace!" "Whoa, whoopee dee! I can't wait!" I love the way Daniel responded. We see Daniel's faithfulness from verses 17-24. "Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation." Daniel is basically saying in modern vernacular, "Keep your stupid gold chain. Keep your necklace, king. As far as being third in the kingdom, you're dead tonight, dude. You're not even going to be around anymore. I'm going to take your job," is what he's thinking. He's going to be promoted to second in the kingdom, and he's going to outlive both his father and king Belshazzar. So he says, "You can keep your gifts."

A little point I want to make before I pass over this lest I forget. When you're a believer, the world has nothing to offer you. The world has nothing to offer you. "We could make you famous! We could make you rich! We can bring you pleasure! You can have possessions. You can be popular!" The world has nothing for me. Do you know that as a Christian you're dead to the world, its affections, and lusts? If you find yourself as a believer longing for the world—something is wrong. If you want to be like the world, in the world, and behave like the world, then something is wrong. The world has nothing for me. Anything the world offers, I'm not interested in. I love the words in that song they say, "Content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss, my sinful self my only shame, my glory all, the cross." I love that! I'm content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss, my sinful self my only shame, and my only glory is the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

This was no temptation to the great man of God, Daniel. He says, "I'll tell you the writing and make known to you the interpretation," (verse 18) "O thou king, the most high God," let me point out what we're reading here. He doesn't just go right to the words and their meaning, he gives them a little mini sermon. As I read these words I'm saying, "Preach it, Daniel. Preach it, Daniel. Go for it, Buddy." He really kind of chastens and rebukes the king. "O thou king, the most high God, gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty and glory, and

honour," God gave him this kingdom, "And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down." He was a complete monarch ruling sovereign, "But when his heart was lifted up," that was his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, "and his mind hardened in pride," which is what is happening with Belshazzar, "he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will." Then he lays it on him, "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; 23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven," He's the most high God and He's the Lord of heaven, "and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou has praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: 24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written." Amazing words that Daniel gives unto the king. He says, "Listen, you're grandfather was lifted up in pride and God humbled him."

It's a shame we don't learn from others' mistakes. It's a shame that nations don't learn from other nations' mistakes. It's a shame right now that the United States of America isn't learning from history. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. You go back in history and look at so many nations that sin brought their destruction. Sin will bring the destruction of America as it is bringing in America, and we're not learning from history. We're so short-sighted when we look back, and any time in our own individual life we don't learn from the pages of Scripture...you know you can read the Bible, you can read about David's sin, Abraham's sin, Noah's sin, and different saints of God who stumbled and fell. Guess what you're supposed to do? You're supposed to learn from their mistakes. You're not supposed to read these stories and go, "Duh, duh," and just go headlong into the same sin. Don't you read your Bible? Don't you see the judgment of God, the chastisement of God, and the consequences that it brings upon them? There are a lot of negative examples in the Bible about what we're not to do and not to be. If you really want to be smart, you would read and learn from them.

Here's Belshazzar, and he doesn't learn anything from his grandfather. I have kids and grandkids. I don't know if I'll live long enough to have great grandchildren, if the Lord tarries and I live that long, but I hope and pray that my kids learn something from me. I pray that those next generations learn something. "Look, I've been there. I've done that. Let me tell you, that's not the way to do it, and that's not the way to live. You're cutting yourself off from the blessings of God."

I want you to note the three sins of Belshazzar (verse 22). He had knowledge, and knowledge brings responsibility. He sinned against the light. You might want to write that down. Knowledge brings responsibility. The more you know, the more you're responsible for. If you

know the gospel, you're responsible for it. If you come to this church, you hear the gospel and you don't believe, you're responsible for it. Don't blame God if you go to hell. Don't blame God if you're not saved. You can believe and receive Jesus Christ and be saved. Knowledge brings responsibility. Jesus rebuked some of the cities and places He was at in His day. He said, "Because you have this great knowledge, the Son of God is here, it is going to be more tolerable on the day of judgment than for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you, Chorazin and Bethsaida, because you had this great knowledge, these miracles, and the Son of God was there. We have the Bible. We have preachers on the radio and on television. We have printed material. We have all this knowledge of the Word of God and if we reject that light, judgment will come upon us.

