

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

“The Christian Church is not a moral agency. She is a regenerating agency. There are many moral agencies; the Church is not, she is supernatural, she is divine, she is filled with the Spirit; she converts men, she regenerates men, she is used of God to do it. The Church does not exist to produce good men. The Church exists to produce new men! You can be a good man without being a Christian at all.” [Martyn Lloyd Jones]

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com (blog)

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The Handwriting on the Wall

December 29th, 2024

Sermon Text: Daniel 5

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 2

Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

As we are about to enter into another new year, the doctrines found here in this account of a

haughty, idolatrous Babylonian king are very pertinent to our time. Kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall at the decree of the Sovereign Lord. That is the central theme of this book of Daniel.

We live in a time of great uncertainty – that is quite plain to any rational person. As much as we are thankful at the results of the last national election, there is still anxiety. Why? Because the devil is always working to oppose righteousness. He works to oppose

the kingdom of God whenever and wherever he can.

Last week Verla and I watched a 4 hour long documentary on the life of Theodore Roosevelt and I highly recommend it to you. While certainly imperfect as all great figures are, TR as they called him worked tirelessly against incredible depths of corruption. You cannot fail to see that the Lord protected him – even when an attempted assassin shot him in the chest. But there were many, many enemies throughout government – (the deep state is nothing new), and in the high places of finance, all the while terrible conditions existed in the tenements of New York just across town from the mansions of the wealthy such as J.P. Morgan, the Rockefellers, and others. Coal barons exploited the poor miners – and Roosevelt fought against these things.

But behind it all – who is orchestrating it? The devil. And nothing has changed today. One thing is certain about this new year of 2025 – there will be wars and rumors of wars, there will be

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wicked attacks upon the righteous, there will be corruption in our government.

But this book of Daniel tells us something else that we must not fail to see. *There is Someone else at work unseen, and this One holds ultimate and absolute authority.* He sees it all, and *He is not going to permit evil to continue indefinitely. He is sovereign. He raises up rulers and He brings them down. Kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall – BUT, there is a Kingdom even now that is growing. And it is going to grow until it fills the entire universe. It is an eternal kingdom ruled by a King who is eternal.*

Psalm 118:22-23 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. (23) This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

Follow along now as we read this 5th chapter of Daniel and watch as the Lord brings down a mighty kingdom and its king –

Dan 5:1-12 King Belshazzar made a great feast for a **thousand** of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. (2) Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. (3) Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God 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, iron, wood, and stone.**

(5) **Immediately** the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. (6) **Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.** (7) The king called

loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

(8) Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. (9) **Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.**

(10) The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, "O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. (11) There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. 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, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, (12) because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

You will recall that the Babylonians under king Nebuchadnezzar, had besieged Jerusalem and taken captives away to Babylon, Daniel and his friends being among them. They also stole implements from the Temple there which were used in the service of the Lord.

Dan 1:1-2 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. (2) And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.

This was done, of course to mock the God of Israel, making the claim that the Babylonian gods were superior.

Here then is Nebuchadnezzar's son, *who knew very well how the Lord had humbled his father*, in this huge, drunken feast, setting out to mock the Lord even further. It is very interesting that surely there must have been other vessels which had been seized from the cities and temples of other conquered people, yet Belshazzar focusing specifically upon those from Jerusalem. This is Satan's doings. Belshazzar commands, and the vessels of the Lord are brought.

NOTE: It is probable that the city of Babylon was at this time under siege by the Medes and Persians. Yet Belshazzar and his nobles were apparently of the notion that it was impossible for anyone to penetrate their defenses. So here they are partying on.

Daniel tells us specifically what the motive was:

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

In other words, they were praising their idols – gods of their own making – gods which were nothing more than metal or wood. And they were doing so in a way so as to mock God. But God is not mocked, as they are about to see:

Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared.

Apparently illumined by a lampstand for all to see, this vision struck terror into the king – and no doubt into all the huge crowd. Things would have become very quiet after perhaps some initial shocked gasps. There was the hand, and there now was the inscription it wrote on probably a white plaster wall.

The Scriptures record a previous time when the hand of God wrote words – it was at Sinai in the giving of His Law. When the Lord writes something, the thing is done.

Exo 31:18 And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

What is written is certain. It is final. The Law of God. This decree against Belshazzar. And for us – the Lord Himself writing His Law upon our hearts when we are born again.

There is emphasis here upon the king's reaction. He is terrified. So much so that his face turned white and he began to shake. Even his thoughts terrified him – this was the Spirit of God, the terror of the Lord coming upon him.

NOTE: The Apostle Paul tells us that the sinner has no fear of God. But let's all be sure – there will come a time when everyone who has lived their life refusing to acknowledge God, mocking Him, treating His Church as an unholy vessel to be trampled upon, be very sure that a time will most certainly come when the fear of God will

sweep over them just as it did Belshazzar. The terror of the Lord will be visited upon them.

