

Daniel 5

January 12, 2025



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

MAIN POINT

God is sovereign. He installs and removes human powers as He wills. Today's text teaches us to beware of a prideful heart that is tempted to glorify self over God.

INTRODUCTION

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

Think about the phrase, "The writing on the wall." Where and how have you heard this used?

How well do you think we typically do when learning from other people's experiences? Why is it important that we try to do this?

The account of King Nebuchadnezzar's reign ended at the end of Daniel 4. Daniel 5 skips forward a bit in time. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC, and due to political assassinations and intrigue, his immediate successors' reigns were short-lived until Nabonidus took the throne in 556 BC. Historians believe he married Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, and King Belshazzar, who we meet in chapter 5, was their son. While



Nabonidus ruled over the entire Babylonian Empire, it seems Belshazzar was named co-regent and ruler of the city of Babylon.

Last week we saw Nebuchadnezzar learn about the sovereignty of God the hard way, but today, we'll see how Belshazzar failed to learn from Nebuchadnezzar's life and mistakes—to his own peril. Once again, we will see that God reigns supreme.

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 happens in this passage? What is problematic with what takes place?

How would you describe Belshazzar's behavior here?

What have we already seen from other rulers in the book of Daniel that indicates Belshazzar is headed in a dangerous direction?

Chapter 5 opens with a great feast Belshazzar held for the nobles of Babylon. At the time, Babylon was under Persian siege. Thinking himself safe because the Babylonians had twenty years of provisions stored inside the robust city walls, Belshazzar engaged in drunken revelry and ordered the vessels Nebuchadnezzar had stolen from God's temple in Jerusalem be brought out for use. But they didn't just use these vessels, they drank from them and praised their false gods (v.4).

Since it would have been known that these were for use in God's temple, this was a bold move on Belshazzar's part to say the least, especially given Nebuchadnezzar's ego battle with the Lord.

When have you seen God "break in" unexpectedly to remind of His authority?

How did the remembrance of Daniel point to the people back to God's authority?

While only King Nebuchadnezzar saw his own disturbing dreams, the writing on the wall in King Belshazzar's feast was visible to everyone. This so greatly disturbed the drunken king that he turned pale and, knees knocking, soiled himself (v.6).

Belshazzar responded in the same way as Nebuchadnezzar: he called in the Chaldean mediums and diviners. They couldn't interpret the divine message, which disturbed Belshazzar even more. Interpretation belongs only to the Lord.



The queen who made her appearance in verse 10 is likely King Belshazzar's mother, Nebuchadnezzar's daughter. She remembered the role Daniel, who was now around eighty years old, played in similar situations in Nebuchadnezzar's reign and recommended that her son call on him for help.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 5:13-24.

How would you describe Daniel's response? Was this different from or like the way he approached Nebuchadnezzar?

Why do you think Daniel recapped the events of Nebuchadnezzar before interpreting the sign?

Read Daniel 5:23b. What do Daniel's words this tell us about God's sovereignty?

We see an interesting change in Daniel's approach in chapter 5. He wasn't disrespectful, but he also spoke directly. Evidently stunned by the foolishness of Belshazzar's actions, Daniel delivered a chastising speech.

He began as we have come to expect from Daniel: pointing to the Lord. Daniel immediately cited the source of Nebuchadnezzar's greatness as the Most High God (v.18). And Daniel's chastisement ended powerfully with: "But you have not glorified the God who holds your life-breath in his hand and who controls the whole course of your life" (5:23b).

God controls everything, and whatever power Belshazzar had received came from the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar learned this lesson the hard way, but Belshazzar's lesson was still to come.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 5:25-31.

How does this passage better inform your idea of seeing "the writing on the wall"?

Do you think Belshazzar took Daniel's interpretation seriously? What evidence is there for this, positively or negatively?

How are the events of this passage ultimately God's judgment on Belshazzar?

At the end of chapter 5, Belshazzar is dealt very serious consequences for his actions. Daniel said it best in 2:21: "he removes kings and establishes kings." That very night, Belshazzar was killed, and the Medes and Persians took over the city.

The Lord used the siege that Belshazzar wasn't worried about to serve His judgment. Darius the Mede diverted the water running into the city from the Euphrates River and



created a path for his troops to enter the city below the water gates, thus ushering in Medo-Persian rule.

Remember Nebuchadnezzar's dream with the colossal statue in chapter 2? These events fulfill Daniel's prophetic interpretation: an inferior kingdom, the chest and arms of silver in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, had arisen and power was passed on (2:39).

APPLICATION

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

King Belshazzar's actions were foolish, but we can let pride dictate our actions, too. What are some areas where we need to approach God with humility? How can we move in that direction?

When we think about believers who have come before us both in the modern day and recorded in the pages of Scripture, how can we learn from their lives and make wiser choices?

What is your primary takeaway from today's passage?

PRAYER

Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.

Thank God for sending His Son to die on the cross for our sins. Ask Him to show you areas in your life where you have been proud and need to repent. Thank Him for being on the throne despite whoever governs or reigns in our human kingdoms.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage as we continue our study of Daniel.

January 19, 2025 --- Daniel 6



COMMENTARY

DANIEL 5

A Mysterious Message on a Wall (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.

Daniel Interprets the Message (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.