Secondly, notice he had deliberate defiance (verse 23). "But has lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven," so he deliberately was defying the God of heaven. Thirdly, he was idolatrous. He praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone. Today, we are idolatrous. An idol is anything that comes between you and God. Anything that takes the place of God in your heart is an idol, and God says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." You can worship a person, a passion, your career, a hobby, your intellect, education, money, things. Maybe you worship your car. Anything can become an idol—anything that comes between you and the true and the living God. Notice these false gods cannot see, they cannot hear, and they do not know—they're dumb gods. Do you know what happens when you worship them? You become like them. You become like your god. If you worship the true and living God, you become like your God. If you worship an insensate god, an inanimate god, stone, silver, wood, then you become like your god—you become dead. Anything that takes the place of God become an idol. What is it in your life that is taking the place of God?

Notice he says, "...and the God in whose hand thy breath is," have you ever thought about how dependent upon God we are? That your very breath is in the hands of God, "and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." At the end of verse 23, mark the purpose of life is to glorify God. Do you know what the purpose of life is? To know God and to glorify God forever. That's the chief goal of man—not to make money, not to fool around, not to have wild parties, not to have a good time, not to have a lot of things. The chief goal of man is to know God and to glorify God forever; and if you're not doing that, you're not fulfilling the purpose for which you were created.

In closing, we see (verses 25-31) Babylon falls. "And this is the writing that was written," and he gives him the meaning, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the thing," so there were four words. The first two words were repeated twice. "This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. 27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. 28 PERES," which is the singular of UPHARSIN, "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. 29 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. 30 In that night," it almost indicates that the king went back to partying. "Well, okay, you got your gold chain and we know what it means. Okay, let's party once again." "...that night

was Belshazzar," who, by the way, was 35 years of age, "the king of the Chaldeans slain," that night comes for every individual. "And Darius the Median," Darius is believed to being a title, like the title Pharaoh or Caesar, "took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old." It was actually the Cyrus the king of Media that took the kingdom, but he did it in the name of Darius who was the king of Medo-Persia.

This king of Medo-Persia was 62 years of age. He praised the gods of gold, silver, and stone. He didn't praise the God of heaven and judgment fell upon him. The meaning of the words are interesting: God has numbered thy kingdom and finished it (verse 26). God has numbered your days. The Bible says, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." I actually believe that God knows the day we will die. You don't. I don't, but God does. No one can guarantee that it's far off. No one can guarantee that it's years down the road. You say, "Well, I'm young!" Belshazzar was 35. I've seen healthy, young 35-year-olds go to bed feeling great and die in their sleep for no apparent reason. When it's your time to go, God takes you home. The Bible says, "It's appointed." Everyone has an appointment. "...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Once you die, there is no time to get right with God. His days were numbered.

"TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Picture a scale with God on one side and Belshazzar on the other. Belshazzar, you're a lightweight. You don't measure up. The Bible says, "All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There is no one righteous, no not one." We've all fallen short. We're all sinners. We're all guilty. We've broken God's laws. PERES means divided. It means that God has judged you. You're going to be removed, and your kingdom is going to be given (verse 28) to the Medes and Persians. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." How did it happen? History tells us and also the prophecy of Isaiah 45:1-4 (write it down, it's an amazing prophecy). The prophet Isaiah had actually prophesied how Belshazzar would be taken and the city of Babylon destroyed.

What happened was that the Medo-Persians diverted the Euphrates River. Remember I told you the Euphrates River ran through the city of Babylon? Well, they actually diverted the river and dried up the riverbed that went under the wall. There was a gate there to keep people from getting through even where the river was, but they had some conspirators inside the city who actually opened the gates and let them in. On this dry riverbed we see the Medo-Persian army (while Belshazzar is partying in his palace) going under the walls and coming in. That very night he was going to be slain and wiped out. He is in the middle of his partying, the doors burst open, and just as God said in the handwriting on the wall, tonight your kingdom is divided and will be given to the Medo-Persian Empire. This is exactly what God prophesied years earlier in Nebuchadnezzar's vision—a head of gold overtaken by breast and arms of silver, the Medo-Persian Empire. They diverted the river, came under the city, came in and slew the king, and conquered. The kingdom of Babylon fell in 539 B.C.

