

# GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

## Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide SB 2.11.2024

### THE WRITING ON THE WALL – DANIEL 5

#### Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

In this week's sermon, Pastor Daniel once again explores the theme of God's judgment upon arrogant pagan rulers. Approximately 25 years had elapsed since Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and now his grandson, King Belshazzar, held the throne in Babylon. The narrative unfolds at a lavish feast organized by the extravagant King Belshazzar. The king proudly displayed his wealth, showcasing wine poured from sacred vessels looted from the temple in Jerusalem. Suddenly, a mysterious hand materialized and inscribed a cryptic and ominous message on the wall. Only Daniel, who was well into his 80s, possessed the ability to decipher the impending doom foretold in the message, predicting the downfall of Belshazzar's kingdom. That very night, the kingdom was handed over to the Medes and Persians. Let us delve into our study.

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

1. What stood out to you about Pastor Daniel's message and this passage?
2. The proverbial phrase "the writing is on the wall" indicates a clear sign that something unpleasant or unwelcome is going to happen. Describe a time where you may have experienced a "writing is on the wall" situation? How might a "writing on the wall" situation serve as wakeup call?

#### Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

##### HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Daniel 5-1:12

Living a life of extravagance, Belshazzar hosted a limitless party, going so far as to command the vessels from the temple to be brought for the guests to drink wine from. This display of pride unmistakably revealed the arrogance of the king, who believed himself mightier than the God of the Jews. In a further act of defiance, he raised a toast to the gods fashioned from gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. This audacious behavior unquestionably invited God's judgment.

1. What was the significance of King Belshazzar's feast, especially regarding the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem?
2. Explore Galatians 6:7-8. Is it possible to mock the justice of God? What consequences await those who live solely to indulge their sinful nature? On the other hand, what reward awaits those who seek to please the Spirit?

At the banquet, King Belshazzar witnesses the fingers of a man's hand inscribing a cryptic message on the plaster of a wall. The sight instills terror in the king, causing an immediate change in his countenance and his knees to tremble and knock against each other.

3. What do you believe caused the king to be so terrified? Can you remember a moment when fear overwhelmed you? Share your experience and describe the emotions you felt.
4. Whose fingers do you believe were involved in this event? Refer to Exodus 8:19, 31:18, Luke 11:19-20, and John 8:3-11. Explore how the finger of God was used in these verses.

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There are various interpretations and speculations among theologians about what Jesus might have written in the sand in John 8:6-8. Some suggest that he wrote the sins of the woman's accusers.

5. The mysterious words were inscribed in Aramaic, a language commonly spoken in the region. Why do you suppose neither Belshazzar nor the Chaldean wise men could decipher the writing on the wall (Refer to 1 Corinthians 2:14)?

### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Daniel 5:13-30**

Even after enduring seventy years under Babylon's influence, Daniel's convictions remained unshaken. He persevered in his faithfulness and obedience to God amidst numerous trials and tribulations. He remained steadfast in yielding to the guidance of the Spirit of God and avoiding the sinful practices prevalent in the surrounding culture.

1. Why do you think the queen suggested to the king to seek Daniel's assistance? (See Daniel 4:8, 9, 18).
2. Daniel was recognized as a wise individual with the ability to interpret things that perplexed others. Why is it important for a Christian to uphold a positive reputation?
3. In today's world, Christians often face significant influence from worldly culture. What are some strategies we can employ to steer clear of the prevalent sinful practices in our surrounding culture?

Belshazzar attempts to motivate Daniel to interpret "the writing on the wall" by offering rewards. To Belshazzar, wealth and luxury held utmost importance, and he assumes others share similar motivations. The king proposes granting Daniel the third-highest rank in the kingdom, the highest achievable position after Nabonidus and Belshazzar himself.

4. What led Daniel to decline the gifts presented by Belshazzar in Daniel 5:17?
5. What historical insights did Daniel share with Belshazzar before interpreting the writing, as described in Daniel 5:17-21?
6. What do you think the writing on the wall symbolized (5:25-28), and how did it foreshadow events to come (5:30-31)?

The writing represents a divine message foretelling the imminent judgment and downfall of Belshazzar's kingdom. "MENE" signifies that God had numbered the days of the kingdom, "TEKEL" represents the weighing of its deeds and finding them lacking, and "UPHARSIN" indicates the kingdom's division and distribution to the Medes and Persians. This cryptic message serves as a profound and ominous warning of divine judgment, illustrating the consequences of pride.

### **Applying God's Word**

**What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.**

Being too proud can make people want things that aren't good, and it can convince them to try to be better than they really should be. God punished Belshazzar for his pride, and he lost his life and kingdom because of it. This should serve as a "wake up call" for our rebellious nation and those believers who have one foot in the world. Our wrong actions bring condemnation upon us, but Jesus came and rescued us from the judgement we deserve. He went to the cross for us, paid the price for our mistakes, and imputed His righteousness upon us. How awesome is the power of the gospel!

1. Once more, God shows His authority over kings and kingdoms, confirming that His plan cannot be stopped. How does this give you encouragement? And in what ways does it present a challenge for you?

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2. How would your life hold up if it were weighed by the Lord's divine scales?
3. Daniel 5 prompts us to consider the choices we make about our relationship with Jesus. What decisions, choices, or situations require us to seek God's guidance and follow His will instead of relying solely on our own understanding?

**PRAYER:** Conclude your prayer time by praising God for His immense love, demonstrated in giving His only Son to bear the judgment and wrath we rightfully deserve. Request His guidance to fill us with His enlightenment, understanding, and exceptional wisdom. Seek His revival for us, our families, and our nation.

*"I have heard of you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that enlightenment, understanding, and excellent wisdom are found in you" (Daniel 5:14).*