

Kingdoms in Conflict – Week 6 – Daniel Chapter 5

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. 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. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. -Daniel 5:2-4

1. What is the significance of Belshazzar using the things created for worship of the Living God for his own drunken pleasure and worship of man-made gods?
2. In what ways do we take things created by God to be used His way, for His glory, and twist and misuse them?
3. Why is it such a serious offense to take the good gifts of God out of His intended context for our own gratification?

Consider the contrast between Daniel and the Babylonian kings, especially when given positions of influence and leadership.

King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. -Daniel 5:1

Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard... -Daniel 2:14a

"...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." -Daniel 5:16b

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 5:17

O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty... 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... And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven... but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honoured. -Daniel 5:18,20; 22-23a,c

*"To you, O God of my fathers,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and might,
and have now made known to me what we asked of you,
for you have made known to us the king's matter." -Daniel 2:23*

1. What do you notice about their outward projection versus their inner substance?
 2. What differences do you notice in their wisdom and self-control? What about fear versus confidence?
 3. In what ways does the world value and reward appearance over substance? Where are you tempted to do so?
 4. Look at Daniel's response to Belshazzar in **vv.17**. What does it look like to be people who put godly character above worldly status?
 5. What does it mean to be a woman or man of substance in an increasingly shallow world?
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Read vv. 18, 20, 22-23 again.

1. What did Belshazzar fail to learn from the previous king?
2. How can the consequences of our past sin and the sin of others become tools for our sanctification and growth?

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. -1 Corinthians 10:11-12

3. Have you reflected on the reality that absolutely everything you have – possessions, jobs, status, loved ones, opportunities – are only in your hands because “the Most High God [who] rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will” has given them to you? What does it mean to be a faithful steward?
4. How does our approach to life change if we see everything we have as *entrusted to us*, rather than *earned and belonging to us*? To be used for the advance of God’s eternal Kingdom rather than our own personal kingdom?
5. Do you find this difficult when God grants you a level of success, achievement, prosperity, influence?

“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? -Luke 16:10-12

“This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” -Daniel 5:26-28

1. What does it mean that Belshazzar was weighed in the balances by God and found wanting?
2. How does it make you feel to know that God is not fooled by any front that we put up—that He knows our heart, and it is not the scales of the world that really matter but the judgment of God?
3. How does the thought of your heart being laid bare before God and weighed in the balance inform how you live?

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart. -Proverbs 21:2

“I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.” -Jeremiah 17:10

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. -Proverbs 4:23

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. -2 Corinthians 5:10

That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. -Daniel 5:30

Belshazzar is partying on the eve of his destruction, feasting and drinking while the Persian army surrounds him, ready to take him out. He either failed to recognise his foolishness and the looming danger, or he failed to take it seriously.

1. What does God want us to hear from this about the seriousness of sin, the importance of examining ourselves, and the urgency of getting our heart right with Him?

Consider “The Parable of the Rich Fool”:

And [Jesus] said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” -Luke 12:15-21

Pray and Reflect:

As you examine yourself, what do you need to repent of? Praise God that He has brought those things to your awareness, showing you what needs to be addressed in your heart and in your life. What gifts have you received from God and have been misusing for your own ambition, pleasure and glory rather than to bring praise and honour and glory to His name? Have you been putting a greater emphasis on chasing status than on developing godliness? Been more about outward appearance than inward substance in a particular area? Have you been squandering the things and opportunities God has given you to steward? What do you need to recommit to the Lord to be used for His Kingdom purposes? If you were weighed in the balance right now, what would be found? What is your life truly about? What do you truly love most? What do the meditations of your heart and the works of your hands reveal? Bring these things before God with a humble and broken heart knowing that it is His great pleasure to forgive, to redeem, and to restore. Where have you seen the mighty works of God in your life and the world around you lately? How are you seeing and experiencing His faithfulness right now? Spend some time praising God for who He is and all He is doing. He who numbers the days of every earthly kingdom, who gives power and takes it away, is holding your life. He is calling you to a life of faithful, meaningful, joyful service to the King of Kings and His Kingdom that will last forever.