

# Daniel 5

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[ 0 : 00 ] Turn with me in your Bibles to Daniel chapter 5. If you're looking in the Pew Bible, that is page 742. In spite of present appearances, God is still on the throne. That's the main message of the book of Daniel, which we've been looking at this fall. And this morning in chapter 5, we'll see that that message contains for us both a word of warning and a word of hope.

But let's read together Daniel chapter 5. Here we go. King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. 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. 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. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. 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. Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him. His limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. 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. Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed. 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. 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, the king, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams and explain riddles and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. 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. 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. Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and made known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter.

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. 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.

[ 3 : 40 ] O king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar, your father, kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. 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. 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 away from him. 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. And you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this. 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. Then from his presence, the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed, and this is the writing that was inscribed,

Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parson. This is the interpretation of the matter. Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end. Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

Perez, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Then Belshazzar gave the command that 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. That very night, Belshazzar, the Chaldean king was killed. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about 62 years old. April 11 of 1912, the HMS Titanic departed from England, headed on its first transatlantic voyage toward New York.

At the time, it was the largest ship afloat, 882 feet long, with the most luxurious accommodations and the most advanced safety features, carrying 2,200 passengers and crew, including some of the wealthiest people in the whole world at the time. But only three days after it departed, it hit an iceberg in the middle of the Atlantic, and less than three hours later, it sank to the bottom of the ocean, and most of the people on board drowned.

[ 6 : 40 ] Over a hundred years later, the Titanic disaster continues to loom large in people's minds and in popular imagination, a ship that was the pinnacle of greatness, seeming invincibility, whose first voyage ended in disaster and death. This morning, our story begins with a king proclaiming his greatness, and seemingly invincible, of the most powerful empire in the world at the time. And yet that very night, he was dethroned and killed. I want us to walk through this story together, and then I want to look at the word of warning it gives to us in the word of hope that we can find here. So, let's walk through this story together. Our passage begins with King Belshazzar throwing a feast. And you might wonder, if you've been reading the book of Daniel, who is Belshazzar, and why is he throwing a feast? The first four chapters of Daniel have been focused on King Nebuchadnezzar. Now, to help you keep some of these names and dates straight, and to see some of the bigger picture of the book of Daniel, you can look in the middle of your bulletin.

I've noted some of the structure of Daniel. We went over that a few weeks ago, so I won't go through that. But at the bottom, there is a couple key dates that relate to this story. But Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest of the Babylonian kings. He was the first one who had presided over a united and expanding and stable Babylonian empire. He ruled for 43 years.

He was a successful military leader, and he made the capital city of Babylon into a center of science and education, of art and architecture. He was also the one who had besieged Jerusalem, and taken to Babylon, some of the vessels of the temple in Jerusalem, and some of the young people of Israel, handsome, wise, and competent, including Daniel and his three friends. But now the narrative has skipped a couple of decades, and we find ourselves in 539 B.C., 66 years after Daniel and his friends had been taken to Babylon. Now, technically, the king at the time was a man named Nabonidus. But Nabonidus had left the capital city and lived elsewhere for 10 years of his reign, and his son, Belshazzar, was living in Babylon, and Nabonidus had basically entrusted authority to his son to rule in his place while he was absent. And that's probably why when Belshazzar offers Daniel a place in his kingdom, he says, I'll make you the third ruler under Belshazzar and under his father, his father, Nabonidus. But in many ways, Belshazzar looked up not so much to his father, Nabonidus, but to Nebuchadnezzar, his predecessor. And if you notice, several times in this chapter, Belshazzar and others refer to Nebuchadnezzar as his father, and Belshazzar his son. Verse 2, 11, 13, 18, 22.

Now, Nebuchadnezzar wasn't literally Belshazzar's father, but in Belshazzar's mind, Nebuchadnezzar was the big daddy of the Babylonian empire. And he was looking up to him and

modeling himself after him and following in the train of his greatness, sort of trying to stand on Nebuchadnezzar's shoulders and be even a bit greater than him. But the reality was, in 539 B.C., Belshazzar's kingdom was nowhere near as great as Nebuchadnezzar's. By 539 B.C., the Persian army, led by Cyrus, had invaded the country, conquered several cities. They were approaching the capital city of Babylon. At the end of this chapter, we learn that that very night, Belshazzar would be killed, and the Babylonian empire would come to an end, and the Medes and Persians would take over the kingdom. So, Belshazzar is literally throwing this huge party while his enemies are standing outside the gates of his city. There's other ancient documents that shed light on this scenario.

