

THE MOST HIGH DANIEL 4:17

This morning we'll read one verse - then we'll study three chapters... Daniel 4:17, "The decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men."

On December 13, 2003 American GIs conducted an operation near the Iraqi town of Tikrit. They opened up a spider hole - a narrow pit about six feet deep.

At the bottom of the hole they found the world's most wanted villain, Sadaam Hussein, ex-President of Iraq.

The manhunt was over. A year earlier Sadaam had been living in Baghdad palaces surrounded by opulence and creature comforts. How ironic to find him now living like a rodent, hidden in a burrowed cave.

It took three years to try Sadaam and convict him.

He was found guilty of *crimes against humanity*, and sentenced to be hung. His last meal was chicken, rice, and hot water with a touch of honey. He was taken to the gallows and executed. *The mighty had fallen.*

In his heyday, Sadaam Hussein had stylized himself after the character of today's lesson, Nebuchadnezzar.

He hailed himself "the new Nebuchadnezzar." Said it was his destiny to restore the glory of ancient Babylon.

And he was well underway when Coalition Forces took him down. He had rebuilt the palace, the Marduk Gate, several temples, and the ancient amphitheater.

The symbolic end of Sadaam's kingdom came when soldiers pulled over his statue in the heart of Baghdad.

In the ensuing days, the Ruler who'd lived in palaces would hide out in a spider hole. The scene harkened back 2500 years ago to events recorded in Daniel.

The first King Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon from 605 to 562 BC - four decades. At the famous battle of Carchemish his armies conquered the Assyrians and drove Egypt beyond the Nile. *The world was now his...*

During Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Babel, the birthplace of idolatry, reached its zenith. The city was surrounded by double walls 90' high and 22' thick.

You could turn a 4-horse chariot on top of the wall.

The Euphrates River flowed under the fortifications, supplying the city its water, and allowing it to grow its own food. Babylon was viewed as impregnable.

Nebuchadnezzar adorned the city with beautiful temples, and boasted of a 700 room palace.

He built **the hanging gardens** as a gift to his wife.

They were referred to by the Greek historian, Herodotus, as **"one of the seven wonders of the world."**

In Daniel 2 this Nebuchadnezzar has a dream. He needs help interpreting it - but he's been suspicious of the so-called magicians and sooth-sayers in his court.

They're on the payroll, but he wonders if they're not *making stuff up*. This time he tests their legitimacy.

If their divine connections are real they'll be able to *recount his dream* - as well as *give its interpretation*.

Of course, this exposes the king's wise men. They're not so wise after all. Nebuchadnezzar is about to clean house, when Daniel hears of what's happened...

Daniel comes home and prays to the true God. The Lord reveals to him the dream and its interpretation.

And I love how Daniel thanks God... In 2:20 he cries out, "**Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings... He reveals deep and secret things.**" Notice his observation, "*He removes kings and raises up kings.*"

Daniel is a faithful Jew living in the Mecca of idolatry.

He's a teenager, barely needing to shave. Jerusalem had been invaded and Daniel forcibly uprooted from family, and friends, and all that was familiar - and taken as a POW half way around the world to a pagan place.

If there was any resentment, *and I'm sure there was*, he had to get over it quickly. For he's now expected to serve Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon in the royal court.

Back home, Daniel had been part of a godly community, now he's in **a believing minority** - in a land hostile to his faith. In Babylon, his God, the true God, is considered one of many gods. Daniel walks amidst temples dedicated to various idols who've been given credit for Babylon's many victories. Yet Daniel knows the

truth. He's never stopped believing that His God is He, who *“removes kings and raises up kings.”*

Daniel knew other Scriptures that affirmed God's sovereignty over kings, and idols, and nations...

Psalm 22:28, *“For the kingdom is the LORD's, and He rules over the nations.”*

Psalm 115:3, *“Our God is in the heaven; He does whatever He pleases.”*

Psalm 47:8, *“God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.”* Daniel lived through defeat, exile, dispersion - at the lowest ebb in the history of God's people. *Yet he never lost sight of God's sovereignty over all things. His God was the Most High.*

Even though the people of Israel had been marginalized, the God of Israel could never be...

