

Daniel 5

ARROGANCE, IGNORANCE AND JUDGMENT

This is “THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL” chapter. Belshazzar, whose name means “Bel protect the king,” now sits on the throne once occupied by his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar.

Belshazzar’s father, NABONIDUS, while yet living, yielded the throne to his son. (For extra-Biblical material on Nabonidus and Belshazzar, see Young, A.J., *The Prophecy of Daniel*, p. 116F)

May I remind you as we prepare for our journey through chapters 5 and 6 that these first 6 chapters of Daniel the book are given to accomplish at least three particular matters – They are:

- I. To AFFIRM THE DOMINION OF GOD.
- II. TO ESTABLISH THE INTEGRITY OF THE PROPHET
- III. TO REVEAL THE FAILURE OF PAGANISM.

Chapters 1-6 just drive these three truths home in many splendored ways.

And so in chapter 5 we shall study the subjects of ARROGANCE, IGNORANCE AND JUDGMENT.

I. THE ARROGANCE OF THE PAGAN KING – vv1-4

1. THE ARROGANCE OF SINFUL PLEASURE

- v 1 “Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousands.
- v 3 “...the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank...”

2. THE ARROGANCE OF ABUSED SACREDNESS

- READ AND EXPLAIN v 2-3
- These were vessels which the Bible described as HOLY – (I Kings 8:4, I Chronicles 22:19, II Chronicles 5:5)

- When the sacred is abused the judgment and the wrath of God are assured.
- Ezekiel, who was a captive prophet with Daniel, had this to say about those who abuse the sacred:
 - Ezekiel 22:26 – “Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shown (difference) between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them...
 - v 31 – “Therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath...”
- Men and women who are arrogant with sinful pleasure will never be holy with sacred purity.
- But not only do we see THE ARROGANCE OF THE PAGAN KING through his
 - sinful pleasure and
 - abuse of the sacred, we also see it in

3. THE ARROGANCE OF PAGAN WORSHIP

- v 4 – “They drank wine and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.”
- (If a person is going to worship gods like that it probably helps to be at least a little drunk)

The Arrogance of the Pagan both grows out of – and leads to

II. THE IGNORANCE OF THE PAGAN KING

- We shall study that ignorance in at least six categories in vv 5-24

-- **The Ignorance Of The King Is Revealed In The Fact That The King Did Not Know:**

1. THE SIGN OF IMMINENT JUDGMENT v 5

-- The king did not even know the handwriting on the wall.

-- What is it that keeps a person ignorant of THE SIGNS OF IMMINENT JUDGMENT?

(1) An unwillingness to read and understand the Word of God.

-- Psalm 119:130 – “The entrance of your words give light; it gives understanding to the simple.”

(2) An unwillingness to make distinction between the holy and the unholy.

(3) A pre-occupation with selfish pleasure. (Too much time at the party)

(4) Unchecked and unrebuked immorality.

(5) Knee jerk response to crisis. (This is all that is left when adequate preparation for life has not been made.)

-- But not only was the king Ignorant Of The Sign Of Imminent Judgment, he was also ignorant of

2. SECURITY IN A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY

-- v 6,9 “The king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another... Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.”

-- No wonder our Lord put great emphasis on our possession of peace with God and the peace of God.

- No wonder He says to us that we should not let our hearts be troubled – that we should not be anxious about anything –
- No wonder He said that it was peace He was giving to us and peace He was leaving with us.
- No wonder the Bible says that “perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment.” (I John 4:18)
- Pagan kings and pagan people are ignorant of such security in times of uncertainty.
- But not only was this Pagan king ignorant of
 1. The Sign of Imminent Judgment and
 2. Security in a Time of Uncertainty.
 He was also ignorant of

3. THE INABILITY OF PAGAN COUNSELORS

- READ and EXPLAIN v 7-8
- Why is it that Pagan society will decry the Holy in order to turn to the Hopeless?
- Modern America is a frightening example of such pagan ways.
 - We reject God’s truth about Holiness, family, morality, relationships, economics, government, education and every other fiber that weaves the fabric of our society.
 - We reach out to the gurus of corruption, the self-seeking of sin, the priests of pleasure ---

AND THEN REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE
DISMAL INABILITY OF PAGAN COUNSELORS.