[10:52] They don't all agree on the details. Some say Babylon was under siege. Some say it was taken without a battle. But two ancient historians, Herodotus and Xenophon, specifically mentioned that the Persians entered Babylon while the Babylonians were singing and dancing at night.

Now, you might wonder, why would King Belshazzar throw a party for a thousand of his lords? I mean, this was a big party when invading armies were right outside his doors. Maybe he was naively confident, like the makers of the Titanic, sure that his city was indestructible. After all, it was surrounded by walls that were 85 feet thick and 40 feet tall. You could ride a chariot on top of the walls. Or maybe he was cynical and realistic. We might die tomorrow, so we might as well party tonight. Dance the night away, drink plenty of wine, and forget about our troubles for at least a few hours. Either way, in the middle of the party, Belshazzar takes the sacred vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the temple in Jerusalem and starts passing them out as drinking cups, ordinary drinking cups. Now, by this time, Belshazzar was probably under the influence, but this is more than Belshazzar just being drunk and stupid. He didn't just run out of red cups and decide to use golden ones instead. At some level, Belshazzar knew what he was doing. He was intentionally flaunting his dominance over the people of Judah and Jerusalem by taking their most sacred vessels devoted to their God and using them to toast the gods of Babylon. Belshazzar was saying,

Nebuchadnezzar took these vessels out of the temple, but, you know, he just kept them in the temple. He sort of respected them. I'm here to show they're nothing special at all. It would be sort of like taking an American flag and laying it in front of the door to be used as a doormat for people to wipe their feet on when they come into the building. Or sort of like taking a wooden sculpture piece from the Yale Art Gallery, chopping it into pieces, building a bonfire, and saying, Let's roast some marshmallows.

It was an act of deliberate defiance and dishonor. But then in verse 5, in the middle of the revelry, the king sees a hand writing on the wall, and suddenly he goes from being the life of the party to the subject of an emergency 911 call.

He can't stand up straight anymore. He can't even control his most basic bodily functions. He screams for help. His wise men can't help him. He becomes even more alarmed. But then, in the midst of all the chaos, verse 10, a wise woman appears. Now, this is probably the queen mother, not the queen, because in verse 2 and 3, the king's wives are already there.

[14:08] So, the footnote is probably a better translation. It's either Belshazzar's mother or Nebuchadnezzar's widow. But either way, she reminds Belshazzar about Daniel. She says, Your father, Nebuchadnezzar, the one you look up to, honored this man greatly because he was full of wisdom and understanding.

He's the best wise men of them all. Call him. Belshazzar calls in Daniel. He doesn't really have any other options at this point. But notice his attitude toward Daniel in 13 through 16.

You are that Daniel. One of the exiles from Judah. Ah, you're one of those people whose flag I just wiped my feet on. You should count it a privilege that you're here at all. I have heard of you, he says, in verse 14 and verse 16. Now, evidently, Belshazzar knew about Daniel, but either he had forgotten him. After all, by this time, Daniel would have been 80 years old, perhaps in semi-retirement. Or perhaps Belshazzar deliberately ignored Daniel because he didn't like the kinds of things that Daniel would say. But now he has no other option. So, he says, Okay, I'll give you a chance. If you can read and interpret this writing, you'll be third in my kingdom. Well, Daniel began not by reading the writing, but by talking about Belshazzar's hero, King Nebuchadnezzar. And he reminded him not only of Nebuchadnezzar's greatness that Belshazzar wanted to emulate, but also of his pride and his fall. God brought Nebuchadnezzar down until he humbled himself and recognized who is really the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

And then verse 22 to 23, Daniel turns and looks right at Belshazzar and speaks directly to him. Notice the verbs in these sentences. You have not humbled your heart. You knew. You weren't ignorant.

You have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. Drunk wine from his vessels, praised lifeless gods, and you have not honored the God who holds your very life in his hand.

[16:48] Daniel spoke to Belshazzar emphasizing his responsibility and culpability. Even though he claimed to look up to Nebuchadnezzar and stand on his shoulders, he didn't learn from Nebuchadnezzar's example. And he went far beyond Nebuchadnezzar in provoking God's judgment.

He embraced the foolishness of idolatry, praising gods made of the same stuff as the cups from which he drank, and dishonoring the God who held his very life together and gave him everything he had. Do you notice how bold and confident Daniel is in speaking to this King?

