

Daniel 5 John Karmelich

1. My title for Daniel 5 is “God holds us accountable for what we know. Period!”
 - a) For those of you who like to write in your Bible, put the word “accountability” over the header of this chapter. It is the key point, in my humble opinion. ☺
 - b) My subtitle for Chapter 5 is “Don’t mock God”. I’ll explain that one later.
2. One of the main characters of the last four chapters of Daniel was King Nebuchadnezzar. He was the primary king of the Babylonian Empire. As we enter Chapter 5, we are now finished talking about Nebuchadnezzar. We now focus on his grandson, which is named Belshazzar.
 - a) When Daniel was first written, there were no chapter breaks. In the 12th Century AD, the book was broken into 12 chapters.
 - i) The first 6 chapters tell six stories from Daniel’s life in chronological order.
 - ii) The last 6 chapters are “supplemental” stories that happen in-between the events of the first 6 chapters.
 - iii) Think of it as 6 chapters and 6 appendixes.
 - iv) This is important to understand, as there is a large gap in time between the end of Chapter 5 and the beginning of Chapter 6.
 - v) It is equally important to remember the lack of chapter breaks in the original writing. I believe one of the intents of the author is to show a contrast in the life between King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar.
 - vi) Actually, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 can be referred to “Daniel and the 3 kings”. Each chapter focuses on a different king who ruled over Daniel and the Israelites. One of the main points of each chapter is the relationship of these Gentile kings with the true God.
3. The whole Chapter 5 takes place during the last 24 hours of the life of King Belshazzar.
 - a) As we’ll discover, this man was a failure in God’s eye.
 - b) I believe King Belshazzar is eternally damned for failing to turn to the God of Heaven.
 - i) He is not in hell because he isn’t Jewish.
 - ii) He is in hell because he turned his back on the knowledge he had about God, because he didn’t act upon that knowledge.
 - iii) Technically speaking, that is how God decides who is going to be in heaven and who isn’t. It isn’t just knowing Jesus, although, that doesn’t hurt. ☺
 - a) God judges all people fairly based on what they *do* know about God.
 - iv) Those with limited knowledge of God will be judged less strictly than those with a full knowledge of God or those with *access* to a full knowledge of God.
 - c) Which leads back to my opening premise for Chapter 5: “God holds us accountable for what we know. Period!”
 - i) This is the story of the failure of Belshazzar.
 - a) We will read of the pronounced judgment on his life and his death.
 - b) King Belshazzar is held accountable because he should have known better. He was the grandson of King Nebuchadnezzar. The testimony of King Nebuchadnezzar turning to the true and living God was well established in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, Daniel states that Belshazzar was well aware this fact.
 - c) The events of the early part of Chapter 5 show King Belshazzar *willingly* turning his back on God. For that, he was punished.

