

DANIEL

DETERMINING TO GO GOD'S WAY – SPIRITUAL LIVING IN A SECULAR WORLD

Session 5 – Chapter 5

Handwriting on the wall

4. Three times in his book Daniel has recorded the failure of the “wise men” of Babylon to interpret the message of God. What point is Daniel trying to make?

5. What were the words written on the wall (5:5-9)?
 - a. What was significant about the timing of this message for the king?
 - b. Why do you think God used such a dramatic method for delivering His message to the king?

6. What are areas in your life where you see “the writing on the wall”?
 - a. What are the clear messages God is giving to you regarding your attitudes or behaviors?
 - b. In what ways do you need to look to others for help in seeing the things God is saying to you?

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7. Which is a greater temptation for you: taking your security for granted (and forgetting about God for stretches of time) or worrying about your security (rather than trusting God)?
 - a. What would be a good attitude for you to about God and the risks life poses? How would that affect your actions?

8. Why did the king not choose to know Daniel personally?
 - a. What might have kept him from considering Daniel as a wise friend?
 - b. What does this say about Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father?
 - c. What message is there in this for us today?

9. How can Daniel's words to Belshazzar help us become more humble and thankful to God (vv. 18 – 24)?

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10. How does this chapter demonstrate that sixty-five years of life under Babylon's influence had not broken down Daniel's convictions?
- What can we learn from Daniel's example that will help us resist pressures to compromise our convictions?

REFLECTION – GOING FORWARD

- Think of **ONE or TWO** things that you have learned that you'd like to work on in the coming week.
 - *You can list these things on page one of your study binder titled Going Forward.*
 - Remember that this is all about QUALITY, not QUANTITY. It's better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work on many and do poorly (or to be so overwhelmed that you simply don't try).**
- In Belshezzar's story, the writing on the wall told him something that was too late to avoid. He was killed that night. Jesus' death and resurrection tells us that it's never too late to amend our ways. Spend a few moments this week thanking God for the second chances you've been granted by His grace. Then ask God to show you areas in your life where you can learn from His Word to avoid having to face a "writing on the wall" experience in the future.
 - *You can list these thoughts on page two of your study binder titled Application under Session Five.*
- Invite God to work on your mind and heart in those areas you've previously noted. Be honest about your desires and fears, consider writing them down.

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GOING GOD'S WAY – GROUP DISCUSSION

Look for ways to put into practice the things you wrote down on page 1. Talk with other group members about your ideas and commit to being accountable to one another.

During the coming week, ask the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal truth to you from what you've read and studied.

Going God's way:

- Every chance we get, we also have a choice to make whether or not to go God's way.
- When we looked at Nebuchadnezzar we saw the number of chances he was given and the choices he ultimately made in determining to go God's way. He finally did go God's way but he had to be broken first and realize his insanity.
- Belshazzar as we read knew about the life, dreams, and conversion of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, he knew about Daniel and the role he had in Nebuchadnezzar's life **(22)**
- As many young leaders, Belshazzar made a choice to go his own way, self-absorbed and eyes fixed only on the present he disregarded the example of his grandfather that was set before him.
- It wasn't just Belshazzar that disregarded the example of Nebuchadnezzar but also Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father, who was the reigning King during this chapter, and the final Babylonian king.
- Where was Nabonidus? Well though he is not written about in the Bible history tells us...
 - He was in Tayma, or Tema, a desert oasis in modern day Saudi Arabia.
 - He put Belshazzar in charge while he stayed in Tayma, which wasn't a short trip, he was away from Babylon for most of his reign as King.
- So what was he doing there?
 - Some have regarded him as the first archeologist, but most importantly, in regards to this chapter of Daniel, he worshipped other gods, deeply and sincerely.
 - Statues of gods were not only worshipped, but the statues housed their gods inside of them, and this only happened when special attention was given to them.
 - Nabonidus gave special attention to these statues so that their cultic personnel would come along with them.
 - Once he found, restored, or recovered these statues he didn't restore them to their rightful house, but he took them all back with him to Babylon in the final year of his reign.
- Interestingly enough, we see this in the Cyrus cylinder,
 - *"As for the gods of Sumer and Akkad which Nabonidus, to the wrath of the lord of the gods, brought to Babylon, at the command of Marduk, the great lord, I (Cyrus) caused them to dwell in peace in their sanctuaries, (in) pleasing dwellings. May all the gods I brought (back) to their sanctuaries plead daily before Bel and Nabu for the lengthening of my days, may they intercede favorably on my behalf."*
- This account of Cyrus was confirmed in the Babylonian Chronicles,
 - *"From the month of Kislimu to the month of Addaru, the gods of Akkad which Nabonidus had made come down to Babylon, were returned to their sacred cities."*
- Why do I share all of this information?