In fact, Daniel knew that it was God who had raised up Nebuchadnezzar to bring judgment against His own land of Judah. He read Habakkuk 1:5-6, *“Look among the nations and watch - be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans (or Babylonians), a bitter and hasty nation..”*

Daniel knew that even though he occupied **minority status** - and though his faith was not in fashion with the surrounding culture - God was still on the throne!

His God, the God of the Bible, still called the shots.

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the king saw an image of a man: his head was gold, his chest and arms silver, his torso bronze, his legs iron, and his feet iron mixed with

clay. A supernatural stone struck the image at its feet, and the whole statue crumbled into pieces.

The medals from the image were scattered, while the stone grew into a huge mountain that filled the Earth.

Daniel begins his interpretation in 2:37, “You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory...”

You are this head of gold...” Nebuchadnezzar ruled what was history’s most golden and glorious empire.

But Daniel was faithful to remind him that it had been given to him, and was on loan, by the “God of heaven.”

And he would not rule forever... inferior kingdoms would follow... the silver of the Medo-Persians, the bronze Greeks, the iron Romans - even the iron and clay mixture of a last days empire, yet to be seen.

As it turns out, the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream represented the span of human government.

It ends when the *Messiah - that supernatural stone* - strikes a death-blow and causes the image to crumble.

Messiah’s reign is mountain-like and encompasses the Earth. And in just this manner, the kingdoms of mankind will become the Kingdom of God and Christ.

Over the centuries Bible students have studied the details of this dream and marveled at its accuracy.

But make no mistake about its original purpose. This was a shot across Babylon's bow. It was a warning to Nebuchadnezzar and his successors not to take their power for granted. *God in heaven* is the ultimate Ruler.

At times He may choose to remain behind the scenes, but He moves all the scenes that He is behind.

And Nebuchadnezzar got the point... *sort of...*

Daniel 2:46 tells us, *“(he) fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel... and said, “Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets...”*

He then promoted Daniel over all his wise men.

But this Nebuchadnezzar was a slow learner. That he was the head of gold in his dream spoke of *his glory*, but it could've just as easily described *his hard-headedness*. For in chapter 3 he makes a gold image of himself, and requires all men to bow and worship.

His image was in direct defiance to God's revelation.

And when Daniel's three friends refuse to bow to the image, and he tosses them into the furnace, *once again Nebuchadnezzar encounters the living God...*

God's Son appears in the fire to rescue the Hebrews who defied the king's authority, and stood up for God.

This time in response, Nebuchadnezzar makes it a crime to speak a negative word against Daniel's God.

His decree is a step in the right direction, but the king still hasn't humbled himself under the Most High God.

Which brings us to one of the most remarkable passages in all the Bible. Daniel 4 was written not by a Hebrew judge, or prophet, or disciple - but by a pagan king in an idolatrous land - *“Nebuchadnezzar” himself!*

Before Daniel 4 was a chapter in your Bible it was an Imperial edict read all across the Babylonian empire...

Chapter 4 is the witness of Sadaam Hussein, Sr.

Verse 1, *“Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth...”*

This was a multi-cultural, multi-national message.

The Emperor writes, *“I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. How great are His signs, and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.”*

King Nebuchadnezzar wants the world to know that among all its idols and kings, there is a *Most High God*.

Nebuchadnezzar's trouble started at a time when he was *“flourishing in (his) palace...”* Then, verse 5, *“I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me...”*

Nebuchadnezzar saw a tall, strong tree - leafy and fruity. It was prosperous! Beast and birds came from all over to settle under its shade, and to live off its fruit.

In verse 14 we're told "a watcher" - another name for an angel - "cried aloud..." It's interesting that the angels *ARE watching*. They're observing us. Apparently, our failures and successes are lessons to the angels.

And it was one of these watchers who cried, "Chop down the tree and cut off its branches... nevertheless leave the stump... let it be wet with the dew... and let *him* graze with the beasts... let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times (or years) pass over him..."

And then our text, verse 17, "This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men."