- d) My second premise from Page 1 is “Don’t mock God!”
 - i) “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” (Galatians 6:7 NIV).
 - a) John’s loose translation of Galatians 6:7: “Don’t mess with God. God cares about His reputation. Those who mock God *will* suffer the consequences accordingly.
4. Before we get into the text for tonight, this is a good time to stand back and give a little philosophical talk about these Bible lessons and the topic of “The Bible-as-History”.
- a) Bible historians and archeologists *love* Chapter 5.
 - b) There are *tremendous* historical facts and data that back-up the events of Chapter 5.
 - c) The Bible critics and doubters have picked on Chapter 5 for centuries. Archeological discoveries within the last 100 years have supported the events of Chapter 5 with tremendous accuracy.
 - d) Here’s my point. Remember this well. The Bible is the accurate Word of God.
 - i) There, lets all say that together, and breath a sigh of relief. ☺
 - ii) For those of you who have walked in faith for a good length of time and already accept this premise, feel free to skim ahead to point heading #5.
 - iii) For those who don’t, there are wonderful Bible study materials and commentaries that focus on the historical aspects of the events of Chapter 5 and support the Bible greatly.
 - a) This lesson is not one of them. ☺ Don’t get me wrong. I am a big believer in the ministry of defending the Bible. There are people who have made a career out of this. There is a need for that ministry. God bless all of you involved in that. It is simply not what God called me to do in this writing ministry.
 - e) My focus of these lessons is on application. How does the Bible apply to your life today? To borrow a cliché from a book I read and paraphrased:
 - i) Who cares about the Amorites, Hittites, and Perizzites, I have bills to pay!
 - a) Or who cares about a king who lived 2,500 years ago, I have two children home sick. What does this have to do with my life?
 - ii) That’s my point. My primary purpose is to show how the Bible applies to your life today. I do throw in some background notes and some history as well as some speculation, but these lessons are primarily to help you understand the verse at hand and help you see the application to your life. Further, the lessons teach us a lot about God, but that us also an application to our lives as a major part of our lives is our relationship and understanding of God himself.
 - iii) One of my life-verses is “Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still;”, which is the first half of Proverbs 9:9 (NIV). I take the view that a wise man, or woman is one who believes in God. My ministry is to *instruct them* in the ways of God to make them even wiser, which is to help them mature their faith.
 - f) Bottom line: If you’re looking for a lot of the historical background that comes with this chapter you can purchase a detailed commentary on Daniel and find a lot of that background. It is interesting. There is a ministerial need for defense of the Bible. It is simply not the primary purpose of this study. OK, off the soapbox. ☺
5. OK, time to get into Chapter 5. At the end of Chapter 4, we had King Nebuchadnezzar proclaiming that our God, the true God, is the *only* God that exists. Now we have a gap in time to his grandson, King Belshazzar. We know from a later chapter in Daniel that Belshazzar reigned for at least 3 years. Verse 1 picks up on the last day of his life.

6. Chapter 5, Verse 1: King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them.
- a) Verse 1 sets the scene: It's party time. Here was the king, sitting in his palace. The occasion for the party is not given in the text. Visualize a big drunken-fest, with lots of loud music, professional dancers, guys, their wives, their "significant others", etc.
 - b) History records the most likely reason for this get together of all the nobles. These are the head officials from all around the Babylonian Empire, gathered at the headquarters. The Median-Persian Empire is on the rise. Many of the "nobles" were on the retreat and came to the City of Babylon for safety. This was probably a gathering of the "gang".
 - c) Babylon the City was considered impenetrable to foreign invaders. It had walls wide enough for chariot races. The Euphrates River ran through the middle of the City, so you could not starve the residents out of the city. The River provided an elaborate moat system and channel system through the City.
 - i) To booster their confidence in themselves and not worry about the rising of the "other" empire, they all had a big party in a large banquet room. Instead of worrying about how to defeat the enemy, they trusted in their own safety within the walls.
 - ii) Bottom line: These guys trusted in the safety of the City, as opposed to God.
7. Verse 2: While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. ³ So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.
- a) Here we read of Belshazzar first and second mistake:
 - b) First of all, he was drunk. Biblically, God calls for leaders to be sober at all times. Because God raises people to high positions, with that leadership comes the burden of responsibility.
 - i) Of all people, King Solomon's mother (Bathsheba) gives an interesting bit of wisdom regarding kings and drinking to Solomon:
 - ii) "It is not for kings, O Lemuel (a.k.a., Solomon) --not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights. (Proverbs 31:4-5, NIV)
 - c) The 2nd and bigger mistake we read of here is Belshazzar turning his back on the God. Let me explain further.
 - i) What we are reading about here is the moral decline of the Babylonian kings.
 - ii) Historical records show that Belshazzar was actually the grandson of King Nebuchadnezzar. In-between King Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar was a small succession of other kings including some assassinations and seizure of the thrown by various people.
 - iii) At the end of the last chapter, we read of Nebuchadnezzar claiming that the God-of-Daniel is the only God out there. He turned his back on all the false gods of the Babylonian system, including the god "Nebu" after whom king Nebuchadnezzar himself was named.