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- Though Nabonidus isn't discussed in Daniel, it's important to note that he set an example in his house of what was and was not important, this is the example that was most present for Belshazzar,
- unlike Daniel who grew up in a Godly home and as he aged continued in that example and grew in his relationship with the Lord.
- Belshazzar grew in the example of his father, who like him, also disregarded the example of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - ✓ WE ALL PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THE EXAMPLE WE SET IN OUR HOME, WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR FAMILIES, WE HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON THE GENERATIONS AFTER US. WE FIRST DETERMINE TO GO GOD'S WAY AND BRING UP THOSE AROUND US IN THAT EXAMPLE.
 - ✓ **Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.**
 - ✓ **Eph 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.**
- In the book of Daniel we have seen examples of Godly men making choices that evidently had been influenced by the Godly men that came before them and the Scriptures that guided their lives.
 - The writer of Hebrews says, ***“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (13:7-8)***
- Here in this chapter we see what happens when history is ignored, when past examples are rejected, and selfishness and pride are allowed to rule a life.
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar many chances, we have a very merciful Lord that is consistent in all of His ways. ***Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.***
- I imagine Belshazzar, had many chances also, but most notably a chance to heed the example of a grandfather whose life was forever changed by the Most High God and a man, Daniel, who still served in his courts at his disposal.
- Now as we look at this chapter we will see how these different lives played out, how their adherence or disassociation with past examples and God differed in the outcome of their life.
 - ***(Q2a) What causes people today to disregard God despite the testimony of earlier generations?***

Stand for God over the long haul:

- Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in 539
- If Daniel was 15 when he was taken in Babylon in 605 BC that would make him about 81 years old at the time he was summoned by Belshazzar in this chapter. ***(vv. 13)***
- If you take a quick look at chapter 8, the events of which precede this chapter, you will see in verse 1, ***“in the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar...”***
 - That places chapter 8 somewhere around 553-554 BC

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- **(vv. 27)** Following the Antioches/Antichrist dream and vision it reads, ***“afterward I rose up, and did the king’s business;...”***
- Daniel was still working within the king’s faculty, evidently not as prominent as the role he had with Nebuchadnezzar as Belshazzar didn’t personally dialogue with him until the final day of his reign.
- Daniel had worked literally in the center of all the pagan and secular ideals of the “Great Babylon” for over 65 years.
- He was educated in a secular and cultic system, he was employed by a secular and cultic system, and probably had an untraceable number of conversations with pagan, cultic, and idolatrous people who he worked around.
- **(v. 11-12)** The Queen tells Belshazzar of Daniel and **(v. 13)** Daniel is brought before the King.
 - **1st (v. 13)** Daniel responds to God’s call. **2 Timothy 4:2 “in season and out of season”**
- In **(v. 13-16)** Belshazzar tells Daniel all the “things” he knows of him, though he never once called on him before this moment.
 - **2nd** Daniel responds first by graciously rejecting the king’s offer for gifts and rewards, even asking that they be bestowed upon another, but still he will read and interpret for him. **1 Timothy 3:3 “not greedy for money” Moses (Num 16:15), Samuel (1 Sam 12:3), and Paul (Acts 20:33)** all exhibited this same attitude, they couldn’t be bought.
 - **3rd** In **(v. 18-21, 22-24)** Daniel wasn’t afraid to respectfully tell the king the truth about him ignoring the example of his grandfather and the outcome of his defiance. From the beginning of his Babylonian captivity he always exhibited humility and tact with the authorities. **Titus 2:8 “Sound speech that cannot be condemned”**
 - **4th (v.25-28)** Daniel faithfully reads the writing and delivers the interpretation.
- Do you know what this tells me about Daniel?
 - He stood for God over the long haul
 - Regardless of his changing job title, he didn’t change his job with the Lord.
 - Regardless of his age, and the years he was in the midst of this pagan culture, he did not waver in his obedience to the Most High God.
 - ✓ WE WILL ENDURE AND EXPERIENCE MANY CHANGES IN OUR LIFE ON THIS EARTH, REGARDLESS OF HOW LONG IT IS. WE SHOULD DETERMINE TO GO GOD’S WAY AND STAND FOR HIM OVER THE LONG HAUL.
 - ✓ NO MATTER OUR CAREER OR AGE WE CAN ANSWER WHEN GOD CALLS. REGARDLESS OF THE PRESSURES WE FACE WE CAN EXHIBIT THE SAME ATTITUDE AS THE GODLY MEN BEFORE US, LIKE DANIEL, THAT WE CAN’T BE BOUGHT. OBEDIENTLY WE CAN APPLY TACT AND HUMILITY TO ALL OF OUR WORDS, ALLOWING GOD TO HANDLE THE CONSEQUENCES AND OUTCOME. WE CAN FAITHFULLY DO HIS WORK.
 - ✓ HAVE WE COMMITTED IN ADVANCE TO OBEDIENTLY STANDING FOR GOD OVER THE LONG HAUL?
 - **(Q10a What can we learn from Daniel’s example that will help us resist pressures to compromise our convictions?)**