Daniel instantly knew the meaning of this dream, and it upset him. He cared for Nebuchadnezzar and his subjects. The man was his boss. He had an empire to run. Daniel shuttered at the implications of this vision...

God was going to humble Nebuchadnezzar. *The head of gold will turn ill in the head*. He'll be humbled by a mental illness that'll cause him to act like a beast.

Nebuchadnezzar had stood tall and proud, now he'll be made a stump. He'll crawl aimlessly on all fours.

Earlier, Daniel was tempted to eat the king's finest delicacies, now for seven years the king's diet will be weeds and grass - not a good kind of vegetarianism.

In 4:27, Daniel lovingly, yet boldly pleads with Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; **break off your sins** by being righteous, and your

iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity...”

Notice, Daniel didn't say, “O king, You Can Have Your Best Life Now...” Or “O king, Eat the Cookie and Buy the Shoes...” He didn't soften up God's demands.

Daniel knew God was angry with Nebuchadnezzar, *as He is with everyone who goes through life turning a deaf ear to His will.* The king needs to “*break off his sins*” - stop His rebellious ways - learn to be merciful.

And this is God's Word to all people regardless of their *orientations* or *choices*... “*break off your sin.*” Put a fork in it! Slam on the brakes. Force an abrupt stop.

Sadly though, the king didn't accept Daniel's advice.

And about a year later, as he was strolling around his palace, boasting of the greatness of His achievements. He blurted out, “*Is not this great Babylon, that I have built...*” And verse 31 tells us, “*While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven* (like a heavy coconut falling out of a palm tree... **thud**): “*King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men... be with the beasts of the field... eat grass like oxen...*” And “*that very hour the word was fulfilled...*”

Verse 33, “*His body was wet with dew... his hair had grown like eagles' feathers... his nails like birds' claws.*”

Imagine President Obama disappearing for seven months... *No speeches. No public appearances. No photo-ops. Nothing but silence from Camp David...*

Except at night... A few daring reporters have seen a shadowy figure, running on all fours, chewing grass...

Washington's inner circle is shrouded with secrecy!

Imagine, if that happened... The White House *press corps* would be in an *uproar*. Yet, Nebuchadnezzar's insanity didn't last seven months, but seven long years.

It's interesting that there're recognized psychological conditions that fit Nebuchadnezzar's symptoms...

Boanthropy is when a human thinks he's an **ox**.

Cyanthropy is when a person thinks he's a **dog**.

And **Lycanthropy** is when he thinks he's a **wolf**.

My 20 month-old grandson, Quincy, has *Elephant-thorpy*. He stick his arm in front of his nose, then he waves his trunk, and likes to make elephant sounds...

But how do you envision a fall this severe? To me, again, the best example is Sadaam Hussein...

At the pinnacle of his power, Sadaam was called, "**The Lion of Babylon, Anointed One, Glorious Leader, successor of Nebuchadnezzar, the modern Saladin...**"

But they fished him out of a hole in the ground like a gopher, inspected his hair for lice, and swabbed his mouth for DNA - how's that for a fall - *from glory to grovel*. This is what happened to Nebuchadnezzar.

It's no surprise that Babylonian historians make no mention of the humbling of King Nebuchadnezzar.

There was no such thing as a free press in ancient times. Journalists who wrote negative stories about the king had their fingers or hands amputated, *or worse*.

There was a Greek historian, Abydenus, who wrote of Nebuchadnezzar some years later - 268 BC. He said the king had been “possessed by some god,” and had “immediately disappeared.” That fits biblical text...

Jewish tradition tells us that it was Daniel who cared for the king while he was “out to pasture.” Daniel must have used his political clout to insure the king’s return.

In 4:34 the king finishes his testimony, “At the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever... He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand...” *...not even a Babylonian king.*

And you’ve got to love the chapter’s last line. It was penned by the most powerful man on the planet at the time. “Those who walk in pride he is able to put down.”

Donald Barnhouse use to say, “Christ sends none away empty, but those who are full of themselves.”

God had emptied Nebuchadnezzar of himself.

What a beautiful witness of brokenness and humility.