- No wonder this Bible warns us about those who “take counsel” but not of God. (Isa. 30:1)
- No wonder this Bible tells us:

“Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful...”

- No wonder our Bible foretold of One who would be the “Wonderful Counselor.” (Isa 9:6)
- No wonder our Bible tells us to “walk accurately ... understanding what the will of God is.” (Eph 5:15,17)
- It is a terrible thing to go through life **IGNORANT OF THE ABILITY OF GOD AND IGNORANT OF THE INABILITY OF PAGAN COUNSELORS.**
- Let me tell you what a society produces with that ignorance:
 - Divorce
 - Aids
 - A “mental health” crisis
 - Public mass murder
 - Drug addiction
 - Child abuse
 - Court overload
 - Jail over-crowding
 - Massive pre-occupation with the insignificant
 - Expensive yet ineffective government budgets
 - Sarcasm toward the sacred
 - Ignorance of personal identity and purpose
- It is a sad thing to be Ignorant about the Inability of Pagan Counselors
- But not only is the **IGNORANCE OF THE KING** seen in his ignorance of
 1. The Sign of Imminent Judgment and (v5)
 2. Security in a time of uncertainty (v 6,9) and
 3. The Inability of Pagan Counselors (v 7-8)
He is also ignorant about
 4. **THE INADEQUACY OF PHYSICAL POSSESSIONS – AND POLITICAL POSITIONS**

-- v 7 – Here is what the king said in his desperate search for understanding:

“Whosoever shall read this writing and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in kingdom.”

-- It is a pitiful thing when leaders and followers do not understand the inadequacy of physical possessions and political positions.

-- It is a pitiful thing when a nation or a church is under the leadership of pagans who think that physical possessions (money and the stuff and influence money buys) and political position can solve the problems caused by ungodliness, immorality and pagan ways.

-- That is one reason Christ said to one church:

“I will spit you out of my mouth. Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing...”

-- and then Christ said to them

“You do not even know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked...” (Rev. 3:16,17)

-- Some of you will remember the story of a rich man who went away from Christ “sorrowful: because he had great possessions.” (Mt. 19:22)

-- The problem with people like Belshazzar and this rich man is that they value treasure without knowing how to Treasure Value.

As long as men value the treasure of gold they will never Treasure the Value of God.

Daniel refused to be caught in that trap. That is why he said in v 17 – “Let your gifts be to yourself, and give your rewards to another.”

This is the issue that frees us from slavery to the insignificant.

-- Belshazzar may have been naïve enough – and some would say “logically innocent,” but his action reveals his ignorance of the workable values of life.

-- But not only was this pagan king ignorant of

1. The Sign of Imminent Judgment, and
2. Security in a time of uncertainty, and
3. The inability of pagan counselors, and
4. The inadequacy of physical possessions and political positions:
He was also ignorant of

5. THE AVAILABILITY OF PROVEN ASSISTANCE

-- Read v 10-12

-- Here is a classic illustration of the power and damage of generational distraction.

Belshazzar was too busy at the party to learn the significance of the past.

-- Of all the points of Belshazzar’s ignorance, this is certainly one that has contemporary America written all over it.

-- That is why the Jews would sing:

“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof, Mark you well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following.”
(Psa 48:12-13)

-- But Belshazzar was too busy with his wives, his wine and his concubines to talk with daddy, to learn what his granddaddy knew, to read the history of his kingdom, to challenge the failure of his paganism. And when Judgment was at the door he did not know it.

-- And that leads us to the next aspect of his ignorance.

He was ignorant of

6. THE SIGNIFICANT LESSONS OF HISTORY:

-- Here are some of those lessons:

(1) Bad Counselors Provide Bad Service.

--- READ v 13-15

(2) Physical Bribery Does not Work with Spiritual People.

-- READ v 16-17

(3) God's Dealings With One Generation Are Intended To Guide The Next Generation:

-- READ v 18-22

(Accent v 22 – “You did NOT humble your heart, though you knew all of this.”)

(4) Arrogance and Ignorance Do Not Exempt Us From Judgment.

-- READ v 23-24

Now we have studied:

- I. The Arrogance of the Pagan King, and
- II. The Ignorance of the Pagan King.