- iv) Sometime in-between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, the country of Babylonian had gone into a moral decline. We know this because:
 - a) 1) Belshazzar was aware of the proclamation made by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - b) 2) Belshazzar, here in Verse 2 calls for the items of the Jewish temple to be brought out in the middle of the feast.
 - c) 3) Belshazzar may also have been aware of Daniel's prophecy to King Nebuchadnezzar that the Medo-Persians would take over the empire as explained in Daniel Chapter 2.
 - d) By bringing the Jewish temple items out into public, what Belshazzar is doing is mocking the proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's predictions. By calling for the sacred items of the Jewish temple to be brought out for display, he is mocking the views of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - e) Understand clearly, that Belshazzar was well aware of his grandfather's proclamation. Daniel makes that clear in Verse 22: Reading ahead:
 - (1) "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this." (Daniel 5, Verse 22).
 - (a) Side note: The Babylonian language has no word for the English word "grandson". The word "son" can also be translated "successor".
 - (2) "Knew all this" refers to Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation of Daniel's God being the one and only true God.
- d) Last thing before we move on. I was thinking about Daniel during this time.
 - i) Daniel probably watched and prayed in sadness as the Babylonian kingdom morally declined.
 - ii) Daniel also knows what God is like. He won't tolerate forever a kingdom that is *aware* of His presence, and then turns their collective backs on Him.
 - iii) World history has shown that whenever there is a Christian-dominated nation, that collectively goes into moral decay, what soon follows is the lack of every other blessing.
 - iv) It was also true of the nations that turned their back on Israel through the centuries. Most, if not all of the ancient nations that fought against Israel no longer exist. How many Amorites and Hittites have you met? ☺ God's name will not be mocked.
 - v) Daniel was much older at this time, probably around 80 years old. He had retired from administrative service. He was as proud as can be the day Nebuchadnezzar made the proclamation to the whole world. Now he has watched the moral decline of the nation.
 - vi) What I *like* about Daniel here is he is on stand by! He knows that living a life of moral decadence is unfulfilling, and sooner or later, people will seek out followers of the true and living God for answers.
 - vii) This is what we read about with Belshazzar. A mystery is coming up which he can't explain. After all his resources fail, he turns back to Daniel. We'll get into more of this later.
 - viii) The point for now, and the application for us, is to be *ready* to give an answer to those who ask for one. (See 1st Peter 3:15). God wants to use us in situations when people are looking for answers.

8. Meanwhile, back in the Book of Daniel, we left King Belshazzar having a happy-go-lucky, no-cares-at-all time back at the palace. Now, for the plot twist. Verse 5: Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lamp stand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. ⁶ His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.
- a) Here's the scene. The king, his drinking buddies, his officials, and everybody's wife was sitting there having a big party. I suspect most of the guests were drunk. Music was playing. There were servants bringing in more and more food. There was lots of laughter and joking around. All in all, it looks like a beer commercial. ☺
 - b) Suddenly, the room goes quiet. The music stops. A human hand, or a set of fingers, with nothing attached to it starts writing on the wall. I suspect the writing was large enough and distinct enough it caught everyone's attention. I suspect some one screamed out loud to get everyone's attention, and then, everybody pointed. Finally, the king stood up to get a closer look.
 - c) Picture the atmosphere changing from party mood to horror. That's what we have here. The king was frightened in Verse 6, and I suspect, so was the rest of the room.
 - i) For those of you who have heard the cliché "the writing on the wall", you now know the origin of that cliché.
 - ii) I was thinking, why did God send "fingers" to deliver the message? Couldn't God just send a big angel with a sword and a big marking pen? That would have stopped the room just as well
 - iii) The only answer I could think of was the cliché: "The finger of God".
 - a) That term first came from the magicians who worked under Pharaoh in Egypt. When they could not replicate the miracles performed by Moses, they referred to those events as "The Finger of God". (Exodus 8:19)
 - b) That term was probably familiar to Daniel and was verification to him that God-himself was responsible for this.
9. Verse 7: The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to be brought and said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom." ⁸ Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. ⁹ So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled.
- a) The king wanted to know what the writing meant. So he brought in the magicians, the wizards, the priests of the Babylonian gods, and probably everyone else of this sect on the government payroll.
 - i) Notice this group is always nearby, especially in religious matters. The last thing Satan wants is for you to turn your life completely over to God. Therefore false priests and false prophets are *always* hanging around, ready to lead you astray.
 - a) If you read the letters of the New Testament, almost all of them spend some time dealing with the issues of false prophets and false teachers.
 - b) If you've been with us through all of Daniel, this group of characters won't go away.
 - i) Back in Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar killed a bunch of these guys because they couldn't interpret the king's dream.
 - ii) Back in Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar brought in the same group again, who again failed to interpret the dream.
 - iii) You would think by now, these guys would have been laid off the government payroll. They have a poor track record.

