***Daniel 5:1-16 Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. 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. 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. 10 The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, “O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father - your father the king - made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. 12 Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.” 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? 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.”***

We’re back with Daniel tonight, but King Nebuchadnezzar will not be joining us. He has died. We can pinpoint the time of this scripture. He died in 562 BC. His son Evil-Merodach ruled from 562-560 B.C, he died and Neriglissar ruled from 560-556 B.C. He died and his son Laborosoarchod ruled for 9 months. Nabonadius took the kingdom and ruled from 556-539. From 541-539, he co-ruled with his son Belshazzar, fulfilling Jeremiah 27:6-7 - *And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him. 7 So all nations shall serve him and his son and his son’s son, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them*. Nabonadius is Nebuchadnezzar’s son and Belshazzar is Nebuchadnezzar’s son’s son. At this point Daniel has been in Babylon, serving and faithful to God, for 66 years. This would place him in his mid to late seventies. Our God is able to use us, no matter our age, no matter our situation.

Verses 1-4 *Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. 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.*

War has been raging between the Medes and the Babylonians since 560 BC. The Babylonian empire has been falling, city by city. Darius, king of the Medes and, his nephew, Cyrus, king of Persia, are laying siege to the city of Babylon. Babylon is on the ropes and, in this situation, a prideful and defiant Belshazzar makes a great feast for a 1000 of his lords. He trusted in Babylon’s high and thick walls, many years supply of food, food growing in gardens, and the Euphrates river supplying all the water they could drink. Rebellious and drunken, he drank wine. While he tasted the wine, which has the idea of drunkenness and intoxication, he commands the golden and silver vessels of God’s temple, be brought so they can drink from them. These were the same vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem. In those days, it was customary to call any male parental figure by the title father. Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson. They brought the vessels and the king, the lords, the wives, and the concubines drank out of sacred vessels from the house of God. Further, they praised the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone. In their hands they held the vessels from the temple of the living God, while praising the false gods and idols of their pagan religion. Not a good mix! Yet, it happens today. Too often, people mix the worship of the world and worship of God. God says – you cannot serve two masters. Our worldly hearts are too easily deceived when we divide our allegiance.

Daniel 5:5-6 *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.*

In the same hour comes from the Chaldee word meaning moment. In the same moment that they started drinking from the vessels of the temple of God, meant only for true worship of God, the fingers of a man’s hand appear. A representation of God, perhaps even the very hand of God, appears and begins to write upon the plaster of the wall of the kings palace. Belshazzar saw the hand. Belshazzar saw the writing. We’ve all heard the saying, “We see the handwriting on the wall?: - this is where the saying originates. The sentence is decreed, God has spoken, the sentence will be executed.

Belshazzar’s countenance changes. He sobers in a hurry. Talk about wiping the smirk off someone’s face. He doesn’t know what it says, but a disembodied hand is writing on the wall, a feeling of foreboding has swept over the room, everyone can see, and fear causes his knees to knock together. This is quite a change from the drunken revelry a few moments earlier. In Isaiah 21:2-5 we read *A distressing vision is declared to me; The treacherous dealer deals treacherously, And the plunderer plunders. Go up, O Elam! Besiege, O Media! All its sighing I have made to cease. 3 Therefore my loins are filled with pain; Pangs have taken hold of me, like the pangs of a woman in labor. I was distressed when I heard it; I was dismayed when I saw it. 4 My heart wavered, fearfulness frightened me; The night for which I longed He turned into fear for me. 5 Prepare the table, Set a watchman in the tower, Eat and drink. Arise, you princes, Anoint the shield!* Isaiah wrote this about 150 to 200 years before these events take place; yet, he calls the Medes out by name. The prophecies of the Bible are incredible, accurate, and destined to be fulfilled.

Daniel 5:7-9 *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.*

Here we go again! Like Grandfather, like grandson. Belshazzar cries out for the astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers - the wise men. Yet, we see again who is not called! Daniel. The one who has the very spirit of the Living God. The king spoke, promising the wise men that whoever reads and interprets will be rewarded greatly! Purple is a symbol of royalty and royal favor, the gold chain represents riches, and third ruler in the kingdom – remember that Nabonadius, Belshazzar’s father is first king co-ruling with Belshazzar, second king. Therefore, the next is line is third king.

All of the wise men try, but they can’t read the writing and, as a result, can’t make an interpretation. Again, the false prophets, worshipping their false gods, fail. The king is greatly troubled, his countenance changes to a look of despair and fear, and his lords are astonished, having the idea of completely confused and perplexed.

Daniel 5:10-12 *The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, “O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father - your father the king - made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. 12 Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.”*

There is an uproar and the queen comes. Likely not one of Belshazzar’s wives. Quite likely, given her knowledge of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, this may be a wife of Nebuchadnezzar. The fact that she entered the banquet hall unbidden reveals much about her position of esteem in the kingdom. Lesser would have been killed. She reminds the king about Daniel – echoing what Nebuchadnezzar said in chapter 4 verse 9 *I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you* – She says - Daniel has in him is an excellent spirit! Call him for the interpretation.

Daniel 5:13-16 *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? 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.”*

Daniel is brought in before the king and the king asks, “Are you that Daniel?” I hope when people see me, when people see you, that they ask – are you that believer? 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.What higher praise could that possibly be than for someone to seek us out as a believer in Jesus? I’ve seen you and you have that Spirit of the Living God! Now we hear what is familiar to us by now - the wise men have failed – their false god and false religion is revealed again – that cannot read the message, much less interpret it. Daniel is asked to interpret.

Daniel is in his seventies. He has remained faithful, focused, and fearless. Life has not been easy, but it has most assuredly been blessed. May we be that believer that people flag down on the road, stop in the Walmart, call on the phone. May we be asked to intercede for others because people see the Spirit of the Living Christ dwelling within us. We won’t need gold chains, purple robes, or keys to an earthly kingdom. We will already be rich enough… in our relationship with almighty God.