

“When God Crashes a Party” (Daniel 5:1–31)

Ben Roethlisberger is the Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback. He is 6–5, 250. His nickname is “Big Ben.” Roethlisberger earned the AP NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year in 2004. He became the youngest Super Bowl-winning quarterback in NFL history. At the age of twenty-three, in only his second season, he helped lead the Steelers to a 21–10 victory over the Seattle Seahawks in Super Bowl XL (40). Three years later, Roethlisberger led the Steelers to a second Super Bowl title as they defeated the Arizona Cardinals in Super Bowl XLIII (43). He has been a Pro Bowl selection and has been one of the most efficient passers in NFL history. Roethlisberger has been a phenomenon during his NFL career, and he’s only twenty-eight years old. He has an incredibly bright future ahead of him.

So why am I spending so much time talking about Roethlisberger when it’s not even football season? March Madness is going on right now; I should be talking about basketball! Have you read the news lately? Everywhere you look on the TV or Internet there is news about the recent Roethlisberger scandal. Big Ben has been accused of sexual assault for the second time in two years. Truth be known, Ben likes to drink and party. Needless to say, this leads him to rendezvous with young women. In the latest scandal, Ben hit on a twenty year old college student. He acknowledges they had some type of sexual contact that stopped short of consummation, and she apparently fell and hit her head. This young woman has dropped out of school and returned home to spend time with her family. The most recent news is that Big Ben has hired a private investigator to look into this young woman’s background.

Regardless of the outcome in this case, it is clear that Roethlisberger is not a wise man. Instead of protecting his image and his NFL career, he is in the process of squandering both. What makes this especially painful is that Roethlisberger has claimed to be a Christian. The lesson that Big Ben must learn is: *Privilege brings responsibility*. This same principle resounds throughout Dan 5. We are responsible for what we know. To whom much is given; much is required.¹ *Privilege brings responsibility*.

As we prepare to look into Dan 5, it is important to recognize that almost seventy years have passed since the day Daniel and the other Jewish teenagers were taken into captivity in Babylon. Daniel is now in his eighties. He is likely living in semi-retirement. He is no longer a VIP, because he was Nebuchadnezzar’s friend, and Nebuchadnezzar has been dead for at least twenty-three years.² Neb’s grandson Belshazzar now sits on the throne of Babylon and his kingdom is on the verge of being struck down by the Persians.

Act 1: An Unforgettable Party (5:1–4). In 5:1, Daniel sets the scene: “**Belshazzar³ the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.**” Belshazzar knows how to throw a feast. Everyone of importance has been invited and the wine is flowing freely. Can you say, “Party time?!” Most people are impressed by this party with a thousand guests; however, the number is between two to three thousand because wives and concubines were included as well (cf. 5:2).⁴ When archaeologists excavated this site they discovered that the huge hall where the party was held was some sixty feet wide and one hundred and seventy-two feet long. The entire main section of the White House in Washington, D.C. is approximately that size.⁵ However, the question is: Why is the king having this party? He is about to be attacked by Persia—this is a time for fasting not feasting.⁶ Perhaps it is a move to boost morale in the midst of adversity.⁷ Like someone who nervously whistles his way through a graveyard,⁸ Belshazzar is trying to convince himself and others that everything is okay. Maybe he wants to reassure everyone that he is in control.⁹ Perhaps he felt Babylon was invincible.¹⁰ Vast sums of money had been invested in its defense. Babylon was designed to withstand any kind of assault. A massive double wall, over three hundred feet high and eighty-seven feet wide, had been built around the city. Over a hundred towers had been strategically placed around the wall to provide surveillance and crossfire. The Euphrates River ran under the wall and through the city, guaranteeing a constant supply of water. Furthermore, Belshazzar had stockpiled enough food within the walls to last twenty years.¹¹

