

Daniel #9

March 3, 2024

Series Title: Daniel's Visions Of the Ages

Today's Message: King Belshazzar's Folly; Daniel 5:1-31

Daniel 5:22 is a key verse in the chapter. The words evidently meant nothing to King Belshazzar. But, hopefully, for you and me it caused your soul to shutter. Daniel says to King Belshazzar these chilling words, "...you knew..." King Belshazzar knew that God dealt firmly with his "*father*" Nebuchadnezzar in humbling him and bringing him to repentance, yet it had no effect on him. Nebuchadnezzar's hard fall from his throne was evidently memorable, yet of little importance to King Belshazzar! He was non-responsive to the Truth of God!

There is great danger in knowing the Truth and doing nothing about it. Obviously, we know from Scripture that spiritual truth is impossible to grasp and understand in a saving-faith-kind-of-way apart from the quickening power of the Holy Spirit causing the *seed of the Word of God* to germinate and spring to life deep within the spirit of a human being. We know that unless the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life a person will remain dead to God and remain in their trespasses and sins. And dead means dead! There is no life; no saving response to the Truth; no turning to God in repentance. To say it again plainly, where there is no response of faith there is no spiritual life. That person is dead in their trespasses and sins. And make no mistake, it is indeed, their trespasses and their sins for which they will give an accounting before God.

So, why are we given this story that is so grim? Why would we have to hear about a King who sealed his own judgment long before he was confronted by the Lord through the *hand, writing on the wall*?

It is written to benefit us in several ways:

To remind us not to set our hearts on evil: The Holy Spirit was very candid through the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul is recounting Israel's rebellion against God. In 10:6 he writes, "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did."

To warn us not to become complacent: Again in 1 Corinthians 10:11 it is written, "These things happened as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall."

To encourage us so that we might have endurance in doing what is right: Paul writes this in Romans 15:4 when he says, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

We could go on and say that this story is written with the same origin and intent as the rest of Scripture. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness." God has spoken to us in the Scripture teaching us what is right on the mark, revealing what is wrong and off the mark, directing us how to get right and on the mark, and how to stay right and on the mark.

So, this grim story is written for us! For some people it might condemn them as they see themselves, perhaps for the first time, in the life and folly of King Belshazzar. If that is you, then repent! Cry out to God for mercy. For some of you the story may be used to wake you up from your spiritual complacency. Wake up! "Wake up from your drunken stupor," as it is written, "as is right and do not go on sinning. For some [of you] have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. (1 Corinthians 15:34)" For others today the story might serve as a warning to stay humble, stay alert and stay vigilant! "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:6)" "Be alert! Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith..." (1 Peter 5:8-9a).

The goal is that you would keep your spiritual zeal and fervor, and not allow yourself to coast through life, but rather to “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13)”!

Our outline is simple but will need some explanation as we go through the message: **1)** King B is Charged with sins against the God of Heaven (5:1-12); **2)** King B is Prosecuted by Daniel who speaks on behalf of God (5:13-23); **3)** King B is judged for his sins with no offer of repentance (5:24-31).

I) **(5:1-12) King B is charged with sins against the God of Heaven.**

A) Who is King Belshazzar?

- 1) He was not a blood relative of Nebuchadnezzar, referred to as *father* as he sat on the throne before him.
- 2) Nebuchadnezzar died in 559B.C. after reigning 43 years. (The following is by Berosus)
 - (a) Neb’s son, Evil-Merodach (2 Kings 25:27-30; Jeremiah 52:31-34) reigned 2 years. He was assassinated by his brother-in-law Neriglassar (Nergalsharezer, Jer. 39:3.13).
 - (b) Neriglassar ruled for 4 years before dying of natural causes.
 - (c) Laborosoarchod, only son of “Neri” ruled 9 months before being beaten to death by a gang of conspirators.
 - (d) Nabonidus, a leader of the conspirators, ruled from 553 B.C. until 539 B.C.
 - (i) **King Belshazzar**, eldest son of Nabonidus, began his “co-regency” in 550 B.C., ruling in Babylon while Nabonidus lived in Egypt.
 - (ii) During Daniel 5, Nabonidus was fighting and losing to the Medo-Persian army. It is upon King Belshazzar’s death that Babylon was defeated, and Darius (the Medo-Persian) became king (See Daniel 6:1)

B) (5:1-4) A huge party with massive spiritual implications

- 1) 1,000 drinking from the gold and silver goblets taken from the Temple of God by Neb.
 - (a) He was so filled with hubris that this party was held while the invaders were at the gates!
 - (b) While they drank from these cups taken by Neb. They worshiped “the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.”
 - (i) He knew his history, so you have to think he knew of the humbling of Neb by God.
 - (a) Yet, it meant nothing.
 1. Like many he knew the Truth, but it meant nothing more than “fables”.
 - a. “I knew not my danger, and felt not my load.” (Jehovah Tsidkenu, line 2)

C) (5:5-7) The Charges against King Belshazzar are publicly presented by the handwriting on the wall.