- iv) The key to remember is that Belshazzar turned his back on God. When people turn away from God, they *always* turn to something else. Man has an inherent need to worship something. False gods, and false-preachers like this group of characters are *always* on stand-by. I suspect as the Babylonian kingdom declined morally, these guys rose to power again.
 - c) I suspect the reason they couldn't interpret it partially had to do with fear of their lives. The words, in the Caldean language, do not have any vowels. The words can have a number of meanings. The words *together* became a puzzle, as this group didn't know the implications of the combined meaning of the words. I suspect they were further afraid to speculate out of fear of their lives.
 - i) Some commentators speculated the reason they couldn't read it is that the letters may have been evenly spaced, and Daniel read them vertically when everyone else was trying to read them horizontally.
10. Meanwhile, here comes the queen. Most commentators believe it is the queen *mother*. Like English the "queen" can refer to the king's wife or king's mother. Verse 10: The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. "O king, live forever!" she said. "Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale!" ¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father--your father the king, I say--appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. ¹² This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means."
- a) Let me paraphrase. Queen mom was not in the room getting drunk with everyone else. She was probably nearby. She may have heard the shrieks of horror when people saw the hand writing on the wall, and was probably sought, or she sought to see what the commotion was all about.
 - i) The Queen-Mom may also have been a wife-queen. It was common in this culture to also have a queen of the previous king (i.e., your father) to help establish power. Thus, this could be either her mother, or a few people speculate it could have been the wife of King Nebuchadnezzar himself.
 - b) To continue my paraphrase: "The queen said to the king don't worry son. Back when grandpa Nebuchadnezzar was on the throne he had this guy who could interpret any dream. Call him out of retirement and he'll solve this mystery for you."
 - c) Notice the queen (mother) was *aware* of Daniel. That is one of the great admirable qualities of Daniel spoken of him in this book.
 - i) It is so common, then and now, to turn to God as a last resort. People will try all sorts of things, everything possible to get out of a mess and then say, "oh, well, there is nothing to do now, but pray". They say that as a last resort instead of a first option.
 - a) That same action took place here. First the king called in the magicians and astrologers, etc. Nothing. Then it was remembered, "oh yeah, there is that Daniel guy. They "conveniently" forgot that grandfather Nebuchadnezzar called Daniel's God the true and living God. They "happen" to remember Daniel had the power to interpret dreams as if, he just had a special talent like a musician or an athlete!

- ii) In the next verse Daniel was called into the banquet. That means in his retirement he was not that far away from the location of the banquet.
 - a) I like the fact that Daniel was still accessible during this time. That is a lesson for us. Despite the fact he was in retirement. Despite the fact that he wanted nothing to do with this king (as interpreted by Daniel's upcoming speech), Daniel stayed near by. Daniel wanted to be ready for service when called by God. That is a great lesson for us.
11. Verse 13: So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, "Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah?"
- a) You may not realize it, but the king just insulted Daniel.
 - b) Remember that Daniel was the #2 man under King Nebuchadnezzar. I'm certain that Belshazzar was well aware of that fact of history.
 - c) Here, Belshazzar calls Daniel "one of the exiles my father...brought from Judah".
 - i) Instead of acknowledging his position, he calls him a slave.
 - d) This is just further proof how much disdain Belshazzar had for Daniel and his God, and his prediction about the fall of Babylon.
 - e) I heard another interesting speculation I want to share.
 - i) In Chapter 1, the Babylonian name Nebuchadnezzar gave Daniel was Beltshazzar.
 - ii) This king, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar was named Belshazzar
 - iii) The names are strikingly similar. King Belshazzar was 14 years old when King Nebuchadnezzar died. It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar *named* the kid after Daniel? It's speculation, but it would add to the *disdain* the king had for Daniel.
12. Belshazzar continues his speech in Verse 14: I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom. ¹⁵ The wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it. ¹⁶ Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom."
- a) Here was the king: Nervous, puzzled, and probably still a little drunk.
 - b) Here is Daniel's big moment to be a witness to this king. It is probably the first time they have faced each other directly. I'm sure Daniel was aware of his escapades.
 - c) Before we read Daniel's response, remember the state of life Daniel was at here.
 - i) Daniel was probably 80 years old. He was deported as a teenager to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar conquered Israel. Daniel probably never saw his parents again after that deportation.
 - ii) Despite his life in Babylon, Daniel remained true to his God. The first four chapters of this book showed Daniel's lack of compromise and his boldness to stand up for the truth. God raised Daniel to be Nebuchadnezzar's right-hand man to be a witness *to* him. Now Daniel is in retirement. Daniel has watched the kingdom decline morally since the death of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - iii) With all that background, do you think Daniel is even *interested* in Belshazzar's proclamation of "if you solve this riddle for me, I'll make you the #3 man in the kingdom?" Hardly!
 - iv) I should mention that history records that King Belshazzar was the #2 man in power, and his father was away on business at this time. Thus the proclamation of making Daniel the #3 man in the kingdom to be valid.
 - a) I further suspect the King was still scared of the writing as to offer Daniel that much power and reward for solving this mystery.

