



Thriving in Babylon / Book of Daniel
Wk. 7 "Problems of Ignorant Pride"
By Pastor Jody May

Daniel 5:1-31 ESV

The Handwriting on the Wall

5 King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand.

² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

⁵ 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. ⁶ Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. ⁷ 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." ⁸ Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. ⁹ Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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, ¹² because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

Daniel Interprets the Handwriting

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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."

¹⁷ 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



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to him the interpretation. ¹⁸O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. ¹⁹And 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. ²⁰But 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. ²¹He 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. ²²And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³but 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.

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

²⁹Then 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.

³⁰That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. ³¹And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Thriving in Babylon... Where are we headed?

For all of Daniel we have been saying there is an overarching main point:

God's Wisdom and Power is what Supervises all of History.

Last week we saw that God chose to love Neb, He chose to discipline him, he chose to interact with him, and he chose to restore him, so that the elect would be cared for. This week we see God taking his last Chess move, if you will, with the Kingdom of Babylon to call "*Check mate*", end game, and ensure that the preservation of His people would continue. So let me illustrate now how God was going to supervise this moment through Belshazzar's ignorant pride.



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Introduction:

Just this past week I had spoken a word of encouragement and warning to those young graduates that I have been so blessed with in getting to know this year. I had given them a list of the top five things you will encounter at College. Out of that list #3 was, "*The habits you develop at school will stay with you for the rest of your life.*" In saying that, I want to open up that warning to make sure you steer away from this one particular habit; **Procrastination** – the action of delaying or postponing something - *British* humming and hawing; *informal* dilly-dallying, & shilly-shallying ☺.

In order to steer clear from Procrastination it is good to understand where does it come from? Most people would tell you it's boredom but it's not, **it's fear**. It's fear because the reason you *Shilly Shally* is because people fear the work that is to be done, that the action to be taken, won't really help you in achieving what you so desire. Procrastination has caused more people to fail in their pursuits than anything else because the action set before them, in their subconscious, didn't show them show them getting what they really wanted. *Hence if you have a problem all the time with procrastination at college perhaps being in college isn't really what you want...*

In the text today we see a man, so steeped in procrastination, that it actually led to the fall of the Babylonian empire, and even then, when it seemed like he had a chance to save himself he let his pride get in the way and he lost it all. His procrastination kept him from engaging with a God that had shown to be a merciful God, but in his subconscious, he was more concerned about keeping his throne and his glory for himself, that he lost it all.

Proposal:

What if today we all could learn from the example of King Belshazzar, that procrastination may be a sign that you have a PRIDE problem. That we are ignorant to it, that the reason we don't go to God with our problems is because we don't want to give God control of our lives.



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The call of the Gospel is that we must let Jesus take the throne in our lives if we want the blessings of our king. Let's go back to the text to learn how to steer clear of a disaster as Belshazzar encountered.

1. Problems we encounter with Sinful Ignorance. (vs.1-9)

At the time of Belshazzar's party, you may not be aware of why he's throwing this party.

Babylon has been surrounded by the Medo-Persian Empire in which most of the time these three powers were friendly with each other and practiced inter political marriages. But as the world has gone on, Babylon, much like Jerusalem, has become a coveted Jewel of civilization, it can't be left alone. Babylon has lost its' influence of what we know as the Iranian and Iraqi people, and the Persians have merged with the Medes to make an empire large enough to stabilize power all over the middle east.

This points us back to the **statue from chp. 2**, Babylon being the head of Gold, is now being taken over at this very moment by the torso/arms of Silver, the Persian empire, which will know no contenders from **539 BC until 331 BC** when Alexander the Great with the Greeks show up in the middle east.

So, Belshazzar is throwing this party for two reasons: 1st let's party like 1999 "2000 party over it's out of time!", and 2nd let's bring all the artifacts connected to the gods and let's see if any of that religion stuff works!

² 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. ...⁴ They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

Missing the whole point of what they were wanting to do, they drank wine from Holy artifacts then praised their demonic gods for the victory over Israel. It's like the blind leading the blind, let's make fun of the only god that could save us!? Then his sinful ignorance, brought him face to face with this principle I want you all to grasp today:



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Ignorant sin brings you to unescapable ends.

⁵ 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. ⁶ Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.