Regardless of his precise motivation, Belshazzar was feeling good. But this leads to his greatest mistake. **“When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father [i.e., grandfather¹²] had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone”** (5:2–4). The word translated “tasted” in this context (5:2) is better translated “under the influence” (NET; HCSB; NRSV) or even “drunk” (CEV). The king is not sampling various cheeses and wines in some exotic taste test. He is getting hammered! You may know what I’m talking about! While under the influence, the king makes a cataclysmic error. He decides to bring out the gold and silver goblets that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem almost seventy years earlier. Since that time the goblets had been stored somewhere in the royal palace in Babylon (cf. 1:2). He then parties with these emblems of worship. This was sacrilegious for two reasons: First, it was profane to use sacred vessels. Second, the vessels were used to worship false gods.¹³ Ouch! This was probably a deliberate attempt by Belshazzar to pump the Babylonian gods over the one true God of Israel.¹⁴ The king is saying, “We’ll show that puny Hebrew God who is in charge around here.” He spits in God’s eye, as it were.¹⁵ Most men are content just to ignore God. Unfortunately, Belshazzar didn’t stop there. He defied God to exercise authority over his life, saying in essence, “Stop me if you can.” God rarely ignores that kind of challenge.¹⁶

Perhaps you’re thinking: This doesn’t really seem like that big of a deal. I can appreciate that. But our problem is we don’t understand just how holy God is. We need to remember that these gold and silver goblets were holy unto the Lord, like the pieces of the tabernacle the Lord told Moses to make. The Bible is clear we must not profane the holy things of God. Although we don’t have the holy temple vessels anymore, that doesn’t mean there is not an application for us. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:19–20). Therefore, we need to honor God in our bodies. Three natural implications follow from this brief account. **First, avoid drunkenness.** One reason not to get drunk is you can make fatal mistakes. You can have a careless one night stand. You can lose your virginity. You can get into a physical altercation. You can stupidly speak careless words that you can never take back. You can make an absolute fool of yourself. You can be involved in a DUI. Now I am not opposed to drinking alcohol. I would have to be more spiritual than Jesus to forbid drinking. However, I must urge you to watch your intake of alcohol because the Bible forbids getting drunk (Eph 5:18).¹⁷ **Second, beware of sexual sin.** The king’s feast includes the wives and concubines for sexual purposes. Since sexual immorality was part of the worship of the chief Babylonian deity, Bel, it is probable that an orgy ensued. In our context, it is unlikely that you will be involved in an orgy, but you may be tempted to have an extramarital affair, have premarital sex, or experiment with pornography. Sexual sin is common to humankind and no one is immune. If you think that this doesn’t apply to you check your pulse and make sure you’re still alive. Then take heed, lest you fall (1 Cor 10:12). **Third, refuse idolatry.** In America it is very easy to put Jesus on the shelf with our other gods. We worship Him on Sunday, but the rest of the week we worship the god of work, the god of family, the god of money, the god of pleasure, and the god of hobbies and leisure. It’s so easy to neglect Christ for so many good things in our lives. However, the Lord said through the prophet Isaiah, “I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images” (Isa 42:8). We are the holy vessels of God and should use our bodies only for holy, not profane, ends. *Privilege brings responsibility.*

Now back to our story. This party is jamming: lots of laughter, lots of conversation, free sex, and plenty of wine for everyone. These party animals no doubt hoped that this party would never end. It seemed like nothing could be better. Long before those *Old Milwaukee* beer commercials, the king and his partiers were saying, “It just doesn’t get better than this!” Tragically, Belshazzar is literally celebrating his own funeral; he just doesn’t know it.

Act 2: The Handwriting on the Wall (5:5–12). Daniel records haunting words: **“Suddenly the fingers of a man’s hand¹⁸ emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing. Then the king’s face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack¹⁹ and his knees began knocking together”** (5:5–6). From these two verses emerge two figures of speech that we use today:

“The writing is on the wall” and “knees knocking” to describe someone’s fear. Imagine being a guest at this party. You are sloshed along with everyone else and then all of a sudden you see what appears to be a man’s hand writing on the wall. What would you think? I must be seeing things. As you look around the banquet hall, you see the king and it looks like he’s having a heart attack. Barely able to stand, his face is ashen and seized with terror. Courage runs like hot wax from his body, and the powerful king collapses to the floor.²⁰ Earlier the king had been too drunk to stand; now he is too frightened to stand.²¹ Belshazzar must have set the all-time record for sobriety. The raucous laughter turned to deafening silence with all eyes on the king. God crashed the king’s party.²²

In 5:7–9, Daniel writes, **“The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, ‘Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom.’ Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king. Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew *even* paler, and his nobles were perplexed.”** Belshazzar follows in the example of Grandpa Neb and calls the wise men to interpret the handwriting. He even promises them a great reward. As we shall see in 5:25, all they have to interpret is three different words! But they cannot! Where was their great wisdom? Two times earlier they couldn’t interpret dreams, now they can’t even read their own language! The more a king depends on wise men, the more they fail him. Although the message is written in their language (Aramaic), it probably did not have any spaces between the words, and God used that to prevent them from reading the message, much less interpreting it. This turns Belshazzar into even more of a basket case.