On the one hand, when you get to 80 years old, perhaps you stop caring about what everybody else thinks. Not totally a bad thing. But this wasn't just crotchety old Daniel telling it like he saw it, having nothing left to lose. Daniel spoke the truth with boldness and confidence in every season of his life, no matter who he was speaking to, no matter what was on the line.

Then in verse 24 to 28, Daniel goes on to read and interpret the writing, Mene, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parson. Now, ancient Aramaic, which is what they spoke in Babylon, was written, like ancient Hebrew, without vowel pointings and sometimes without spaces in between words. So, when you read ancient Aramaic and Hebrew writings, sometimes it takes a little deciphering to figure out what they mean.

Many scholars have pointed out that these words, Mene, Tekel, Parson, sound like three units of weight, a mina, a shekel, and a half. The word parson or perez means half. It would be a little bit like saying a pound, an ounce, a half, from greatest to smallest. But Daniel focuses on the fact that these words, also sound like three verbs, numbered, weighed, divided. Your days are numbered. You've been weighed and found wanting. Your kingdom will be divided. It's a message of divine judgment on Belshazzar's pride.

[19:25] Verse 29, Belshazzar responds. It's an interesting response. He responds by promoting Daniel and honoring him as the messenger, but he never acknowledges God, the subject of Daniel's message.

Verse 30, that very night, not only Belshazzar's kingdom, but also his life was taken away, never to be restored. That's the story.

As I said, I think there's a word of warning and a word of hope. So, let's look at those in turn. First, the word of warning. We're meant to see chapter 5 in contrast to chapter 4. If you look at the outline of Daniel, you can see some of the parallels. They both focus on proud pagan rulers.

Nebuchadnezzar is humbled and eventually restored. Belshazzar exalts himself and is finally brought down. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ said, everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

And so, chapter 4, which we looked at two weeks ago, emphasizes God's mercy and the opportunity for repentance and restoration. Chapter 5 emphasizes God's righteous judgment that those who do not humble themselves before God will one day be brought down.

[21:03] And so, we need to consider the word of warning that this chapter gives us. We need to ask ourselves, does the description of Belshazzar in this chapter fit me?

He was in charge. He was capable, but he was condescending and overconfident. He knew some truths about God, but he did not honor God.

Perhaps you know something about God. Maybe you were taught the Bible as a child. Maybe you've seen God make a difference in people's lives who are close to you. Maybe you've always had a deep sense that God exists, that He's there. Maybe God has intervened in your life, maybe dramatically, periodically. But are you honoring God for who He is?

Daniel describes Him as the Most High God, the God who, unlike the idol, sees and hears and knows, the one in whose hand is our very breath and all our ways.

Are you living as if you are ultimately accountable to no one but yourself? Maybe you grew up with faith in God, but over time you've gradually distanced yourself from the faith that you once had.

[22:32] Let me ask why. Were there overwhelming intellectual doubts which you have thoroughly researched and not found good answers? Or is there perhaps also a part of you that wants to live the way you want to live, and you don't want God to get in the way too much?

Back in 1937, the British intellectual Aldous Huxley wrote this. He said, Most ignorance is willful ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know.

I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning. Consequently, I assumed that it had none, and then was able to find satisfying reasons for this assumption.

The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics. He is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do.

For myself and many of my friends, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation from a certain system of morality which interfered with our sexual freedom.

[ 23 : 49 ] Now, Huxley was more honest and more self-aware than most of us are. But he knew that what we love and desire, whether it's sex or money or power or comfort, shapes our perceptions of reality.

What we love and desire shapes how we see the world and how we interpret it. And he also saw that sometimes our loves and desires can be deeply self-promoting and self-justifying.

Now, maybe you don't go quite as far as Huxley denying that the world has any meaning at all.

Later, he wrote that quote later on when he was re-examining that assumption.

Maybe you still identify as a Christian. But have you, like Belshazzar, taken God's holy things that he has created for his own glory and use them for your own self-indulgent, self-glorifying purposes. Now, in the Old Testament, the temple in Jerusalem and its vessels were set apart as holy to the Lord. In the New Testament, there's no physical temple.

[ 25 : 05 ] Jesus is now the temple, and Jesus' vessels are holy to the Lord. The New Testament says our bodies individually and the body of the church corporately are now the temple of the Holy Spirit set apart for the worship of God.

And God builds us up. He builds up his temple, his people, through his holy word. Breathed out by God. Useful to equip us for every good work.

