**The Writing on the Wall: The Judgment of God and Mankind’s Accountability**

**Daniel 5:10-23**

 Good morning to you all! I am humbled to be with you this morning and to have the honor of studying the Word of the Lord with you. Today we are continuing our study of the 5th chapter of Daniel. This is the 2nd part of the three-part message where we will be unwrapping the lessons Scripture is teaching through the experience of King Belshazzar of Babylon. As we discussed last week the king was having a wild party with all of his officials as well as his wives and concubines. During the party the king decides to have the holy vessels from the temple in Jerusalem brought out so they could drink out of them and pay honor to the false gods of Babylon. After this takes place, the hand appears and begins writing on the wall. This is when the king begins to fear what he is seeing and then uses the sources he knows of to get an interpretation for the writing. As we concluded in verse 9, we saw that his wise men were unable to give him any help. Today we will continue with verse 10 and then conclude with verse 23. In today’s passage we will discover how the king will eventually get the information he needs as well as learn a valuable lesson regarding the way God demands to be honored by His creation. This passage will also show us four lessons we can learn that will help us as we daily walk with Christ through this life. The first lesson we will learn is that God sometimes sends us His wisdom using unexpected messengers reminding us that in times of uncertainty we need to rely on Godly wisdom rather than human understanding. Secondly, we will learn that it is during times of chaos that we are drawn to God’s wisdom. We need to remember that God uses those times of challenge to draw us to Him. Our third lesson is that we must stand firm in truth and in humility realizing that our eternal reward is with God in heaven. Finally, we will learn that all people are accountable in how they respond to the Gospel reminding us that we must take the warning given by God in Scripture very carefully. Today we will read our Scripture in four smaller sections.

**1. God Uses Unexpected Messengers to Bring Wisdom in Confusing Situations (vv. 10-12)**

“10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen began to speak and said, “O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—appointed him chief of the soothsayer priests, sorcerers, Chaldeans, and diviners. 12 This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of riddles, and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation.”

 In the beginning to the passage, we have the queen enter the hall to provide the king with a solution to his problem. What we need to know is that the queen mentioned here is not the wife of Belshazzar, rather this is the queen mother who would have been the queen to King Nebuchadnezzar. The reason we can come to this conclusion is because her testimony regarding Daniel is coming from a person who had first-hand knowledge of him and his actions during the previous monarchy. She begins by encouraging the king by telling him that he does not have to have anxiety over this situation because there is a source that can provide him with all the information he needs. Daniel is explained to have the wisdom of the gods in him and the queen mother is giving him a reference so that the king will trust him just as she does. There is no doubt that Daniel can do what the king needs, so she instructs to summon him without delay.

 In this first section of the passage, we find that God chooses to use an unexpected messenger to provide a solution to this situation. It is through the actions of the queen that God will orchestrate the resolution to the king’s dilemma. In what way was the queen an unexpected messenger? She was not the person whom the king had gone to in order to get the answers he desired. In the room there was a large group of very well-educated men who had been called in because they had wisdom to handle situations such as this. When they had failed to perform the task, the queen entered with another solution. This was not a solution that Belshazzar had considered, so this makes her an unexpected messenger.

 Our first lesson today is that God chooses to make Himself known and to handle confusing situations in ways that you and I might not always see. There are several examples in Scripture where God provides a solution or gives wisdom to His people in ways they were not expecting. Let’s take a few moments to look at two examples. In the book of Numbers chapter 22 verses 21-34 we have the account of Balaam and his donkey. Balaam was a prophet of God who had been asked by the King of Moab to put a curse on the Israelites because he was afraid of their numbers and because of what God had done to the Amorite people. God told Balaam that he could not curse Israel since they are His people. The King of Moab’s officials would not take no for an answer, so they made Balaam go with them to the king. As he was riding his donkey an angel of Lord appeared on the path barring them from going forward. However, only the donkey saw the angel. After refusing to move forward three times and Balaam hitting the donkey with his stick the Lord allowed the donkey to speak. She basically asked him why he was hitting her? To make the story shorter, Balaam was able to see the angel after the donkey spoke to him. God used the unexpected messenger of a donkey to get Balaam’s attention so that he would not do something foolish against the people of God.

 Our second example comes from the book of Jonah where God takes a reluctant prophet like Jonah and uses him to take the message to Nineveh that unless they repented, God would destroy them because of their sins. Jonah was an unexpected messenger not just because he hesitated to take the message to Nineveh, but because he had such a strong hatred for the Assyrian people. Once again in this situation, God took an unexpected messenger and used him to share His word with others. We could mention others like the Wise Men who visited the young Jesus or the Widow of Zarephath who provided bread for the prophet Elijah with only grain and oil. God uses many unexpected ways to get the attention of His people meaning that He may call you or I to share His good news with someone who we might never consider speaking with. He can use anyone who is willing to be used for His purposes.

**2. Times of chaos will draw us to God’s wisdom (vv. 13-16)**

“13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king began speaking and said to Daniel, “Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14 Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight, and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. 15 Just now the wise men and the sorcerers were brought in before me to read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message. 16 But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.”

