

The application for this week is on “judgment” – not an easy topic. While this is a story that ends in judgment, this is not the main point. Rather, it is continuing the focus on God as the sovereign ruler and judge of the world.

In today's American culture, this is anathema for some. People hate the idea of being judged. And yet, they are more judgmental than I can remember. We have “haters” and “unfriending” and “canceling” like never before.

So, let's focus on the one and only righteous judge, who rules and judges with absolute perfection, compassion, and perfect timing.

### THE HANDWRITING IS ON THE WALL

How is this figure of speech used? What does it mean to you? Has there been a time when you did or didn't see it? Which of these experiences would friends or family might have said, ‘We could see the handwriting on the wall?’

- When you chose to go into a certain career? Or didn't go into a certain career?
- Who you married, or, who you didn't marry?
- When you failed at something? Got hurt doing something?
- When you made a purchase of some kind?

For example, I think people were surprised when I chose to leave my previous career and become a pastor. But when I purchased a sports car, people could see the ‘handwriting on the wall’ as I have always enjoyed cars.

### LET'S OPEN GOD'S WORD

Daniel chapter five is another encounter with a Babylonian king. (Belshazzar is the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.) While few of us will ever have such an encounter, God has preserved these stories with purpose. The Jewish captives needed to know that God is sovereign over the nations and He still has a plan for them. But, don't miss the connection of the sins of kings with the sins of Israel and why they were in captivity.

Read Daniel five and consider what God wants us to learn and apply.

How is the conquering of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) and the captivity connected to this king's story?

This story and the entire book of Daniel is about God's judgment of Israel (Judah) and what God has planned for the future. This king, Belshazzar, is one of many that is still under the sovereignty of God.

What atrocious sin did this king commit? What other sins did this king most likely commit?

Though this king has violated many of God's commands, he blasphemed God by using the temple utensils to praise his pagan gods. Instead of representing God and His goodness, this king like all the kings of Babylon had been extremely violent, robbed, murdered, and abused people in many ways and neglected the afflicted and poor.

From what you know about Israel (Judah) before the captivity, how did their sins compare?

Prophets repeatedly accused Israel of neglecting their calling to represent God. They were violent, cheating the poor and afflicted, and were not acting in accordance of their covenant with God. They, too, were judged by God.

Belshazzar was a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. How were their situations similar to what happened in chapters two and four?

Both became the king of the largest kingdom on earth, both had dreams that no pagan could interpret, and both were facing judgment from God.

How was Belshazzar different from his grandfather in chapter four? Why did God respond differently?

The key difference was humility and repentance. King Nebuchadnezzar “raised [his] eyes toward heaven.” Belshazzar apparently did not humble himself.

Why do you suppose that God chose to send a message in this manner?

Nebuchadnezzar’s sin was private and his judgment the same. Here are some ideas:

- His sins were very public, so God’s proclamation was public.
- It reveals the supernatural work of God alone.
- It reveals to the leaders of Babylon that almighty God is a judge of all people including kings and them.
- All people’s days are numbered – today is the day to humble oneself.
- Blasphemy will be met with divine judgment.
- Some think that this matches the styles of Babylonians and other kings who made decrees that were inscribed on places.

## **DISCUSS TOGETHER**

What is the sin for which this king is judged? Why is this particular sin so atrocious to God?

How might we sin in this way today?

Blasphemy.

In the New Testament, the unpardonable sin is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. This is found in the gospels. (Mark 3:28–29, Matthew 12:31–32, Luke 12:10.) This sin is to reject the work of the Holy Spirit in one’s life which is a rejection of Jesus and the gospel.

For us, we can resist the Holy Spirit, quench the Spirit, or the work of the Spirit in other people. If we are a follower of Jesus, we will not die (rarely seen) but we might face discipline or the ending of our ministry.

The judgment of God (that he judges us) is something that we rarely discuss. How do you feel about God judging this king?

This is an opinion / feeling question. We are all growing, learning, and sinning.

Fortunately for us, 1 John 1:9 tells us that God will cleanse and forgive.

Read Hebrews 9:27. Have you ever warned someone that they will one day face the judgment of God?

Do you think about your own judgment?

“Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” Hebrews 9:27

As followers of Jesus, we will be judged differently than those who are without faith in Jesus.

“Believers are judged at the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10–12). We believe that this judgment will probably occur in heaven during the seven-year tribulation on earth. Every believer will give an account of himself before the Lord. This judgment does not determine salvation, which is by faith alone (Ephesians 2:8–9); rather, it determines the rewards believers will receive.

First Corinthians 3:11 pictures Christ as our “foundation,” and the surrounding verses liken the Christian life to building on that foundation. We can build with “gold, silver, costly stones,” or we can build with “wood, hay or straw” (verse 12). What we construct will be tested, as it were, by fire. Our worthless, shallow activity will not survive God’s refining fire; only what is done for God’s glory will last. The judgment seat of Christ will reveal this.

Believers will be rewarded based on their good works in Christ’s service and their faithfulness to the Lord (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24–27). We will give an account of our actions, inactions, words, thoughts, and motives. Were they truly indicative of our position in Christ? “So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God” (Romans 14:12 ).” (Copied from “Gotquestions.com” on the topic of judgment)

Now read Hebrews 9:26, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and 1 Peter 3:18. How does this help us know how to discuss judgment with people? How does this affect how we think about the judgment of God for us? But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Hebrews 9:26

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

“Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” 1 Peter 3:18 Concerning judgment, there is good news. Jesus Christ, in His death and resurrection has made it possible to escape the wrath of God. He has become our substitute, our righteousness, and our savior.

### **APPLY IT THIS WEEK**

It is right to fear judgment. Left to our own, without the work of Jesus, we would all be condemned and face the wrath of God. In the Scriptures listed above, we understand that God in Christ, has made a way for us to avoid the wrath of God. Read and reflect on the following promises and commands: Romans 2:12; 3:21-24; and then the good news in Romans 5:1-2, 9 and 8:1. If you have not yet, put your full (100%) trust in Jesus and what He did on the cross.

### **PLEASE PRAY**

- Thank God for many things he has done including renewing our lease for Micah House, seeing people come to follow Jesus (Yay God!), and giving us unity and power in the Spirit of God
- Please pray for friends who are without Jesus as their mediator and savior
- Please pray for students at winter camp February 14-16.

### **CALENDAR NOTES** (See website for more info)

February 22 Trinity is hosting Grandparent Summit

February 28 “Gather 25”, Global prayer event, 25 hours including gatherings at Trinity, groups

March 2 Trinity Kids “Wheels” on campus

Praise God for the work and promise of Jesus in our lives. I pray for your shepherding and facilitating of God’s family on this difficult topic.

Steve