Did you know that there is a last night for every nation and a last night for every individual? There is a last night for every nation and a last night for every individual. Just a week ago Sunday, I mentioned that I have a cousin. She never married, never had children, and she

passed away. She's the oldest of us Miller cousins. She passed away a week ago. Yesterday, my wife and I were in Whittier. I was officiating her services. Just yesterday, I'm standing at the cemetery with a casket as we lower her into the ground, and it was just a reminder again life is short, death is certain, so teach me to number my days so that I may apply my heart unto wisdom.

You know, it would be awful foolish for you to be here tonight and to hear this study from the book of Daniel and not be right with God, not be ready to go to heaven, not know whether or not you're ready to go to heaven. If you were to die tonight, if God were to actually come for you tonight, would you be ready to go to heaven? You might be a specimen of health, but it could be an accident—it could be a tragic accident. You never know when you are going to go, that's why you need to be ready. The Bible says all of us have sinned; all of us have fallen short of the glory of God. The Bible says there is no one righteous, no not one, but the Bible says whoever believes on Jesus Christ will be saved. Jesus came from heaven and died on the cross to take your sins and to pay their penalty. He was buried and rose from the dead so that you could be forgiven and have eternal life. You know, being a Christian isn't going to church. It's not being baptized. Those are false trusts. That's like Belshazzar, trusting in the walls of Babylon. "I'm okay. Nothing can happen to me." "I'm okay. I've been baptized." "I'm okay. I go to church." "I'm okay. I'm a good person." "I'm okay. I live in the United States. All Americans go to heaven," and you haven't been born again.

I want to ask you tonight, are you sure that you have eternal life? Are you sure that when you die you'll go to heaven? Would you like tonight to make sure? I don't think that you should leave here tonight without saying to the Lord, "Lord, come into my heart, forgive my sins, and be my Savior." I want to give you an opportunity tonight. I haven't done this for many weeks on Wednesday night, but if there is anyone here, please, don't say no to Jesus tonight. Don't resist the Lord tonight. It's no accident that He brought you here to hear this message. Remember Belshazzar was troubled and his knees were shaking and he was knocking? Maybe you're kind of distraught right now. Maybe you're troubled. You're sweating a little bit. You're getting a little nervous. That's the Holy Spirit. He's convicting and drawing you to Jesus Christ. Maybe when you lie on your bed at night and go to sleep you say, "What would happen if I died in my sleep? Would I go to heaven?" If you don't know for sure, then make sure tonight. Give your heart to Jesus Christ. Surrender your life to Him as Lord and Savior, and He will forgive your sins, He will transform you from the inside out, He'll give you a new heart, and He'll give you eternal life. You'll know that you have eternal life, and you'll be able to spend eternity with Him. Let's bow our heads.

If God has spoken to you through this message today and you're not sure that you're a child of God, maybe you don't know for sure that if you died today that you would go to heaven, you've never really trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, I would like to lead you in a prayer right now inviting Christ to come into your heart and to be your Savior. As I pray this prayer, I want you to repeat it out loud right where you are after me. Make it from your heart inviting Christ to come in and be your Lord and Savior. Let's pray.

Dear Lord Jesus, I'm sorry for my sin. I pray that You'll forgive me. Come into my heart and make me Your child. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and help me to live for You all the days of my life. I believe in You. I receive You as my Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer and you meant it, God heard that prayer. I believe that God will and does forgive your sins. We'd like to help you get started growing in your walk and relationship with Jesus Christ. God bless you.

If you just prayed with Pastor John to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, we are so excited for you! We'd like to send you a Bible and some resources to get you started in your relationship with the Lord. Simply click on the contact link at the top of the page and tell us something like, "I prayed to accept Christ." We'll get your Bible and resources mailed out to you right away. God bless you and welcome to the family of God!