Fortunately, in 5:10–12, a woman comes to the rescue: **“The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, ‘O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale. 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 magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners. This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas 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.”** The Queen is most likely Belshazzar’s mother, who is in all probability a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.²³ Interestingly, she calls Daniel twice by his Hebrew—not his Babylonian—name, which indicates that she knew Daniel personally and probably, knew his God as well.²⁴ This wise woman urges her son, the king, to summon Daniel who is most likely retired.²⁵ Daniel is the king’s last resort. His brain trust has failed him and now he has nowhere else to turn. Fortunately, Mom knows what to do and who to turn to. This is a classic case of “Mother knows best.” Please allow me a quick bunny trail: Listen to your mom, young people. Men, listen to your wife. Most women are quite discerning. I can speak to this personally. I am a visionary, while my wife has a spiritual gift of discernment. If I don’t listen to her, I will fail in my ministry and personal responsibilities. If I don’t seek input and insight from women in our church who are praying and serving, I will be functioning with half the horsepower that I need. Women are strategic in both life and ministry; the Bible makes this clear again and again. If we would all take this to heart and listen more carefully and be more teachable, we would be better people and have a much more enjoyable life. (This pearl of wisdom is free of charge.)

Act 3: Daniel Interprets the Dream (5:13–28). At the advice of his mama, the king brings in Daniel, which may be his one and only wise move. Unfortunately, his remarks are far from cordial. **“The king spoke and said to Daniel, ‘Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 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. Just now the wise men and the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message. 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’** (5:13–16). In 5:13, Belshazzar puts Daniel in his place. He is saying, “Let’s not forget, I am king; you are captive.” In 5:14 and 16, he uses the phrase “I have heard,” implying that he doesn’t endorse the positive reports about Daniel. Contrast this with what Neb had said: “I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell *me* the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation” (4:9). Furthermore, 5:22 and 8:27 make it clear that Belshazzar did indeed know Daniel personally, but he had chosen to simply ignore him.²⁶ He had tried to bury the past and with it the God of Israel. Deep down, he knows and has always known the truth. And because it disturbs him, he seeks to destroy it, to forget it.²⁷

Despite the king’s motives and lack of respect for Daniel, God calls Daniel upon the scene. He wasn’t on the original guest list because prophets and preachers ruin parties. But when there is a serious need, God always brings Daniel front and center. Similarly, you may not be invited to parties and social events. Your friends and coworkers may laugh at you and call you names. But let a fellow student get pregnant out of wedlock, let there be problems with parents, let a marriage break up, let cancer hit, let the children get in trouble, or the career hit rock bottom, and who do they call? They call the faithful men and women who know the Lord. We never know our influence until a crisis comes. What an encouragement this is. You may be stuck in an office, a classroom, a neighborhood, or a family where you are the only Christian. You may feel overlooked and taken for granted, or possibly ridiculed and misunderstood. Bide your time and don’t despair. Soon enough life will come tumbling in and the people who have no time for you will turn to you for answers. You may not be invited to every party, but you will get the call when trouble comes. When it happens, be bold to speak the truth in love. *Privilege brings responsibility.*

After the king’s initial spiel, in 5:17 Daniel takes over and launches into an amazing rebuke. **“Then Daniel answered 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.’** Daniel begins by refusing the king’s reward. He doesn’t need it and doesn’t want it. He wants the king to know he isn’t motivated by material possessions, earthly prestige, or kingly power,²⁸ but he will gladly explain the meaning of the mysterious handwriting. He proceeds to give the king a history lesson, a theology lesson, and a reading lesson. In 5:18–21 he begins with a history lesson: **“O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him. He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, 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.”** These words are intended to hit Belshazzar between the eyes. Daniel is saying: You should have known better. You should have learned from the past. But you managed to forget it, and thus the lessons of history were lost to you.