- 1) Was it an illusion? Was it the *finger of God*?
 - (a) Remember when Jesus wrote with His finger in the dirt in John 8:1-11?
 - (i) No one dared throw a stone at the woman. Something He wrote brought terror.
 - (b) King Belshazzar was terrified by the finger of God. “Knees knocking.”

D) (5:8-12) Daniel summoned.

- 1) “The wizards” could not explain the meaning of what was written.
- 2) The Queen Recommended Daniel to be summoned. She may have believed in God!
 - (a) Application: How long had Daniel been silenced? How long had the voice of God been ignored by King B? How long have you or a loved one ignored the voice of God...?
 - (b) Daniel would have been God’s voice to Him.
 - (i) Remember Jesus: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” (Matthew 23:37)
 - (c) King B neglected the Word of God.

- (i) PRN: The Devil leverages our neglect of the Word of God, to his advantage and our hurt.
 - (a) Prov. 24:33-34: “A nap time here, a nap time there, A little folding of the hands to take it easy, then your poverty will come as a robber and your want like an armed man.”
 - (ii) You have a responsibility to stop ignoring the Truth, repent and believe the Truth!

II) **(5:13-23) King B is prosecuted by Daniel who speaks on behalf of God.**

- A) (5:13-17) “I have heard (5:14, 16) [of your insight and abilities].” Still BLIND!
- B) (5:18-21) Daniel presents the opening arguments of God’s case against King B.
 - 1) No doubt Daniel is leveraging King B’s “I have heard” statements.
 - (a) No doubt [you heard] of Neb’s sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor.
 - (b) No doubt [you heard] he could do whatever pleased him: to promote and to murder.
 - (c) No doubt [you heard] that he was dethroned because of his arrogance.
 - (d) No doubt [you heard] that he grazed like a cow until he acknowledged God!
 - (e) No doubt [you heard] the conclusion of the matter: “That the Most High God is Sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes.”
- C) (5:22-23) Daniel lays out the prosecution.
 - 1) The two most damning words: YOU KNEW!
 - (a) King B, YOU KNEW and yet you did not humble yourself before God.
 - (b) King B, YOU KNEW that you were OPPOSING God by having the goblets from the Temple of God brought in to the party.
 - (c) King B, YOU KNEW and did not give glory and honor to God and worshiped idols instead.
 - (d) King B, YOU KNEW that God hold your life and ways in His hand.
 - (e) King B, in summary, YOU KNEW AND DID not repent and acknowledge God.
- D) Application: Jesus prosecuted the Pharisees by pronouncing against them the “Seven Woes.” The Pharisees “KNEW” the Truth but were nursing evil in their hearts (Matthew 23).
 - 1) James writes, “If anyone, then, knows the right thing to do but fails to do it is guilty of sin.” (James 4:17)

III) **(5:24-31) King B is judged for his sins and sentenced with no offer of repentance.**

- A) Daniel makes clear: God’s hand is the invisible hand that holds the king’s life and ways (5:23). And it is God who “sent the [visible] hand that wrote the inscription.”
 - 1) The point is that King B would understand that his terror is warranted; but his heart is stone cold!
 - (a) It meant nothing to him, the righteousness and holiness of God meant nothing to him. The human heart is hard! Unless the Lord breaks it, it won’t turn to Him!
- B) The judgment: Three-fold
 - 1) The first: God has numbered his days and brought it to an end. Its over.
 - 2) The second: God has said that King B falls short, in spiritual want.
 - 3) The third: God has stripped the kingdom from him and given it to the Medes and Persians. God can and does do that as he pleases (Ps. 115:3; Daniel 4:24-27).
- C) The judgment is carried out and the sentence is passed. King B was assassinated that night and King Darius, king of the Medo-Persian empire began his reign, subjecting the Babylonians to his rulership.
- D) APPLICATION: Parents keep praying for the repentance of your children. Don’t stop. Paul counseled Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24-26: **READ.**
 - 1) Daniel 5:22, Daniel told him, “You knew.” King B knew the stories about Neb and his repentance. He knew much like many of you know the *Truth*. It will be a sad today for many people, if they are unrepentant, when they hear the words, “You knew, and still you refused to repent.” If hearing this is hurting you, perhaps God has wounded you. What will you do? Do not refuse Him! (Heb. 4:6-7). King B was not given an invitation. But, thanks be to God, the invitation is open to you!