Nebuchadnezzar reminds me of Psalm 51:17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart - these, O God, You will not despise.”

I believe one day we’ll meet Nebuchadnezzar in heaven. He surrendered His will to God. He learned that every king has a King! The name he coins for God in verse 34 reveals it all. He calls God, “*the Most High.*”

As we've mentioned the last two weeks, Daniel was part of a believing **minority!** He was exclusively devoted to God in a multi-cultural, pluralistic society.

The Babylonians were exclusively devoted to no one. They believed in *every god* and *no god*. They used religion to control the masses and further their politics. But convictions weren't part of their make-up...

Daniel and friends though were different. They were men of faith even in the midst of secular surroundings.

I like this observation by author Eugene Peterson...

“Eighteen hundred years or so of Hebrew history, capped by a full exposition in Jesus Christ, tell us that God's revelation of himself is rejected far more often than it's accepted - it's dismissed by far more people than embrace it - and it's been either attacked or ignored by every major culture or civilization in which it has given its witness: *magnificent Egypt, fierce Assyria, beautiful Babylon, artistic Greece, political Rome, Enlightenment France, Nazi Germany, Renaissance Italy, Marxist Russia, Maoist China, and pursuit-of-happiness America...* The community of God's people has survived in all of these cultures and civilizations but always as a **minority**, always marginal to the mainstream, never statistically significant.”

What's happening in America today is nothing that hasn't occurred in all cultures at one time or another.

It wasn't just Daniel in Babylon - *nor is it just you in your office...* More often than not, real Christians constitute a minority. A culture that supports Christian faith and values is the exception rather than the rule.

And the stories we've read this morning reveal **three truths** that are vital for believers living in the **minority**.

First, even though the numbers and mood of the culture may be against us, **our God is still in charge!**

Write this principle down... **God is still in charge!**

Several years ago, British researchers went door-to-door asking fellow Brits about their belief in God.

Here's one of their questions: "Do you believe in a God who intervenes in human history, who changes the course of affairs, who performs miracles, etc.?"

One man's response stood out. He answered, "No, I don't believe in that God; I believe in the ordinary God."

Well, if *the ordinary God* is impotent, and apathetic, and uninvolved - then He isn't the one, true God.

The real God is **extraordinary** - and we can't forget that truth when everyone around us is against Him.

God is in charge! He's the One who determines the course of events, and is ultimately the final authority!

Let me add to the Scriptures I read earlier that speak of God's sovereignty over the nations... Proverbs 21:1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes."

Rulers are often proud, hard, and stubborn - but God has means... He knows how to turn hearts His way.

The personal crisis of public figures is often hidden.

We don't see what the President endures with his kids, or the heartbreak the movie star feels... A guy hits a lot of homers, *who knew he had marital problems?*

But God knew! Psalm 103:14 tells us, "God knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust." We're all human. *Hey, even Barack and Michelle snip at each other at times.* We all have troubles. No one is exempt.

Ben Franklin put it, "The greatest monarch, on the proudest throne, is obliged to sit on his own rear end."

And the sovereign God can get even the most prominent people's attention... *like Nebuchadnezzar!*

He can wake up a king to his spiritual hunger... or cause your boss to recognize His need for God... or spin that prodigal around on his heels and bring him back home... *God orchestrates every circumstance!*

The **second** truth we glean from these chapters in Daniel is that even though we're a minority, God's providence **positions us to make a strategic impact.**

Our lives are like chess pieces on a giant board.

We just don't always realize it's the Father's fingers around our lives, and He's making strategic moves.

I'm sure there were days Daniel moaned, "Lord, **why am I here? My heart is in Jerusalem, not in this pagan place!**" Yet God had purposes for him in Babylon - just as He has reasons for positioning you where He has.

Daniel's convictions and godly character allowed God to promote him to influential and important posts.

Daniel was just one man - but oh, the difference he made. In Jerusalem he would've been useful, but in Babylon, God used him to steer worldwide events...

If you don't think there's power in the minority - even in One - let a single mosquito into your tent and spend the night with you! It'll prove how powerful One can be.

When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white person this one lady became a civil rights symbol that exposed the evils of segregation.

