

“THE RESULTS OF BEING A REPROBATE”

DANIEL 5:1-31

Theme: Those who defy God will face the judgment of God.

I. A Reprobate Will Be Contentious toward Divine Authority – 5:1-4

A. *THE ALTERNATIVES OF THE REPROBATE IN DISTRESS* – vv. 1-2

1. The situation must be understood to properly grasp what was happening here.
2. Babylon was under siege by the Persians – Belshazzar’s father, Nabonidas having gone out to fight and was defeated.
3. Babylon was therefore surrounded, but had great confidence due to the massive walls, supposed unlimited supply of water, and many years of food stored up for just such a time.
4. Having had their army destroyed by the Persians, the Babylonians were somewhat distressed as to what ought to be done. Their confidence shaken, *“Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles . . .”* - an attempt to fortify the hearts of those in distress.
5. *“... and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand”* – attempting to bury their cares and get relief from their anxieties through drinking - a common practice among those who are Christ-less.
6. Possibly in a series of boastful assertions partially induced by intoxication, Belshazzar was declaring that he was not afraid of anything - the Persians or any human being; or even the gods - even the God of the Jews who had so greatly humbled his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar.
7. To prove his bravado, *“Belshazzar tasted the wine* [suggesting drunkenness “and”] *gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, in order that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.”*
8. Thus, the only thing people who do not fear God have to turn to in distress is the hollow assertions of their own abilities, and the escapist inebriants that claim to allow one to forget his worries.

B. *THE ANTAGONISM OF THE REPROBATE TOWARD DIVINITY* – vv. 3-4

1. When the sacred vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem were

brought to the King, Belshazzar attempted to reinstall confidence in the Babylonian gods by mocking the God of Israel.

2. We are told that *“they drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.”*
3. This was an act of defiance against the one God who had clearly been singled out as the “Most High God” through marvelous acts of sovereignty and might.
4. Belshazzar was glorifying his own gods and challenging the Lord God Jehovah, whose Temple vessels they were putting to unholy use, to prevent their debauchery and punish them if He could.
5. This defiance against God is a common feature among those who are “reprobate.”

II. A Reprobate Will Be Confronted by Divine Admonishment – 5:5-24

A. *THE DISTRESS PRODUCED BY DIVINE CONFRONTATION* – vv. 5-16

1. As a result of this defiance, *“suddenly the fingers of a man’s hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.”*
2. Later we will see what was written was a direct condemnation of Belshazzar and those who would defy God.
3. The immediate impact on those who have previously cared to know nothing about God but who are confronted by God is demonstrated in Belshazzar: *“Then the king’s face grew pale, and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.”*
4. He immediately calls for the *“conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners”* - wanting someone who would be able to handle this mysterious event.
5. He kept growing increasingly distressed until his mother, his father’s wife *“the queen entered . . . and said . . . Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale.”* – essentially, she told him to get a grip on himself.
6. She remembered the reputation of Daniel and suggested that he be called upon to provide insight into the mystery.
7. Daniel is described as a man who is greatly contrasted to the “reprobate” king:
 - a) – *“in whom is the spirit of the holy gods ...”*
 - b) – *“illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the*

gods are found in him”

c) - *“an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel.”*

8. Notice however, that when Daniel arrives, the King is interested to know about whether he was *“Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah . . . ?”*

9. This suggests that already, Belshazzar was feeling guilty about defying the God of the Jews.

B. THE DEGENERACY PROVOKING DIVINE CONFRONTATION – vv. 17-24

1. When Daniel begins to explain the reasons for which God is judging the King, he begins by referring the God as *“the Most High God”* and then immediately bring up the issue of Nebuchadnezzar’s difficult lesson.

2. He then states: *“Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this.”*

3. Daniel reveals what had been the reason for God’s judgment: *“but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven;”*

4. He concludes by stating: *“But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified.”*

5. He explains that the *“hand was sent from Him”* and the message is one of judgment.

III. A Reprobate Will Be Condemned by Divine Assessment – 5:25-31

A. THE CONDEMNATION IS EXPLAINED – vv. 25-28

1. We see what was written: *“Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘Menē, Menē, Tekēl, Upharsin.’”*

a) *“‘MENE’ – God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.”*

(1) It means not only “to count” but “to fix the limit of” as is also the case in our common expression that a man’s days are “numbered.”

(2) It is a declaration of doom on the kingdom of Babylon.

b) *“‘TEKEL’ – you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient”*

(1) Since it means to “weigh,” the thought is that the king has been weighed in the balances to test, as it were,

whether he is of full weight, or whether he fully conforms to the standard.

(2) He falls short of a “true weight.”

c) *“PERES’ – your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians”*

(1) *“upharsin”* – was in the first statement because “u” is a conjunction and “pharsin” is a plural of *“peres.”*

(2) *“peres”* means *“divided”* – and Daniel applies this to how the kingdom would be destroyed.

2. Once again, God’s servant provides the Word of God to those condemned only to be exalted to prominence, something Daniel would not have appreciated as the more honorable the person in a kingdom, the greater the likelihood of prosecution by the new government.

B. THE CONDEMNATION IS EXECUTED – vv. 29-31

1. This is the verdict on all human pride and achievement apart from God.

2. Even as Daniel declares the judgment of God, the invasion of the city was underway as the Persians were diverting the river Euphrates that flowed through the city and streaming through the riverbed into the unsuspecting, drunken city.

3. *“That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.”*

4. We are thus introduced to the next ruler in God’s plan for the ages – *“So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.”*

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