Recently I was in a store and there was a man some 60 years old or so with an absolutely foul mouth. He was blasphemous and arrogant, thinking obviously that his wicked speech make him look like a big man. In fact, it just labeled him as a fool. He had no fear of God. *But one day he will!* Our God is a consuming fire and it is a terrifying thing to fall into His hands for judgment.

Much as his father had done, Belshazzar calls for his wise men and promises them great reward if they could interpret the words on the wall. Of course none of them could.

It is interesting that the Lord chose to write words in apparently a language no one there could understand. It could well be that it was no earthly language, one which only a real prophet of the Lord could read. Once more the gods and priests of Babylon were found to be frauds.

NOTE: God's Word is illegible to the wicked.

Isa 29:10-12 For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers). (11) And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." (12) And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read."

This is why Jesus spoke in parables and it is true today that sinners need a preacher to show them:

Rom 10:14-15 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (15) And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the

feet of those who preach the good news!”

The queen, being wiser than the king, enters at this point and reminds him of his father’s experience with Daniel. They are all still idolaters – even the queen simply describes Daniel as a man in whom “the spirit of the holy gods” dwells. None of them had arrived at the truth – that there is only one true God.

Let’s read on:

Dan 5:13-17 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, “You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. (14) I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. (15) Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the

matter. (16) But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. 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.” (17) Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation.

Daniel knows that the king is a fool – he had no doubt realized this long before. His response to the king’s offer of wealth and power is classic-

Let your gifts be for yourself and give your rewards to another.

Before that night was over, as Daniel no doubt knew, Belteshazzar would not be giving rewards to anyone!

NOTE: No earthly reward or position is superior to the

indescribable gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must never envy anyone or covet anything in this world. Daniel's humility was a result of knowing that Christ and His kingdom are what matters – not even the highest position in the greatest kingdom of this world. Coveting position and fame is a curse which plagues the church. We all very much need the clarity Daniel possessed – “O king, keep your gifts.” We must take care not to fall to flattery or to a desire to be exalted in this world.

Now we see Daniel's courage as he stands before this king, and this is what he tells him:

Dan 5:18-23 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. (19) And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled.

(20) **But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him.** (21) He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.

(22) **And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this,** (23) but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in 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, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand

is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

- Your father was king because the true Most High God gave him kingship
- But he became filled with pride, controlled by it
- Therefore the Most High God brought him down and removed his throne and glory
- You know very well, Belshazzar, that your father was out in the fields for 7 years as a beast
- And he remained there *until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.*
- And YOU, Belshazzar, YOU knew all of this and in spite of that, you not only have lifted yourself up, you have exalted yourself *against the Lord, in whose hand is your very breath.*

NOTE: As we consider this description of Belshazzar's sin, do we not see the same evil in the hearts of sinners today? Proud,

arrogant, knowing God yet refusing to honor him? Belshazzar saw that handwriting on the wall – but it is also written for everyone today who arrogantly mocks God. *There comes a time when the Lord writes the day when the unrepentant sinner's doom is final. And once it is written, it is done.* They will have no excuse. Their time has run out.

Dan 5:24-31 “Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. (25) And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN.

(26) This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end;

(27) TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting;

(28) PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

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

(30) That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. (31) And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Many of you have probably heard of Victor Davis Hanson. He recently wrote a book entitled, *The End of Everything: How Wars Descend into Annihilation*. He begins it with this:

“There are lots of ways that states and their peoples can vanish from history, and all sorts of causes explain their disappearance. Both nature – earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, plagues and climate change – and humans sometimes wipe out vulnerable populations. Indeed, entire cultures have often been obliterated, sometimes quickly, sometimes over decades.

Yet this book focuses on the rarer abrupt *wartime* destruction of a civilization, a state, or a culture through force of arms. The conclusions warn the modern world, America included, that it is hardly immune from repeating these tragedies of the past.

And so it was with Belshazzar and the kingdom of Babylon. *That very night*. Why? Because God decreed it. He numbered Babylon’s days and pronounced them ended, He weighed Belshazzar in the scale of righteousness and Belshazzar came up short, and thus his kingdom was handed over to the Medes and the Persians. *That very night Belshazzar was killed* by the God he had mocked.

God raises up kings and kingdoms, and He removes kings and kingdoms. He can do so, and has done so, in a moment. Kingdoms which appeared to be indestructible have fallen with astonishing rapidity. It is therefore in the Lord that we must always place our trust. We are excited about 2025 and about the damage done by the unrighteous rule of the last 4 years

being corrected. But we must not place our ultimate trust in any man. We must not think that America will surely last forever – though we certainly hope that should the Lord delay His return, America will be a blessing to our children and their children.

The day will come, we can be certain, when this nation of ours will be no more. We know this because we know that this *world* will be no more. And we know that for a short season that evil one-world empire of Antichrist will come to power.

Belshazzar and his nobles were just like the scoffers Peter described:

2Pe 3:3-4 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. (4) They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

“All things are continuing as they were....” But that very night it all came crashing down. The party was over. The handwriting was on the wall. And so it will be, one day, with this evil world and the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ will reign forever and ever. This is where our hope is.