Daniel continues with a theology lesson in 5:22–23. **“Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, but you have exalted yourself 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 from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified.”** Daniel is severe with the king because he willfully rebelled with an awareness of what God did to his grandfather. He had the privilege of experience. Nebuchadnezzar was arrogant, but his was an arrogance of ignorance. Belshazzar’s arrogance stood in the full midday light of God’s revelation.²⁹ Again, *privilege brings responsibility*. You are accountable for what you know whether you are a believer or an unbeliever.

Daniel polishes off his rebuke with a reading lesson in 5:24–28. **“Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out. Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENE, MENE [MEE-nee], TEKEL [TEH-keel], UPHARSIN [yoo-FAHR-sin].’ This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENE’-- God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. ‘TEKEL’-- you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. ‘PERES’-- your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”** We might paraphrase the message on the wall like this: “Your number is up. You’re a moral lightweight. You’ve squandered your privileges. The party’s over.”³⁰ God makes it clear to Belshazzar and to us there is a last page in every person’s book. It says, “The End.” God knows when that last day is. We don’t. That’s why the Psalmist says in Ps 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.”

Act 4: Daniel’s Reward and Belshazzar’s Punishment (5:29–31). This chapter closes in rather abrupt and dramatic fashion. **“Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom”** (5:29). Belshazzar didn’t seem to get the message immediately, because he ordered Daniel to be clothed in royal robes with a gold chain around his neck and to be proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. Apparently, he assumes he’s going to remain on as king. What a rude awakening 5:30–31 must have been: **“That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.³¹ So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.”** Verse 30 says Belshazzar was slain “that same night,” but no details are given. Secular history fills in the gaps. The army of the Medes and Persians was camped near the Euphrates River. Historians tell us that Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians in a surprise attack. The army managed to divert the river into a nearby lake. With the river dried up the way was open into the city. One ancient writer even says that when the army entered the city they found the Babylonians feasting in a time of drunken revelry. Not long after Daniel gave his solemn message to the king, the Medo-Persian army entered Babylon almost without a fight. Before sunrise Belshazzar was dead and the Babylonian Empire came to an inglorious end.

Remember, this is Babylon the great! Yet, God snuffed her out in the blink of an eye. He can do the very same thing to America.³² The only reason we are still a super power today is because God is immeasurably patient and gracious. We have committed every conceivable act of drunkenness, immorality, and idolatry. We are just like Babylon, except, no doubt, far worse. Yet, our Lord remains longsuffering. Nevertheless, eventually, we will likely be wiped off the map because God will say “Enough is enough.” God will also do this with churches that are compromising His truth on moral, ethical, and biblical issues. Indeed, there will come a day when He will remove the lampstands in these churches. This is equally applicable in our personal lives as well. The kindness of God is intended to lead us to repentance (Rom 2:4), yet we all tend to presume on God’s kindness and grace. When we insist on carrying on high-handed, rebellious sin, the Lord will judge us. He loves us too much to do otherwise. So today, may we humble ourselves before Him and repent for our nation, our church, and our individual lives. *Privilege brings responsibility*. Since we have been given much, we are especially accountable to Christ.

Scripture References

Daniel 5:1–31

Psalm 19:1–6; 86:8–10

Isaiah 47:1–5

Luke 12:47–48

John 15:22

Acts 17:24–31

Romans 1:18–32

Study Questions

1. In what ways am I like King Belshazzar (5:1–4)? Do I commit acts of immorality and idolatry? What is my rationale for doing so (e.g., anger or disappointment toward God, loneliness, lack of discipline)? How can I grow in progressive holiness and dedication to God? Who can help me in this great pursuit?
2. Do I take God's judgment seriously (5:1–9)? Why or why not? What place does (should) the message of coming judgment have when I speak to people about their need for Jesus Christ? Does God judge in the present day or is all judgment future? If God does judge in the present, what does it look like? Is there any way to know when God is the source behind the judgment?
3. Am I willing to be God's spokesperson (5:10–28)? Will I listen to His voice today? Will I tell the world what He has to say? How has God been preparing me to step up and speak up for Him? Am I looking for opportunities to be used by Him?
4. What would a hand sent from God write on the walls of the U.S. Congress? On the sanctuary wall of my local church? On the wall of my family room? How can I ensure that God doesn't need to pronounce a verdict of judgment on my life and/or family?
5. Who in my life stands out as an example of godliness? Does that individual know how they have influenced me? Take time to honor this person by doing something special for him or her (e.g., write an e-mail or card, give a small gift, make something special for this person, verbally encourage him or her).