13. Daniel's response, Verse 17: Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.
- a) The gifts had no meaning to Daniel. I further suspect that Daniel wanted to show the king that his motivation to interpret the dream was not for financial reward but to speak on behalf of God and proclaim his message.
 - i) Often, we as messengers of God need to turn down financial rewards for doing such actions. People will question our *motivations* if we taken financial rewards in such cases.
 - a) If Daniel took the money, people *could* have thought, "Well, of course Daniel gave a bad interpretation. He wanted to get back in power again. Look, he's now the #3 guy in the kingdom for his sermon!"
 - b) If you read through Paul's letters, you will notice Paul sometimes avoided taking collections from those he was witnessing to. He didn't want his motivations to be questioned.
 - (1) Paul said, "And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed." (2nd Cor. 11:9, NIV)
14. Meanwhile, Daniel is still chewing out Belshazzar: Verse 18: "O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. ¹⁹ Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. ²⁰ But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. ²¹ He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes.
- a) Let me paraphrase and make this simple "Oh King Belshazzar, you ain't nothing compared to Nebuchadnezzar. Now that was a king. Who Nebuchadnezzar wanted to kill, he killed, who he wanted to spare, he spared. God gave him that power. God raised him up to be the most powerful man on earth. God gave him all that authority. When Nebuchadnezzar refused to acknowledge God, He made him a madman like a cow until he *did* acknowledge God. Then God raised him up again because he repented of his sins.
 - i) Daniel is further implying that Nebuchadnezzar was not raised to power because Nebuchadnezzar was "something special". God raised him up that high for your learning, for my learning, and for the learning of King Belshazzar!
 - ii) God goes out of his way to teach us that he, and he alone is in charge. God raised, lowered and raised Nebuchadnezzar again as a witness of God himself.
 - a) "For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another." (Isaiah 48:11, NIV)
15. Verse 22, the most important verse in the Chapter. (Yes, that means pay attention! ☺): "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.
- a) Sorry, Belshazzar you don't get any more chances to repent. God isn't going to turn you into a cow for 7 years and give you a chance. You *knew* all of this. You *knew* of the rise and fall of your grandfather. Instead of learning that lesson, you *mocked* God by bring the temple items out of the closet for "common" use!
 - i) To use New Testament terminology, "Much is required from those to whom much is given, for their responsibility is greater." (Luke 12:48b, TLB)

