***Daniel 5:17-31 17 Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. 19 And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. 21 Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. 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 rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. 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. 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. 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.***

We’re back tonight with Belshazzar and Daniel and 1000 lords in a great hall, looking at a plaster wall with writing on it, written there by a disembodied hand as the king watched. We left them two weeks ago after Belshazzar promised Daniel, servant of the Most High God, third place in the kingdom, in return for reading and interpreting the handwriting on the wall. Tonight, we’ll find out what the writing says and what it means. Once again, Daniel is able to read and interpret what God has communicated on by the Grace and good favor of God. He will speak a word of knowledge to yet another prideful king.

 Verse 17 *Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation.*Daniel gives not only a humble answer, but also an answer showing confidence in what God has written. He has seen the worthlessness and fruitlessness of earthly wealth. He knows that kingdoms come and go. He agrees to do the reading and interpretation, but also knows that Belshazzar’s kingdom, and Babylon, in done.

Verses 18-21 *O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. 19 And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. 21 Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. 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 rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.*We all recognize what Daniel is speaking of here. We studied these verses earlier. Quickly, Daniel recounts the story of Nebuchadnezzar, a king richly blessed by God, and God bringing the king to humility and acknowledgement of the fact that God alone appoints and removes. Daniel makes it plain, Pride was the problem with Nebuchadnezzar. Did anyone other than me smile when Daniel mentioned Nebuchadnezzar dwelling with the wild donkey’s? Pride will often make otherwise smart people dwell with donkey like associates.

Verses 22-24 “*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. 24 Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.* Pride was Nebuchadnezzar’s problem. Pride is our problem. Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Daniel tells Belshazzar – pride is your problem too. Belshazzar has followed the same path and has fallen into the same trap as his grandfather. He’s lifted up his heart against the Lord, desecrating the vessels of God’s Holy Temple in pagan worship.

When God cleanses us, sanctifying us through the blood of Christ, and we then return to things of this world, we too use a vessel God means for holiness and righteousness for unclean worship of false idols. Reverence for the things of God includes reverence for the vessel He has set apart.

Remember the dream Nebuchadnezzar had in Chapter 2 – an image with a head of gold, chest of silver. In study, we learned that this represented a succession of kingdoms. Babylon was represented by gold and the Medo-Persian empire represented by silver. An interesting thing to note here. Notice in verse 4 it says - *They drank wine, and praised the gods of* ***gold and silver****, bronze and iron, wood and stone.* Gold is first and silver second. But in verse 23, notice that the order of the metals – *And you have praised the gods of* ***silver and gold****, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know.* The order is reversed. Silver is first, gold second. It’s interesting because the Medes are at the door and will soon overrun Babylon. The Medes, represented by silver will indeed soon supplant the Babylonians represented by gold. The Bible is God’s inspired word – never discount the value of every word! A word moved has meaning.

Verses 25-28 *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.* Daniel now reads and interprets the writing on the wall. Mene, meaning numbered. God has numbered the days of Babylon. God has numbered the days and finished the kingdom of Babylon. This is a great reminder to us. We must redeem our time, as Colossians 4:5 says, numbering our days as Psalm 90:12 says *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.* God alone holds our life, knowing the ending from the beginning. Our time in heaven will be eternal. Our time here is not. Tekel – the kingdom has been weighed in the balance, humility, love, righteousness, and caring for the helpless, and come up short. Belshazzar and his wives, concubines, and 1000 lords have shown brazen rebellion against God, but they only represent what the kingdom has become.

In Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:3, Hannah says, *“Talk no more so very proudly; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, For the Lord is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed.* May we never forget that God weighs our actions and our words, looking upon the heart, bringing anything done in the dark into the light. May we never be found short.

Peres – is the singular of Upharsin, meaning pieces. God has numbered, found wanting, and divided Babylon into pieces, between the Medes and the Persians – Silver replaces the gold. Thus, we now have confirmed the head of the image in chapter 2 being gold is replaced by the shoulders which are silver. How beautiful and dependable is the Truth of God’s Word.

Verse 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.* Belshazzar keeps his word, even though Daniel did not want it and knew it’d be worthless soon.

Verse 30-31 *That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.* Belshazzar is slain that same night. Darius, king of the Medes takes the throne at age 62. Darius was uncle to Cyrus, king of the Persians. They allied to take Babylon. History tells us that Cyrus knew scaling or breaking through the walls wouldn’t work. Instead, Cyrus diverted the Euphrates river, which passed beneath the walls of Babylon. When the water level fell low enough, his army marched under the wall, found 2 gates that had been left open, giving him access to the city, even as Belshazzar and guests feasted. The king was executed and Darius ruled until he died at age 64. Isaiah prophesied of this 150 years earlier! Isaiah 44:27-28 says *Who says to the deep, ‘Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers’; 28 Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure,
Saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,” And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.* Isaiah 45 further confirm Cyrus and how the city will be taken. How do we know this? Herodotus wrote The Histories in the 5th century BC and told of how Cyrus dug 180-360 streams to divert water into basins, lowering the water levels. He further records that 2 gates were left ajar within the city, which gave Cyrus access to the city.

Our God is the God of fulfilled prophecies and kept promises. Babylon was measured and found lacking. God called Cyrus forth to release Israel from captivity. God fulfilled then and He fulfills now.

Daniel again shows himself to be fearless, focused, and faithful. He interprets the dream, knowing that the Medes and Persians were just outside the gates. He knows God will deliver him and, as we continue our study, we see God raise up Daniel in the eyes of Darius, just as God did in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar. When we serve God, we serve at His pleasure and do His will, trusting with certainty that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Matthew 24:45-46 *“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.* May Jesus find us serving and faithful when He makes His glorious return.