Notes

¹ See Luke 12:48.

² In 562 BC historians tell us that after Nebuchadnezzar died all of the ministers who were at the core of the palace regulars were banished and sent away from the throne. Over the following six years, the gold quickly tarnished under three successive evil kings. Finally, in 556 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's son-in-law Nabonidus seized the throne and held it for seventeen years. In 553 BC, only nine years after Nebuchadnezzar's death, Nabonidus made his son Belshazzar co-regent and ruler over the province of Babylon.

³ *Bel* means lord" and is another name for *Marduk*.

⁴ The feast itself, involving a thousand people is not unusual. There are historical records of a Persian king feeding 15,000 men daily from his table.

⁵ David Jeremiah, *The Handwriting on the Wall: Secrets from the Prophecies of Daniel* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 99.

⁶ Bill Crowder, *Daniel: Spiritual Living in a Secular Culture* (Grand Rapids: RBC, 2006), 19.

⁷ Leon J. Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 132; Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*. The New American Commentary, vol. 18 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 151.

⁸ Crowder, *Daniel*, 17.

⁹ Gene A. Getz, *Daniel: Standing Firm for God*. Men of Character Series (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 88.

¹⁰ Gleason L. Archer, Jr., "Daniel," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), Electronic ed.

¹¹ John Phillips and Jerry Vines, *Exploring the Book of Daniel: An Expository Commentary* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1990), 75.

¹² In the Hebrew and Chaldean language, there are no words for grandfather or grandson.

¹³ Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove: InterVarsity; Leicester: UK: Apollos, 2002), 129.

¹⁴ Miller, *Daniel*, 154. Belshazzar knew how YHWH had humbled Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Dan. 4), and he was simply acting out of spite (cf. Dan 4:22).

¹⁵ Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*. The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 137.

¹⁶ William Carr Peel, *Living in the Lion's Den without Being Eaten* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994), 131.

¹⁷ Proverbs 31:4–5 says, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, for they will drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted."

¹⁸ The word "hand" (BDB 1094) can mean "arm," "palm," or "finger." Longman, *Daniel*, 138 writes, "Though God has no body, his actions are frequently described metaphorically as the acts of his hand. Indeed, in three other notable Scripture references, God's finger is at work. In response to the plagues, the Egyptian magicians remarked, 'This is the finger of God' (Ex. 8:19). Exodus also describes the commandments as written by God's finger on the stone tablets (31:18). Finally, the heavens themselves are 'the work of [his] fingers' (Ps. 8:3)."

¹⁹ This is a metaphorical phrase describing fear (cf. Nahum 2:10; Ps. 69:23; Isa. 21:3), as is "knees began knocking together" (cf. Ezek. 7:17; 21:7; Nahum 2:10). Longman, *Daniel*, 138 notes that this phrase may even imply by the last clause that he has lost control of his most basic bodily functions, which has undermined his posture of composure.

²⁰ Peel, *Living in the Lion's Den*, 129.

²¹ Crowder, *Daniel*, 19.

²² Longman, *Daniel*, 138.

²³ Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 133; Miller, *Daniel*, 160; Getz, *Daniel*, 91; Lucas, *Daniel*, 130.

²⁴ Peel, *Living in the Lion's Den*, 129.

²⁵ Archer, "Daniel"; Lucas, *Daniel*, 130.

²⁶ Lucas, *Daniel*, 131.

²⁷ Longman, *Daniel*, 140.

²⁸ Getz, *Daniel*, 92 (see also Wood, *Daniel*, 144; Miller, *Daniel*, 162; Lucas, *Daniel*, 131–32). For a similar rejection of gifts, see Gen 14:21–24, where Abram tells the King of Sodom: "I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich'" (14:23; cf. 33:9).

²⁹ Peel, *Living in the Lion's Den*, 130.

³⁰ Peel, *Living in the Lion's Den*, 132.

³¹ God predicted this judgment approximately a hundred years prior through the prophet Jeremiah: "'But I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all their evil that they have done in Zion before your eyes,' declares the LORD" (51:24; cf. 50:1–3; 51:11, 28–29, 36–37, 57).

³² Isaiah 40:15: “Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.”