 As we look closely at this second section of the passage, we find that the king calls for Daniel to be brought in to interpret the writing on the wall not because the king had respect for Daniel or for God, but because he was desperate for an answer. This desperation shows us how many times mankind is forced to come to God and accept His wisdom because of the actions of God, not because man wants to rely on God for that wisdom. It is when the chaotic moments of life hit us that cause us to stop, reflect and then remember that it is only with the wisdom of God that we are going to be able to make it through that situation. We find this happening to the children of Israel after they had entered the Promised Land and had defeated their enemies. In the book of Judges, the nation of Israel was constantly forgetting the Lord who would then allow them to be controlled by another nation. Only after years of being under the yoke of another nation would they cry out to God and ask for His deliverance. Look with me in your bulletin at Judges 10:10-16 ***“10 Then the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord, saying, “We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have abandoned our God and served the Baals.” 11 And the Lord said to the sons of Israel, “Did I not save you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines? 12 And when the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites oppressed you, you cried out to Me, and I saved you from their hands. 13 Yet you abandoned Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer save you. 14 Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them save you in the time of your distress.” 15 Then the sons of Israel said to the Lord, “We have sinned, do to us whatever seems good to You; only please save us this day.” 16 So they removed the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord; and He could no longer endure the misery of Israel.”*** What we learn from this passage is that God had to use other nations to put Israel under harsh treatment so that the people would cry out and return to Him. God intervened to bring restoration to His people because if He had not done so they would have gone their own way which would have led to their destruction.

 One more point that needs to be made before moving on is that our Lord Jesus Christ offers us rest in Him and that we can take on the chaotic times of life when we rest in Him. Please read with me ***Matthew 11:28-30 “28 ‘Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is comfortable, and My burden is light.’”***God will take measures to make His people look to Him for delivery, but as Jesus reminds us, He is gentle and humble in heart. He desires that all would come to repentance. Unfortunately, we know that is not the case and there will be many who will reject Him. We have hope that our Lord will give us rest when we place our faith in Him.

**3. Stand in the Truth with Confidence and Humility (vv. 17-21)**

“17 Then Daniel replied and said before the king, ‘Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him. 18 O king, the Most-High God granted sovereignty, greatness, honor, and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. 19 Now because of the greatness which He granted him, all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages trembled and feared in his presence; whomever he wished, he killed, and whomever he wished, he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated, and whomever he wished he humbled. 20 But when his heart was arrogant and his spirit became so overbearing that he behaved presumptuously, he was deposed from his royal throne, and his dignity was taken away from him. 21 He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of animals, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he recognized that the Most-High God is ruler over the realm of mankind, and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.’”

 Daniel begins his analysis for the king by refusing to accept the rewards that were promised to him in verse 16. This humility shown by Daniel gives us the proof that Daniel was not willing to take the credit for interpreting the writing. He wanted to use this opportunity to give all glory to God for the ability to do it. Not only does Daniel show a very strong humility while in service to the kings of Babylon, but he also exhibits a confidence before these kings showing that he was very comfortable standing in front of these kings and speaking the truth to them regardless of what kind of news he would have to share with them. In verses 18-21 Daniel restates for the king the experience of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar and all of the things that took place with him because of God’s judgment. What Daniel is doing here is giving King Belshazzar a very stern warning by reminding him that it was because of pride that his grandfather had experienced such a harsh judgment. What we need to take from these verses is that the warning that was given to King Belshazzar is not only a warning for him, but it is also a warning for all mankind. Every man and woman who has lived, who is living now and those who will come in the future will be held accountable for how they respond to the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Scripture is very clear that all people must respond to the good news by either accepting or rejecting it.

 Let us look specifically at how Scripture addresses this topic. Please read with me Romans 15:4 ***“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”*** The Apostle Paul is telling his readers that everything God has provided for us in His Word is for our instruction so that we will have hope in Him. Scripture has been provided as instructions for living that gives us all we need to live in a way that is pleasing to God. It is the truth and serves as a guide for our walk. Not only this, but Scripture records the examples of those who lived in the past so that we may learn from their lives. Paul writes these words to the Corinthian Church ***“10 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our fathers were all under the cloud and they all passed through the sea; 2 and they all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and they all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased; for their dead bodies were spread out in the wilderness.***

***6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they indeed craved them. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: ‘The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.’ 8 Nor are we to commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. 9 Nor are we to put the Lord to the test, as some of them did, and were killed by the snakes. 10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”*** Paul is making the point that if we take the words of Scripture seriously, we will learn from the mistakes of those who came before us so that we do not make those same mistakes. As every history teacher says “those who do not study history are doomed to repeat the same mistakes.” May we be confident as we speak the truth remembering with humility that had it not been for the grace of God we would be lost as well.

**4. Ignoring Warnings Has Consequences (vv. 22-23)**

22 Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, 23 but you have risen up against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives, and your concubines have been drinking wine out of them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see, nor hear, nor understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified.

 As we conclude our passage of study today, we see Daniel telling the king that since he knew about the things that happened to the previous king, but chose to ignore them, there will now be consequences on his kingdom. As we just said in the previous section there are consequences for those who know the truth and choose to ignore rather than heed the warnings of God. What we need to do with the closing moments we have together is look at the words of Scripture so that we can take the lessons learned and apply them in our lives. In Romans 1:18-21 Paul writes these words ***“18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, being understood by what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their reasonings, and their senseless hearts were darkened.”*** These verses tell us that God has revealed everything to us that we need to have to know of His existence and that He has revealed the truth to all people by providing the proof through creation, which is known as natural revelation. The reason that mankind rejects the truth of God, according to Paul, is because man chooses to suppress the truth in unrighteousness. This means that man would rather live according to his own truth rather than the truth of God. The consequence is that man became futile in their thinking and began to live in rebellion against the truth of God. This is exactly what King Belshazzar did when he chose to take the vessels and use them to worship false gods. He knew the truth of God that had been shown to his grandfather, but rather than accept the truth he chose to suppress that knowledge and rebel against God. This is a danger that we must not allow to happen to us as the Nankin Community Church. May we continue the faith left for us by the Apostles and follow their example. May we be united in solidarity by standing on the authority of Scripture, may we continue to share the truth that in Jesus Christ and in Him only is there salvation and finally may we continually gather as God’s people testifying to His great works and proclaiming the Good News of the gospel in all that we say and do.