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Writing on the wall, numbered days:

- Everyone here has no doubt heard this expression used in our culture today.
- It has been used for film, television, and countless songs from country to metal.
- It has been used by grandmothers, mothers, and fathers for countless generations as a warning of bad actions or behaviors that will lead to trouble, impending doom.
- This phrase originates with this chapter.
- Belshazzar did not pay attention to the writing on the wall.
- I would say that preceding that phrase are less severe warnings and examples of right behavior.
 - The stories Belshazzar knew of his grandfather would have been examples to him of his wrong behavior.
 - Daniel's warnings to Nebuchadnezzar could have most definitely been warnings for Belshazzar.
 - Belshazzar heard of the visions and interpretations, therefore he would be familiar that his grandfather was interpreted as the head of gold **(2:32)** which would be replaced by an inferior kingdom, breast and arms of silver, the Medes and Persians.
 - While the feast was going on, the Medes and Persians were at the wall of the city, arrogance and indifference kept him from reacting. This advancement on Babylon was the first major threat since his grandfather's reign. Hello! Put two and two together Belshazzar! Well he could have.
- The writing on the wall
 - Daniel tells him,
 - **(v. 26) MENE; God has numbered your kingdom and finished it;**
 - **(v. 27) TEKEL; You have been weighed and came up short;**
 - **(v. 28) PERES; Your kingdom will be taken from you and divided between the Medes and Persians**
- Quick reminder: THEY ARE AT THE GATES OF THE CITY!!!
 - Belshazzar rewards Daniel, Daniel accepts it because it doesn't matter, they are coming in shortly and it's not going to matter.
 - Belshazzar could have at least run, hidden, fell flat on his face and worshipped God, repented, humbled himself, etc..
 - Instead he rewards Daniel in the most awful display of arrogance and indifference to the pending doom and parties on.
 - From knees buckling before the reading and interpretation, to creating the kingdom's third ruler after being told he would be finished by those at the walls of his city.
- This warning came from the finger of God, just as the finger of God defeated the Egyptians when Pharaoh refused to let the people go **(Ex. 8:19)**, and wrote the holy law for Israel on the tablets of stone **(31:18)**.
 - ✓ LIKE KING BELSHAZZAR, MANY PEOPLE IN OUR WORLD TODAY ARE UNMINDFUL OF HISTORY LESSONS, UNABLE TO INTERPRET THE PRESENT, AND UNPREPARED FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FUTURE.

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- ✓ BELSHAZZAR DISREGARDED THE WORD OF GOD, GODLY EXAMPLE, AND HISTORY AND AS A RESULT LOST HIS LIFE. LET'S NOT BE NUMBERED AND WEIGHED WITH HIM.
- ✓ LET'S DETERMINE TO GO GOD'S WAY, TO CORRECT OUR ACTIONS BY THE EXAMPLES BEFORE US, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE, AS WE NEVER KNOW WHEN OUR DAYS WILL BE DONE. WE ARE EITHER LIGHT OR SALT OR TOSSED ASIDE LIKE CHAFF IN THE WIND.
- ✓ ***(Q6 What are areas in your life where you see "the writing on the wall"? a & b)***
- ✓ ***(Q3 What lessons from history do you think stand as particularly relevant reminders to us today?)***

Influence of one Godly life:

- Our days are numbered, so at the other end of this story, never take for granted the impact one Godly life has on the world around you.
 - Although Daniel had been disregarded over those last decades of the Babylonian Empire, when this message from God came, the Queen knew where to go, Daniel.
 - While nobody thought to consult his wisdom earlier that doesn't take away the influence Daniel had.
 - Anyone can freely choose to trust God, it's our role to faithfully witness, to be an ambassador for Christ. Unfortunately and sadly some people will choose to be curious about God too late.
 - Belshazzar consulted Daniel and even at the end of the interpretation completely missed the point, it was too late for him.
 - Whereas we saw Nebuchadnezzar's curiosity begin much earlier, he was open to the idea of God and had time to turn to him before it was too late.
 - I believe whole heartedly that Belshazzar had the chance to fall on his face and worship the Most High and One true God, while he may have lost his earthly life he would have received an eternal life.
 - The Medes and Persians were coming, so the choice he could have made would have been a personal one, but arrogance and pride consumed him.
- We have seen the Godly influence of Daniel and the impact it had all through the book of Daniel thus far:
 - ***(1:9) "God brought Daniel into favour and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs."***
 - ***(1:10)*** This influence spread from Daniel, to Ashpenaz, to Melzar who was over Daniel and his three friends.
 - ***(1:20)*** Nebuchadnezzar finds them 10x better
 - ***(2:15)*** Daniel had some influence on Arioch as he exhibited a real freedom of expression before going into the king.
 - The rest of chapter 2 shows Daniel getting time from the king, the king "glorifies" him and recognizes something amazing about "Daniel's God". This is the beginning of the conversion.
 - Daniel was able to set his friends in a good spot.
 - In chapter 4 we have Nebuchadnezzar's testimony which was delivered after the Lord broke him. This is the result of Godly influence on one's life.

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What does Daniel's rejection of acclaim and rewards (v. 17) say to you about the integrity and authenticity of this man and the message he brings? How might Daniel's example help you in your workplace or area of ministry?

- ✓ WE CAN ALL BE AMASSADORS INDIVIDUALLY PROCLAIMING THE TRUTH TO CALL MEN, WOMEN, AND NATIONS TO GOD AND HIS MERCY.
- ✓ WE NEVER KNOW WHEN OUR LORD WILL WANT TO USE US AS HE USED DANIEL. WE ALWAYS NEED TO BE READY.
- ✓ WHETHER WE HAVE A HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL ROLE OR ONE OF OBSCURITY GOD USES US.
- ✓ THE CHOICES WE MAKE MARK OUR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF THOSE AROUND US FOR ETERNITY.
- ✓ ARE YOU ACCOUNTING FOR THE GREAT INFLUENCE YOU HAVE WHEN YOU LEAD A GODLY LIFE, CHARACTERIZED BY THE LORD'S TRUTH, REFLECTING HIM TO THE WORLD AS THE MOON REFLECTS THE SUN?
- ✓ DO NOT BEAT YOURSELF INTO A BELIEF THAT YOU ARE ONLY ONE PERSON AND THE JOB IS TO BIG.
 1. THE JOB IS NEVER TO BIG FOR GOD
 2. YOU ARE NEVER ALONE
 3. THE BIBLE IS FILLED WITH PEOPLE THAT THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD DID AMAZING THINGS IN THE SAME 24 HOUR, 7 DAY A WEEK LIFE WE LIVE NOW.
 4. DO NOT TAKE FOR GRANTED THE INFLUENCE OF YOUR GODLY LIFE ON THE WORLD AROUND YOU.

FOUR POINTS:

- GOING GOD'S WAY HEB 13:7-8, JOSHUA 24:15, PSALM
- STAND FOR GOD OVER THE LONG HAUL 2 TIM 4:2, COL 1:11, 1 COR 13:7
- SEE THE WRITING ON THE WALL OUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED HEB 3:7-11,
- INFLUENCE OF ONE GODLY LIFE! HEB 13:7, 1 PET 3:15, 1 COR 11:1,

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GROUP DISCUSSION

Reflect, write, and answer as you feel comfortable

1. Daniel said to Belshazzar, “you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven” (vv. 23). Think of some present-day examples of people who mock God by their words or actions. Does God seem slow to judge their mockery? How can you explain God’s “slowness”?
2. What might it look like today for a person to set him – or herself up against the God of heaven – and what consequences can that person expect?
3. Belshazzar failed to learn from the experiences of his grandfather. What spiritual truths have you learned (or failed to learn) from your parents or predecessors?
4. What does Daniel’s rejection of acclaim and rewards (v. 17) say to you about the integrity and authenticity of this man and the message he brings? How might Daniel’s example help you in your workplace or area of ministry?
5. Think about your life as God sees it. In what ways might you be “found wanting” (vv. 27)? What can you do about it?