She was one person, but she made a big difference.

It's often not *how many* - but it's *who we are* and *where we're placed* that matters. As a true believer you may be a minority at work, or in your family - but that doesn't mean God won't use you in a major way!

And the **third** lesson in these stories, is that God often uses the minority **to speak prophetically**, and sound a warning, to the people who live around them.

This is what we see happen over and over again with Daniel. He's johnny-on-the-spot with the interpretation.

He became God's spokesperson to emperors...

Surely, Daniel wasn't the most popular person in times of prosperity. It was good he never had to run for office, he wouldn't have garnered a majority of votes.

Daniel spoke the truth - *not what tickled your ears*.

Yet in a crisis the king knew who's number to call. *I'm sure Nebuchadnezzar had Daniel in his iPhone.*

And this is true of believers even when they're in the minority. If we had to court the favor of the majority we'd consult opinion polls and tailor our message accordingly... But when you're in the minority from the start, you have nothing to lose in telling the truth.

Daniel wasn't trying to make points with the king, or climb a political ladder, or launch his own campaign.

He was a Hebrew biding his time in a strange land.

And this is our status! This world is not our home. We long for a heavenly city. In this life we'll always be somewhat of a misfit. Our job is to point others to God.

When people hurt and look for answers, our job is to speak **prophetically** - speak *for God, at God's leading*.

Think back on your life... some of the best advice you've ever received wasn't so much *what was said*, as *when it was said*... Your heart was soft. The pump was primed. It was *the right word at the right time!*

Perhaps you'd just lost your job... or your child was in trouble... or your marriage was on the rocks... or you faced a serious illness... God used a friend to speak a timely word to you. When our friends go through similar circumstances we need to be prepared to speak out.

The Christian Minority should realize God has us in the culture for this purpose - *to speak to those around us when life causes them to be receptive to the truth...*

Well, I want to look at one more story in Daniel 5 - as a way of hammering in the truths I've staked out...

Here are these three principles in action... **God is in charge... He positions us... He uses us to speak...**

Chapter 5 puts these truths on display in a vivid way!

Chapter 5:1, "Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine..."

One Sunday a pastor was attending a Bible Study Conference, and was absent at church. His secretary placed a notice in the bulletin explaining his absence.

She meant to type, "*Our pastor is away at a Study Conference.*" But she mistakenly left off the "y." Instead it read, "*Our pastor is away at a Stud Conference.*"

And worse, was the remainder of the bulletin notice... It went on to read, "**Please, keep him in your prayers.**"

Well, in Daniel 5 the last Babylonian king named, *Belshazzar*, does host a *stud party!* It's a drunken orgy.

It's girls gone wild - a Playboy banquet of wine and women. And just as the party gets *out of hand* it gets interrupted by *the hand of God*. God crashes this party.

Secular history lists the last king of Babylon as a man named "**Nabonidus.**" But there's evidence that he and his son "*Belshazzar*" ruled together for a season.

During their rule, Babylon was in trouble. War was raging with two hostile allies - the Medes and Persians.

History tells us that at this time the city was under siege. It's possible King Nabonidus, and a portion of his army, had gone out to battle to divert the enemy.

And Nabonidus leaves the city in the hands of his arrogant son, King Belshazzar - what a crucial mistake.

Here's a kid with a silver spoon in his mouth. He never had to fight, or work, or sacrifice. Everything was given to him on a silver platter. He was naive enough to think that *Babylon the Great* was unconquerable.

Belshazzar had believed his own press clippings. His kingdom is in dire straits, as he throws a raucous party.

It's like President Obama being criticized for taking vacation and playing golf while the nation's problems brew... *That was the knock on Belshazzar*. No jobs, the market crashes, the country is on the verge of war, and instead of minding the store, Belshazzar parties hearty.

Yet isn't this what a lot of people do today!

Their life is riddled with problems - guilt, and friction, and emptiness, and anger. Yet rather than face their enemies, they *drown their sorrow* and *numb their pain* with alcohol, or drugs, or porn, or other amusements.

Belshazzar doesn't want to face reality. Enemy troops are outside his gates, and he hides in a glass.

