

# God's Expectations Never Change, Don't Learn the Harder Ways

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Sunday, May 19, 2024 ▪ Jeremy Winkelman

God wants us to \_\_\_\_\_ . vv. 1-5

God expects us to \_\_\_\_\_ from the \_\_\_\_\_. vv. 10-22

Learn from God's \_\_\_\_\_ and from His \_\_\_\_\_. vv. 23-31

## Daniel 5

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<sup>[1]</sup> King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand.

<sup>[2]</sup> Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. <sup>[3]</sup> Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. <sup>[4]</sup> They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

<sup>[5]</sup> Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. <sup>[6]</sup> Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. <sup>[7]</sup> The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." <sup>[8]</sup> Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. <sup>[9]</sup> Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.

<sup>[10]</sup> The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, "O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. <sup>[11]</sup> There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, <sup>[12]</sup> because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

<sup>[13]</sup> Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, "You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. <sup>[14]</sup> I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. <sup>[15]</sup> Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. <sup>[16]</sup> But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

<sup>[17]</sup> Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. <sup>[18]</sup> O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. <sup>[19]</sup> And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. <sup>[20]</sup> But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. <sup>[21]</sup> He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. <sup>[22]</sup> And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, <sup>[23]</sup> but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines

have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

<sup>[24]</sup> "Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. <sup>[25]</sup> And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. <sup>[26]</sup> This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; <sup>[27]</sup> TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; <sup>[28]</sup> PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

<sup>[29]</sup> Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

<sup>[30]</sup> That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. <sup>[31]</sup> And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old. (ESV)

## ***Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions***

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**Open:** What is the most important thing you have temporarily forgotten?

**Read & Discuss:** Daniel 5:1-9

1. The story opens in verses 1 through 4 with a lavish feast thrown by King Belshazzar. What can we learn about the character of the king from these opening details?
2. Imagine being at the party and seeing the mysterious writing appear, what emotions might you feel? How does Belshazzar attempt to deal with his own emotions regarding this message from the Lord? What sources outside God do you tend to use to try and solve your problems?

**Read & Discuss:** Daniel 5:10-23

3. The queen remembers Daniel's abilities and offers them as a source of hope to Belshazzar. Why might the Babylonian kings have kept looking to their own magicians and enchanters before utilizing Daniel who had this reputation for "having the spirit of the holy gods"? How does the queen describe Daniel's abilities? In contrast how do you think Daniel would describe his abilities (see 1:17, 2:20-23, 27-28)?
4. The king offers the same rewards to Daniel that he offered to the other magicians and enchanters but Daniel rejects them. If not the offer of reward, what do you think motivated Daniel to interpret this sign from God? What motives, good or bad, can cause us to serve God? How can we keep our motivations God-centered?
5. In verses 18-22 Daniel summarizes the lessons of King Nebuchadnezzar from chapter 4, which likely happened more than 25 years before, what reasons are there for Daniel to recount this story for Belshazzar now? In verses 22-23 what does Daniel identify as Belshazzar's sin? What biblical evidence do we have that the object of our worship matters to God? How can we keep ourselves from idolatry?
6. According to verse 30 Belshazzar died that very night. Is God unjust in his timing? When you think about references to God's timing, what biblical ideas (and references if you are able) come to mind? (Consider Hab 2:3, Luke 12:20, Gal 4:4, Eph 1:10, 2 Peter 3:9, Rev 6:10-11) How does Belshazzar's story encourage us to think about God's present patience?

**Application:** What are we meant to learn from the partnered stories of chapter 4 and 5? What do you depend on to keep your arrogance in check? How might we build redundancies into our accountability mechanisms?

**Prayer:** Ask God to reveal areas of your life where you have been failing to learn from and follow God's Word. Thank God for the grace he gives us through Christ. Pray that God would work in the hearts and minds of those you know who need to embrace the gospel.