That lampstand was not from Target, but it was **THE Lampstand** brought from the Temple which had been with the Jews for centuries. That Lampstand was to watch over the 12 loaves in the temple, representing God's presence watching over His empire. This Ignorant king Belshazzar had brought in the symbolic presence of God's reign through the nations, that sign of God as the watcher over His people, and then blasphemed Him, a lesson that Belshazzar's grandfather Neb learned the hard way. It was as if in his sinful ignorance Belshazzar was asking God to judge him, to judge Babylon, to see if they had made the cut, if they would be the ones to protect His people.

Family, I know right now many of you, and it is perhaps the main lesson here, **see America as Babylon**, and we are wondering **how bad it has to get** before some of our sinful and ignorant leaders figure out that they have been surrounded and cut off. How long will they let the people they try to persuade through granting fleshly desires have their way in the land without realizing it is the same people that will overthrow them in the end.

It has been said that Ignorance of the Law does not make it ok to break the law, and that it will be upheld no matter who you are. Today personally, is there something you are turning a blind eye to in your life, something you need to confess? Your ignorance is not going to keep you safe, reckless living will not make your life ok, living like it is 1999, just like Prince found out, will put you in the ground earlier rather than later.

If you want to feign innocence, if you want to keep living in ignorance, please understand God is going to give you over to that. The penalty of ignorance and procrastination is you receive that which you fear the most, whatever is a just 'do' according to Romans 1.



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Now as if it wasn't enough to contend with, Belshazzar is going to dig the hole deeper, even after a loving family member tries to help.

2. Problems we encounter from Sinful Contempt. (vs.10-16)

¹⁰The 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. ¹¹There 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—... ¹²Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

The Queen steps in, this is not his wife for his wife(s) were already in the room, this is most likely his mother and spouse of his father (Nabonidus). Her heart is put out there, she is no fool she knows the end is near, and yet she declares, "*may you live forever!?*" She is putting a hope in that whatever Daniel has to say to him, that he might listen to him, he might believe in the gospel, that God is the savior of nations, He rules the world, put your trust in the God that your grandfather did by the God that saved him and opened his eyes! May he be that for you son!

I have seen that in the eyes of my own mother for her own children, it is hard to watch sinfully ignorant people not adhere to the gospel. **The unrepentant will be judged by who and what they have put their trust in but the repentant that call on the name of the Lord shall be saved!**

Belshazzar seems to heed the advice of mom, and this is where we all need to heed the attitude that Belshazzar shows towards God, even in light of him being afraid of what was just revealed to him by the writing on the wall.

Daniel Interprets the Handwriting

¹³Then 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. ¹⁴I 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.



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¹⁵ Now the wise men, ... could not show the interpretation of the matter. ¹⁶ But I have heard that you can ... 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."

Belshazzar knows darn well who Daniel is! He served his grandpa and dad for years, led the schools for the Magi, and he addresses him as an exile of Judah, a captive of Babylon, meaning, "I own you boy." All the other guys (magi) went before you, meaning my first team pick, perhaps you can do better Daniel, I am going to give you one shot, and if you get it right, I will reward you! Listen to how Daniel responds:

¹⁷ 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.

Daniel rejects the Kings gifts, much like Abraham rejected the King of Sodom in Genesis 14, he rejects the earthly blessing as payment for the reading because **you can't buy Salvation**, you can't blaspheme the Holy Spirit, **reject His revelation of God and His need for Him**, and still escape the consequences of your behavior ([Mat. 12:31](#)).

Contempt for God leads to the dismissal of a sinner's plea.

Nations cannot buy favor with God by offering a sacrifice, for God doesn't want the work of your hands but wants the love in your hearts.

Hosea 6:1 & 6 ESV

6 "Come, let us return to the Lord;
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.

⁶ For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

The prophet Hosea preached this to the rebellious nation of the Jews and now Babylon was about to experience the same discipline as they did.



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This is why as a church we never stop praying for our country, we never stop praying for our communities, we never stop praying for our neighbors, and we definitely never stop praying over lost loved ones because God's desire is to save! God is not interested in getting your earthly wealth, but **He is very interested in getting you to know Him and what it means to be loved by Him!**

Gospel: Even now, God has showed us His love, that He poured out what should be our punishment on His Son, so that through His propitiatory work, we would not know the pain of sacrifice, **as Jesus had to**, but **we gain** all the **love and attention as if we did.**

1 John 4:10 ESV

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

If we reject that, if we snub our nose at God, if we show **contempt** towards what God is trying to do for us, it cannot be forgiven, **our plead for help without repentance is not heard.** It is the blasphemy of the HS to deny the revelation of Jesus and His life poured out for us and then reject that offer.