- ii) The reason God does not turn you and I into cows for 7 years is because we have access to the Bible! We live in an age of readily accessible information. We, as Americans, do not have any excuses. We are accountable to God because we should know better.
 - iii) The balance of course, is that God gives us all time to repent. I suspect that when Daniel was telling Belshazzar about the dream, he was looking for *any* sign of remorse or repentance on the king's part.
 - a) Peter said, "He (God) is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2nd Peter 3:9, NIV)
16. Daniel continues, Verse 23: you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.
- a) Before I get into specifics, I just picture this old man Daniel speaking his mind. Part of him has to be thinking, "I'm old. I served God all my life. What can this guy do to me anyway? I'm just going to bluntly tell him the truth and accept the fact he may kill me for it. I've lived this long trusting God. Why stop now!"
 - b) The interesting thing is that Daniel lived, once-again after being the bearer of bad news, and God will use Daniel's testimony to *another* king in the next chapter.
 - c) Here is Daniel chastising the king. He blatantly says in Verse 23 that you have set yourself up *against* the Lord of Heaven.
 - i) He accuses of him of blaspheming God by bringing in the temple items.
 - ii) He states that Belshazzar is guilty of blasphemy.
 - iii) It's interesting to note that Belshazzar didn't call Daniel a liar or deny the accusations.
 - iv) Just as Nebuchadnezzar's rise, fall and rise is a testimony to us about honoring the true and living God, so is the fall and no-rise-again of Belshazzar as *another* testimony to the importance of acknowledging and serving God.
17. Onto Daniel's interpretation of the inscription, Verse 24: Therefore he (God) sent the hand that wrote the inscription, Verse 25: "This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN ²⁶ "This is what these words mean: *Mene*: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. ²⁷ *Tekel*: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. ²⁸ *Peres*: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."
- a) You have to remember that in this language (Aramaic) there are no vowels. The words have multiple meanings depending upon where the "vowel-points" are placed.
 - b) The word "Mene", which means, "numbered" is stated twice for emphasis.
 - i) Saying a word twice is like the English word "very" as in very very good.
 - ii) By the way, there is an earlier Biblical support for repeating the word twice.
 - a) In Genesis, Joseph was interpreting the dream of the Pharaoh of Egypt. The Pharaoh had a dream that was repeated to him.
 - b) Notice an editorial comment by Joseph:
 - (1) "Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about. Genesis 41:32 (NASB)
 - c) The word "Tekel" means, "weighed", as stated. It is a money-type of weight. The Jewish coin "Shekel" has a similar root word.

- d) The word “Peres” which means divided is also a pun. The same constants also spell the word “Persians” as in the Medo-Persian Empire.
- i) In Verse 25: The 4th word is “Parsin”. Some translations say “Uparsin”. They are the same word. In Verse 28, the same word is “Peres”
 - ii) “Peres is the singular word for “divided”. “Parsin” or “Uparsin” is plural. Since the division is by the Medes and the Persians, the plural is used.
18. Verse 29: Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.
- a) This is the strangest verse in the Chapter. Daniel just solves the mystery, and announces to the king that the Babylonian kingdom is about to be destroyed along with the king’s life. Yet, the king announces to clothe Daniel in purple, give him a gold chain and make him the #3 man.
 - b) I heard a few possible explanations I would like to share:
 - i) The first is that the king didn’t believe him, and therefore he was mocking him. The king in his drunk state was saying sarcastically, “Oh, yeah, good interpretation Daniel, hey everybody, let’s put a robe on this guy and make him the #3 man, etc.
 - ii) The 2nd possibility is that the king was drunk. He simply didn’t comprehend the message. Imagine the king speaking in a drunken voice “I’d said I’d give you a robe and some gold, so guards put a robe on this guy. I said I’d do it and I’m going to do it. I’m a man of my word! {hiccup} ☺ ”
 - iii) The 3rd possibility is that he knew Daniel was right, and was trying to do the right thing, but I find this unlikely.
19. Verse 30: That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, ³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.
- a) History records that night that most of the people in that room were slain and the king was killed. I wonder if it happened right after Daniel made the proclamation.
 - i) Personally, I envision Daniel leaving the room right after the proclamation. He probably ran into Darius in the hallway. Darius said, “Excuse me, do you know where I can find the king and his nobles? Daniel said, “Sure, down the stairwell straight ahead. They’re in the basement. Can’t miss them.” ☺
 - b) How the actual conquest of Babylon happened is interesting history. The Medo-Persian army diverted the River that flows into the City of Babylon. The army was then able to walk under the moat-walls. They overtook the unsuspecting guards and moved into the banquet hall. History records that almost everyone in the banquet hall was killed that night.
 - c) History records Darius was a sub-king under Cyrus the Persian. Darius lead the invasion of the City of Babylon and ruled from that City.
 - d) We tend to forget that our God, who is a God of Love, is also a God of Judgment. God is not mocked, and there is an eternal punishment to pay for those who turn their backs on God.
 - i) C.S. Lewis once made the remark “The gates of hell will be locked from the inside”. What he meant by that is that hell is a place for people who willfully turn their back from God on a life-long basis. This is an example of what we see in King Belshazzar and has been repeated throughout history.
 - ii) Christianity has been described as “a rescue mission at the gates of hell”. Our job, like Daniel’s here, is to help people realize they are going down the wrong path and offer them an opportunity to change their ways. Some of them, like Nebuchadnezzar do so. Some, like Belshazzar, willfully choose to disobey God and suffer eternal consequences.