So let me ask, how do you treat God's word, the Scriptures? Do you treat them with reverence? Or are you willing to play fast and loose with them?

You know, in the 19th century, some critical scholars read this story about Belshazzar, and they dismissed it as purely a fiction. Surely, Belshazzar never existed because we have no other documents outside the book of Daniel that refer to him.

But today, we have the Cyrus Cylinder, the Babylonian Chronicle, Herodotus, Xenophon, and cuneiform texts that either refer to him by name or affirm some details of this story.

[ 26 : 29 ] Only in hindsight can we see the arrogance of scholars who confidently declared that Belshazzar never existed based simply on the lack of evidence available to them at the time.

But 100 years from now, how many confident pronouncements of contemporary scholars, including biblical scholars, may seem arrogant, outdated, or based on arguments from silence that are no longer valid?

Now, let me freely acknowledge, if you study the Bible academically, there are plenty of tricky questions, including many related to the book of Daniel. And faithful Christian scholars should honestly acknowledge unresolved difficulties.

We should wrestle with the literary genre and its implications. We should examine the Near Eastern parallels that we have access to. We should consider how it all fits together. But in the end, we're called to stand under God's Word in humility and not over it in judgment.

Beware the arrogance that infects much biblical scholarship. It can infect you too in more ways than you realize.

[ 27 : 51 ] Now, maybe you're not an academic Bible scholar. You have no interest in reading commentaries about the history of the ancient world. But how do you respond to God's Word when you hear it read and preached each Sunday?

You know, after he heard Daniel's speech, Belshazzar honored Daniel. But he never responded to God. It's like coming up to the preacher after the service and saying, that was a great sermon. I've really enjoyed listening to it. Man, you have great illustrations, even a couple cool jokes. You kept me awake the whole time. But having no intention to actually respond to God's Word with trust and obedience.

Now, if you want to tell me that you liked the sermon or I kept you awake, that's fine. But you know what truly encourages a preacher who loves God's Word is when someone says, God was dealing

with me this morning through your message.

I responded to Jesus as I was looking into His Word. The Holy Spirit brought the message home to my heart. When the preacher fades into the background and Jesus takes center stage.

[ 29 : 19 ] Perhaps for some of you, God may be using Belshazzar's example to warn you in your pride, to expose your condescending and overconfident attitude. Like Belshazzar, you may have a high position of authority.

You may feel secure in your fortress, no matter how many enemies are camped outside your door. You might be able to throw a great party and be the life of it too.

But be warned, if you do not humble yourself before the God who made you and who holds His life, your life in His hand, God can and will bring you down.

And He can do it fast in one night. If the description of Belshazzar fits you, repent today.

Humble yourself before King Jesus. Weep over your arrogant pride before the day of judgment comes and it will be too late to change.

[ 30 : 26 ] Perhaps by God's grace, the description of Belshazzar doesn't completely fit you. But there's still a warning for all of us because we are all vulnerable to fall into the trap of pride.

That's the warning to humble ourselves before the Lord. But there's also a word of hope that's just as strong in this passage.

The word of hope is this. When God's name is defamed and when God's messengers are dishonored, God shows up.

God's name is defamed unexpectedly, powerfully, and in ways that even His enemies cannot deny or ignore. You see, this story happened nearly 70 years after God's people had been sent into exile. And for Daniel and whoever was left with him, it might have felt like all was lost and things could only get worse. Jerusalem was destroyed. The temple was no longer.

[ 31 : 32 ] No Israelite king anymore. The present and future leaders of God's people had been deported and retrained and pressured to conform to the pagan culture of Babylon. And now Belshazzar goes one step further, blatantly mocking the one true God by using His holy things as common drinking cups at a drunken party.

How much worse can it get? But when all seems lost and when the darkness seems to triumph, that's when God shows up.

For His people in undeniably powerful ways. You see, the end of Belshazzar's rule meant the end of the Babylonian Empire and the beginning of a new kingdom, the kingdom of the Medes and Persians.

And soon after that, in this very same year, the Persian king Cyrus would issue a decree that the Jews could go home again and start rebuilding their city of Jerusalem and rebuilding their temple to worship God.

Hope for the future of Judah and Jerusalem and of God's people was just around the corner even when it seemed like all was lost and things could only get worse.

[ 32 : 47 ] And yet what we see here in this chapter is that God has preserved His people from the beginning of the exile all the way to the end. Daniel was taken to Babylon at the beginning of the exile, 605 B.C., and he was still there in 539 at the end.