Lastly, this morning hopefully you have seen the mistakes of Belshazzar, let's look once more and learn from this king's Prideful ignorance of his sin.

3. Problems and Blessings of Holy Judgment. (vs. 17-30)

18 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty.

Daniel is like; Let's start with this first, what you offered to me (riches/power), was given to your grandfather, all of it by God. So, before we even talk about what this means let's shed light on your offer - **it means nothing!** But when your grandfather didn't want to accept it, let me recap his sentencing:

21 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



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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.

Neb came to the understanding, God's work was not to punish Neb but to convert him, to make him understand these things, in a sovereign act, God disciplined him to make him see the errors of his way to cause repentance. **I say all of this family also to get you to see, that when you go through hard times, when you have been under the delusion of your superiority, God will take you down, and in that is love if it gets you to see that He's the one in charge.** Listen there is no true repentance until you have understood that God is ruler of all things and that includes all of 'your things' even your 'will'.

²² And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³ but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. ... 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.

You, Belshazzar, were spared the same lesson, because it was already taught to you by recorded history (chp. 4 written by Neb) that your grandfather wrote down, so that you would know **what not to do!** Your pride brought this on you Belshazzar, your sinful ignorance brought you to this point, you were spared a hard lesson and now your ignorance of it is going to cost you.

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

Your sinful ignorance, and your sinful contempt has brought now the Holy judgment of God. All you had to offer to God was your opinion of His people - *that you thought we were still exiles*, your opinion of Him - *that God was still a foreign God*, and your opinion of yourself - *that the money and power you had to offer was actually yours*. You have been judged by those opinions - by what you



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offered, **which is nothing**. I have laid claim to my kingdom, I am removing it from your hands and now I give it to another.

Babylon, the Golden head, the purest of the kingdoms represented by the statue, **a short-lived kingdom where gentiles recognized that God was the reason they were so blessed**. They had given it all up and now they had lost their place in the world. Family, do I really have to preach about the similarities here between the United States and Babylon?

I do want to say this, **you should not be afraid**, because there is still good news even when one's national leaders have held God in contempt.

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. ³¹ And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Judgement from God still brings Salvation for His people.

Belshazzar, still had a moment of realization, it didn't save his earthly life, although it perhaps may have done something for his soul. He still recognized Daniel as third in the Kingdom. What that means is that God got sinful people to recognize His elect and He put Daniel in charge so that when Cyrus, Darius the Mede, walks into Babylon **Daniel** is there to **greet** him as the **guy in charge** of everything because the king is now dead.

Friends, even if our leaders cannot get their act together, even if the church continues to sink into cultural pragmatism, **God will still save the elect and He may even preserve their place in society**. Just because an earthly government fails to *be for the people* **doesn't mean that our heavenly government will do the same**. God will preserve His elect because one day is coming, where our job will be to turn over the keys of this earthly kingdom to Jesus as he walks into this realm again to take control! It may not look like what it used to, but it will still be under God's sovereign reign, and it will be His for us to give back.



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Today, how will you respond to the good news that God preserves His people and that He still holds people accountable for their ignorant pride?

Perhaps there needs to be a recommitting on your part to pray for those you vote for that they may still come around and learn from their early fathers.

Perhaps there are some loved ones you have given up on, but like the queen you still need to do your part and proclaim that Salvation can still be found in God.

Perhaps in your circle of friends you have dispelling more fear of what we are losing instead of proclaiming the good news that God preserves His people.

Perhaps you are still holding God in contempt for some reason and today I call you to repent and hold not back your confessing of sin and admittance that God is sovereign over your life no matter what has happened, He desires for you to know Him!

Would you work at changing your opinion today of Jesus, if He is not absolute ruler of your life, would you come to Him in humility this morning?

Let's pray and seek Him together and let's make sure He is on the throne in our lives and that we are in the rightful place on our knees waiting to serve Him.

PRAYER

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father, that has ordained history and even to this day offers us another chance to repent and turn from sin.

Go in the name of the Son, that was our propitiation for sins, and will one day return for His Kingdom.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that has revealed to you who God is in the life of Jesus, now go and share that good news with the world!