- iii) On that somber note, its time to wrap up today's lesson. ☺
20. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, we live in a world that has been corrupted by sin. You have left us as your witness to a morally declining world. Help us to learn the lessons from Daniel about being a faithful witness in good and bad times. Each of us have people we love who have turned their backs to you. Open their hearts to your truth and help us to be a faithful witness. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.
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Bonus Material – Class Handouts:

Notes for Daniel- Chapter 5 (Page 1 of 3)

God Holds Us Accountable for What We Know!

Introduction:

- The key word to the whole chapter is: Accountability!
- “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows” (Gal. 6:7 NIV).
- Background notes for Chapter 5:
- King Nebuchadnezzar is “out of the picture”. The last we read of him was in Chapter 4.
- Chapter 5 takes place many years later.
- Daniel was in “retirement” as of this time. He was in his late 70’s or early 80’s.
- Belshazzar is now the head of the Babylonian Empire. He is Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson.
- All of Chapter 5 is about the last 24 hours of the life of King Belshazzar

A Summary of Chapter 3:

1. King Belshazzar throws a big feast (Verses 1-3).
 - a) All the governors (i.e., “nobles) from the Empire are invited the banquet.
 - b) King Belshazzar orders to bring the gold and silver goblets taken captive from the Jewish Temple for their use at this banquet.
 - c) This was done in defiance of Daniel’s prediction of the fall of the Babylonian Empire.
 2. A hand or maybe just fingers, appears unattached to an arm, and writes on the wall (Verses 5-9).
 - a) The party comes to an abrupt halt. Everybody, including the king is scared.
 - b) The king calls for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to interpret the writing, no luck.
 3. The Queen Mother’s Recommendation (Verses: 10-16):
 - a) The Queen who was not in the room, came in and tells the king “calm down”.
 - b) The Queen said, “When Nebuchadnezzar was on the throne, Daniel interpreted dreams.
 - c) The king had Daniel called in. (Daniel must have lived/been near by).
 4. Daniel’s interpretation of the writing (Verses 17-28).
 - a) Daniel “chews-out” King Belshazzar for mocking the God-of-Israel (Verses 17-24).
 - b) Daniel explains what was written on the wall. (Vs. 25-28).
 5. The epilogue to the story (Verses 29-31).
 - a) King Belshazzar rewards Daniel for interpreting the verse.
 - b) Later that night, King Darius of the Medo-Persian Empire, enters the palace and kills the king, along with almost everybody in the room. (Daniel left earlier).
 6. Chapter 6 is about Daniel and King Darius.
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Bible Cross-References and Notes for This Week’s Study:

Verses 2-4: The 2 mistakes made by King Belshazzar:

- Mistake #1: The Bible teaches against drunkenness, especially for leaders.
- “It is not for kings, O Lemuel (a.k.a., Solomon) --not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights. (Proverbs 31:4-5, NIV)
- The king was trusting in the security of his palace and his great wealth as opposed to God.
- Mistake #2: King Belshazzar did not humble himself before God although he knew of God.
- “But you his (grand)son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.” (Daniel 5, Verse 22).

Notes for Daniel- Chapter 5 (Page 2 of 3)

Bible Cross-References for This Week's Study:

Verses 2-4: Where was Daniel during the declining years between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar?

- All we know was Daniel was nearby.
- We know this because he was called brought in the room quickly for the interpretation.
- During times when things are falling apart morally be on stand by to give an answer like Daniel.
- Peter said, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (1st Peter 3:15, NIV)

Verses 5-9: The "fingers" writing on the wall.

- This is where the cliché comes from "the writing on the wall".
- Why did God choose this method to communicate King Belshazzar's doom?
- "The finger of God" in the Bible is associated with judgment.
- But when the magicians (of Pharaoh) tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals. The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." (Exodus 8:18-19a, NIV)

Verse 7: The false-prophets/occultists where brought in to read the writing.