This is what your boss, or co-worker, or family member does... they dig a hole deeper and deeper to bury their problems - *like Sadaam, hiding in a hole*. They live in denial - dodging consequences - not wanting to admit that a day of reckoning is inevitable.

In fact, King Belshazzar makes another move to foster the illusion he has nothing to worry about...

Verse 3... “They brought the gold vessels that have 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.” These were the Temple treasures Nebuchadnezzar took from Jerusalem - along with Daniel - some 70 years earlier.

The young king is thumbing his nose in God’s face. He’s claiming to be greater than the God of Israel.

Belshazzar was like many folks today - *partying on the outside, while fighting God on the inside.* God is the real issue even when people don’t want Him to be!

Verse 5, “In the same hour (or in response to their mockery of God) 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.” Today, archaeologists working in ancient Babylon have unearthed a banquet hall 56’ by 170’ that they believe was the site of the king’s party.

And since there’re no crayon markings on the wall to indicate the royal toddlers were at work. Apparently, the writing on the wall came from the hand of God.

Imagine, floating fingers writing a message! Eerie...

It shook up the king! “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.” It scared the stuffing out of him.

The phrase, *“his hips were loosened”* speaks of his bowels. The king’s problem wasn’t too many *party prunes*, he had a case of *divinely-inspired diarrhea*.
A little writing on the wall makes a good laxative.

Immediately the king shouts for his wise men to come and read the message. When all the astrologers fail, the king sulks. He has no idea where to turn...

That’s when the Queen-mother, perhaps the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, Amytis, enters the banquet hall.

She recalls Daniel. Verse 11, *“There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God...”*

So Daniel gets brought to the party. And immediately Belshazzar promises him a purple robe, gold chain, a big promotion - as rewards for revealing the mystery.

And I love Daniel’s reply... He’s an old man now - in his 80s. He could care less about the king’s wealth...

And the promise of promotion in Belshazzar’s government was like being awarded command of the Titanic just before it sinks. Daniel is impressed.

Daniel snarls at Belshazzar, verse 17, *“Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king...”* He won’t be bought. He’ll read the writing only because he speaks for God.

But first, Daniel recalls God’s humbling *of the greatest of the Babylonian kings, Nebuchadnezzar*.

He rebukes Belshazzar for having learned nothing from his predecessor. Nebuchadnezzar bowled, instead this little punk blasphemes, and mocks the living Lord!

In verse 23, Daniel pulls no punches - minces no words. He rebukes the king for his blasphemies!...

“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.”

Verse 25 records the words the fingers of God wrote on the wall: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN."

These were Aramaic terms, familiar to at least some of the wise men of Babylon. They probably knew their meaning - they were just too afraid to confront the king.

“Mene” means “numbered.”

“Tekel” means “weighed.”

“Upharsin” means “divided.”

Verses 26-29 gives the meaning of God’s writing...

Belshazzar’s **number** is up... He’s been **weighed**, and God considers him a light-weight... As a result his kingdom will be **divvied up** between Media and Persia.

Historians tell us that very night, October 12, 539 BC, while Belshazzar was partying inside the city, the Persian General, Ugabaru, was launching his attack.

Ugabaru knew he couldn't go over the walls, *but why not go under them?* Since the Euphrates River flowed below the city walls, his engineers went upstream and diverted the river into a basin. This enabled his troops to march into the city through the dried-up riverbed.

In fact, when the invaders reached the inner gates of the city they found them unlocked. It was a fulfillment of Isaiah 45:1, where God calls the Persian King Cyrus by name, and says for him **"the gates will not be shut."**

The Medes and Persians conquered the city of Babylon without a battle. Daniel 5:30 tells us, **"That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom..."**

What a pointed illustration of the three principles we gleaned earlier - *truth for believers with minority status.*

Despite the culture's attitude, **God is still in charge!**

And **He positions us** strategically in the society... to **speak a timely word** when the opportunities arise...

Don't be intimidated, or confused, or afraid... If Nebuchadnezzar, or even Sadaam Hussein were here today, they'd both testify, **"our God is The Most High."**