He had been sidelined. He had been slighted. He had been threatened and persecuted. He was now an old man, but still he stood bold and confident in the Lord. He had outlasted Nebuchadnezzar and the three or four kings that came in between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and he would outlast Belshazzar.

And throughout history, God has sustained His people through seasons of exile, through seasons of persecution, through seasons of social isolation and marginalization.

Kingdoms and empires have risen and fallen, but the people of God have outlasted them all. In the ancient world, the Christian church endured 300 years of persecution and marginalization in the ancient Roman Empire, but as Tertullian said, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the growing church.

In the Middle Ages, when Christianity became confused with the imperial ambitions of Western European rulers, and many church officials were corrupted by the love of money and power, God preserved a faithful remnant, both inside and outside the official church, through people like Francis of Assisi and Peter Waldo and Thomas Akempis and their followers.

[ 34 : 28 ] In the modern world, the church has faced all kinds of seemingly insurmountable challenges. Dictators like Stalin in Russia or Mao in China who vowed to stamp out the church once and for all.

But it didn't work. When the Soviet Union fell in 1992, for the first time in 70 years, the church bells rang in Moscow in Red Square and large banners proclaimed, Christ is risen.

And today in China, millions of Christian believers meet in both registered and unregistered churches. In the Western world, culture despisers have predicted that among educated people, secularization is inevitable and traditional Christianity is on the way out.

But it's not true. Even at a place like Yale, there are many more Christians than there were 30 years ago. You can talk to anyone who was around back then. There weren't many of us.

And in the moments when all has seemed darkest, like last year in Charleston, South Carolina, when nine people were murdered at the Mother Emanuel Church by a visitor whom they had welcomed into their Wednesday evening Bible study, the light of Christ has continued to shine.

[ 35 : 48 ] When the grieving members of that church spoke to the defendant in court and calling him to repent and offering him forgiveness through Christ, and their words were televised nationally, and when the outcry after that event led to the Confederate flag being taken down once and for all from the state capitol.

Some people say the Christian church in America is headed into a season of exile when we'll be increasingly isolated and socially marginalized and pressured to conform to an ungodly world. This may be true. In fact, it's already been true for many Christians in this country. That's been the experience of many African American and Native American and immigrant believers in Jesus already.

Maybe right now you're facing a personal situation where you feel alone and isolated and marginalized and under pressure to conform. But brothers and sisters, remember this above all. There was a day 2,000 years ago when God's name was defamed and dishonored and trampled upon. When not only a messenger of God but his very own son, Jesus the Messiah, was condemned to die, beaten and mocked and strung up on a cross.

[ 37 : 17 ] And on that day, the powers of darkness seemed to triumph once and for all. But on the third day, on Sunday morning, God showed up unexpectedly and powerfully in ways that even his enemies could not ignore.

He raised Jesus from the dead, never to die again. The grave could not hold him. Death could not keep him. He was and is alive forevermore.

And that very first Easter Sunday, yes, you can say amen. And that first Easter Sunday, Jesus came alongside two of his followers who were walking on the road to Emmaus, lamenting their disappointment and their lack of hope.

We had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel, they said. We had hoped, but we hope no more. And on the road, Jesus opened the Scriptures to them, and their hearts were strangely warmed.

And in the house, he broke bread with them, and their eyes were suddenly opened, and they knew that he was alive again, and he would be with them that day and forevermore.

[ 38 : 24 ] This is the Jesus who rekindles hope in the midst of seemingly hopeless circumstances. This is the Jesus who said, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not stand against it.

So brothers and sisters in Christ, stand firm. Remain faithful. Weather the storm because we're not alone, and the storm won't last forever. Whatever your storm is, fix your eyes on King Jesus. who will endure and outlast all the kingdoms of this world, and who will reign forever and ever. In spite of present appearances, God is still on his throne.

So be strong, and take heart, and wait for the Lord. Let's pray. Amen. Our Father in heaven, we give you thanks that you rule over this world.

This world which you have created, this world which you have not abandoned in its sin and fallenness, this world which you have come in your Son to redeem and reclaim for your very own.

[ 39 : 52 ] We pray that we would humble ourselves before you and be loyal to you alone. We pray that you would give us hope in you, that we might wait upon you and look to you and know that you will be faithful just as you have been in the past.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, the music team is going to come forward at this point as we prepare to sing our last song, our song proclaiming that Jesus shall reign throughout all

the earth.

So let's stand as we prepare to sing and praise our risen King. Amen.