- In the Bible, false prophets are *always* on standby to lead others astray.
- Paul said, "For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness". (2nd Thessalonians 2:11-12, NIV)

Verses 10-12: The Queen Mother's Recommendation:

- The Queen Mother was "one-step better" than King Belshazzar.
- She was not in the room drinking.
- She was aware of the power of Daniel.
- She was aware of King Nebuchadnezzar' proclamation that Daniel's God is the true God.
- Despite the fact she was not part of the drinking party, she is no less guilty before God because she herself didn't repent.
- Jesus himself gave a warning to those who are "luke-warm" in their relationship with God:
- "I know you well—you are neither hot nor cold; I wish you were one or the other! But since you are merely lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth! (Rev. 3:15-16, TLB).

Verses 13: Daniel was called in before the king.

- Belshazzar insults Daniel by calling him "one of the exiles brought out from Israel".
- He knew that Daniel was the #2 man under Nebuchadnezzar.
- There is the possibility that King Belshazzar was named after Daniel and his Babylonian-name Belteshazzar. King Belshazzar was 14 years old when Nebuchadnezzar died.

Verses 17: Daniel turns down King Belshazzar's offer of gifts for interpreting the writing.

- Sometimes we have to turn down financial rewards for being a witness for God.
- If we accept those rewards people will question our motivation.
- Paul said, "And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed." (2nd Cor. 11:9, NIV)

Notes for Daniel- Chapter 5 (Page 3 of 3)

Verses 17: Daniel “chews-out” King Belshazzar for mocking the God-of-Israel (Verses 17-24)

- Daniel knew Belshazzar was aware of Nebuchadnezzar’s proclamation.
- Being a witness for Jesus is not only telling the good news, but also involves rebuking those who refuse to learn obey God’s commandments. That is what we see here.
- God raised, lowered and raised again the power of Nebuchadnezzar in Chapter 4.
- King Belshazzar was not given the same chance because he knew this.
- God did this to Nebuchadnezzar for his learning and for our learning.
- “For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another. “ (Isaiah 48:11, NIV)

Verses 22: Daniel scolds King Belshazzar for not acting on the knowledge he had about God (Verse 22)

- Jesus said, “Much is required from those to whom much is given, for their responsibility is greater.” (Luke 12:48b, TLB)
- God doesn’t turn us into cows for 7 years like Nebuchadnezzar because we have the Bible.
- We as affluent, information-accessible, adult-Americans have no excuses before God.
- The corollary is God is patient, and is waiting for people to repent.
- Peter said, “He (God) is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2nd Peter 3:9, NIV)

Verses 24: The Interpretation of the writing on the wall.

- There are only 4 words. They were written in Aramaic, a cousin-language to Hebrew.
- There are no vowels in Hebrew nor Aramaic. There are “vowel-points” added above the letters.
- Therefore, words have more than one meaning.
- It was the 4 words together that nobody else could interpret:
- MENE – means “numbered”.
- The word is stated twice for emphasis, like in English when we say it was very very good.
- In the Bible, when it is repeated, the emphasis shows the matter is determined by God.
- “Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about. Genesis 41:32 (NASB)
- TEKEL – means “weighted” as in money-weight. The word “Shekel” has the same root.
- PERES– means “divided”.
- It is also a pun because the same root letters can mean “Persians” as in “Medo-Persians”.
- Some translations say “Parsin” or “Uparsin”, which is the plural of “Peres”
- This is because the division of the kingdom is plural as in the Medes and the Persians.

Verses 29: King Belshazzar puts a robe & ring on Daniel for his interpretation.

- Why would the king do this when Daniel just predicted his death?
- Possibility #1 – The king was being sarcastic and cynical.
- Possibility #2 – The king was drunk – “I said I’d reward you and here ya go {hiccup}. ☺ ”

Epilogue – King Belshazzar was slain that day, because he failed to acknowledge God.

- C.S. Lewis once made the remark “The gates of hell will be locked from the inside”. What he meant by that is that hell is a place for people who willfully turn their back from God on a life-long basis. This is an example of what we see in King Belshazzar and has been repeated throughout history.
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