



## Silverdale Baptist

STAND. A STUDY IN DANIEL • STAND AWARE • DANIEL 5:1-31 • 6/27-28/2020

### MAIN POINT

Judgment and grace both come from the Lord. How will we respond?

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Did you ever misbehave as a child and have one of your parents tell you that they would deal with it when you got home? What was worse for you in those times: the actual punishment or the anticipation of punishment?**

**What are the purposes of punishment? What are the dangers of it?**

Many, many children have trembled at the words, "Just wait until your father gets home." Many children have dreaded taking their report cards home from school when they've gotten bad grades. It's so much fun to neglect homework and to play with friends, but eventually, we wind up paying the price for our neglect.

God is just, and because He is just, He will not ignore wickedness. Sin may be fun for a season, but eventually, we must pay the consequences for our actions. This is a lesson King Belshazzar would learn in Daniel 5. Fortunately for those who believe, the atonement that Christ made on the cross will deliver us from the punishment we are due. But for those that do not embrace Christ by faith, they have nothing to look forward to except "a terrifying expectation of judgment" (Hebrews 10:27).

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 5:1-12

**What do you learn about Belshazzar from this story?**

**Why do you think the writer mentions that Belshazzar brought in the vessels from the temple under the influence of wine?**

**Why do you think King Belshazzar was so afraid? Was it only the disembodied hand that frightened him?**

**What do you learn about Daniel from this story? How is he described?**

King Belshazzar was showing off his wealth in front of his 1,000 guests. In the middle of this celebration, Belshazzar had too much to drink and to show off, even more, he ordered the things from the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem to be brought in. Belshazzar and his guests used the vessels dedicated to the Lord God to praise their own false gods.

The hand, writing on the wall, would have been terrifying, but the fact that none of the conjurers, Chaldeans, or diviners could interpret the writing only made the fear worse.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 5:13-21.

**What was Belshazzar's offer to Daniel?**

**What do you think of Daniel's reply to King Belshazzar's offer?**

**Why do you think Daniel reminds Belshazzar of the story of Nebuchadnezzar?**

Belshazzar tried to be complimentary of Daniel by telling him that he had heard that Daniel had "the spirit of the gods" in him. The problem was that Belshazzar should have known better, but since he didn't know better, Daniel set him straight. He told Belshazzar that "the Most High God gave sovereignty, greatness, glory, and majesty" to his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel served the Most High God, not the gods of Babylon.

Daniel had no interest in Belshazzar's offer for a couple of reasons. Judgment was about to fall on Belshazzar and Babylon. Daniel knew that anything Belshazzar offered was practically worthless. Finally, Daniel did not interpret on behalf of the Lord just for monetary gain. He came to give the Lord's Word to the King so that others might learn to fear the Lord.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 5:22-31.

### **What is exactly is Belshazzar's sin?**

#### **Should he have known better? Why do you say that?**

Belshazzar knew about God's humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar himself had issued proclamations honoring the God of Israel after he regained his sanity, declaring that God's "dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation" (Dan. 4:34). Belshazzar was without excuse for acting so arrogantly towards the vessels of the Lord, and he knew better than to use the things of the Lord to praise his false gods.

#### **What is the interpretation of the writing on the wall?**

God's judgment came swiftly. At the first of the chapter, Belshazzar is wealthy enough to throw a party for 1,000 nobles. He's eating and drinking and having a great time. By the end of the chapter, he is dead. His sons did not sit on the throne after him, either. He lost everything through God's judgment, and even though he was the sovereign king of Babylon, he was powerless to stop it.

In the Bible, God writes with His finger on three occasions. The first is the ten commandments.

| HAVE VOLUNTEERS READ DEUTERONOMY 9:10.

Moses tells us God wrote the original ten commandments on stone tablets.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:1-11.

#### **What is the context for Jesus writing on the ground?**

#### **Where does this story take place?**

As Pastor Chuck Patrick pointed out, we have three times in the Bible where God wrote with His finger. The first is the Law or ten commandments. The second is judgment, the story of Belshazzar's arrogance. The third takes place in the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem, and it is the story of grace.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**At its core, the sin of Belshazzar is arrogance. In what ways do we become so casual with the things of God that we become arrogant?**

## **How can Belshazzar's bad example help us to live in humility?**

Belshazzar should have known about the judgment of God from the life of his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar.

## **What evidence do we see around us of the hand of God at work?**

**If God offers judgment (Daniel 5) and grace (John 8), how should that encourage us to share the gospel?**

## PRAYER

In a time of group prayer, ask the Father to help love and fear Him, and to remember that He is sovereign. Thank the Father for saving us from judgment through our Lord Jesus Christ, and ask Him to give us the courage to share this good news with others.

## COMMENTARY

### | DANIEL 5:1-31

The events of chapter 5 occurred in 539 B.C., twenty-three years after Nebuchadnezzar's death. Belshazzar was now ruling Babylon in the absence of his father, Nabonidus.

5:1–12. Belshazzar held a great banquet for all his nobles and their wives. He ordered that wine be served in the golden and silver goblets Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Lord's temple in Jerusalem years before. While Belshazzar and his guests drank from the goblets, a hand appeared in thin air and wrote a mysterious message on one of the palace walls. The frightened king sent for his wise men and diviners and decreed that whoever was able to interpret the message would be elevated to third in the kingdom. (Technically speaking Nabonidus was still the king, with Belshazzar being his vice-regent.) When they were unable to decipher the message, the queen (or queen mother) reminded Belshazzar of Daniel, who years before had gained a reputation as a skillful interpreter of dreams and riddles.

5:13–31. When summoned by the king, Daniel agreed to interpret the writing, though he declined the king's gifts. Before interpreting the message, however, he reminded Belshazzar of how God had humbled proud Nebuchadnezzar. He also denounced the king for his arrogance and for his disrespect for the temple vessels. Finally, Daniel turned to the cryptic message, which read, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin." He interpreted the message as being an ominous warning of

impending judgment on Belshazzar's kingdom. "Mene," meaning mina (fifty shekels), sounds like a related word meaning numbered. Belshazzar's days were numbered and his reign about to come to an end. In similar fashion "tekel," meaning shekel, was a play on a related word meaning weighed. Belshazzar had been weighed like a shekel on the scales of divine justice and had been found lacking. "Parsin," meaning half-shekels (in 5:28 the singular form "peres" is used) was taken as a play on a related word meaning divided. Furthermore, it sounds like Persian. Belshazzar's kingdom would be divided between the Medes and Persians. This prophecy of Belshazzar's demise was fulfilled that very night.