We must now study

III. THE JUDGMENT OF THE PAGAN KING (READ v 22-31)

-- When ARROGANCE and IGNORANCE prevail in the arena of the spiritual and the moral, God has the responsibility to bring judgment.

And here is what Daniel 5 teaches us about that Judgment.

1. GOD HAS INVASIVE RIGHTS IN EVERY MAN'S TERRITORY.

-- v 5 – “In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace...”

-- God need not get permission to mess up the plaster behind which we seek to hide.

There is no such thing as a pagan palace which is off-limits to His hand of judgment.

-- We shall not think it a strange thing when God walks into those palaces of our modern paganism, those plaster walls behind which we hide our folly, those gathered crowds of partners in sin. Those storage bins where we store our stuff.

-- No wonder Christ warns us with the story of the man who said:

“I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry.’” (Lk 12:19)

But you know what God said to that man!

“Fool, this night your soul shall be required of you.” (Lk 12:20)

-- In Judgment, God has Invasive Rights to Every Man’s Territory.

2. GOD HAS WITHDRAWAL RIGHTS FROM EVERY MAN’S PEACE.

-- v 6 “Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his knees were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.”

-- There is no fear to match the fear produced by guilt.

-- The Bible announces the terror upon men at the time of God’s wrath.

-- READ Rev 6:15-17.

-- Even though God has withdrawal rights from every man's peace, we should know that God has conditional provision for every man's peace.

-- Here are some of those conditions.

(1) The Condition of the Presence of the Prince of Peace

-- Isa 9:6-7 "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given...His name shall be called... The Prince of Peace... Of the increase of His government and peace....No end."

(2) The Condition of Focus and Trust:

-- READ and EXPLAIN Isaiah 26:1-3

(3) The Condition of Christ-like Obedience to the Assignment of Christ:

-- John 20:21 – "Peace be unto you: as my Father has sent me, so send I you."

Now not only does God have

1. Invasive Rights to every man's territory and
2. Withdrawal rights from every man's peace,

3. GOD HAS NUMBERING (MEASURING) RIGHTS TO EVERY MAN'S KINGDOM.

-- v 26 "This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God has numbered your kingdom and finished it."

-- God has a history of "measuring" the kingdoms of men.

-- Adam lost Eden.

-- Because of the sins of the Judeans, (see Habukkuk) Judah fell to the Chaldeans.

-- God announced through Johan that He would judge Ninevah.

-- And to the rich man who said he had plenty, God said “you fool” and that night He measured that rich fool’s kingdom. (Lk 12:20)

-- There is silence here with reference to God seeking permission to measure the kingdoms of men.

-- Paganism may set its first Agenda. God will set its final one.

4. GOD HAS JUDGING RIGHTS TO EVERY MAN’S LIFE.

-- v 27 – “TEKEL; You are weighed in the balances, and found wanting.”

-- God invaded his territory

-- God withdrew His peace.

-- God numbered His kingdom

BUT GOD JUDGED THE MAN

-- “You are weighed in the balances, and found wanting.”

-- Judgment is announced for every one of us.

(1) To Christians, the Bible says “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10)

(2) The unsaved will appear before that “great white throne” and evidence for their judgment will come from the books which God has kept. (Rev 20:10)

-- But not only does God have

1. Invasive rights to any man’s territory (v 5), and
2. Withdrawal rights from any man’s peace (v 6) and
3. Numbering rights to any man’s kingdom (v 26), and
4. Judging rights to any man’s life (v 27)

5. GOD HAS DISPOSAL RIGHTS TO EVERY MAN'S POSSESSIONS.

- v 28 “PERES: your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians.” (Upharsin and Peres are related to the same Aramic word which simply means to “divide.” “The word UPHARSIN is the conjunction ‘and’ plus the plural of PERES.” TWOT – 2945 and 2945b and Strongs – 6536 and 65537)
- Of the rich fool Christ asked “Then whose shall these things be? Lk 12:20

6. GOD HAS FINAL RIGHTS OVER EVERY MAN'S ARROGANCE.

- Read v 29-31
- After all the warnings Belshazzar continued his arrogant ways as though the word of God had NO consequence.
- THREE THINGS REVEAL HIS ARROGANCE:
 - (1) **He still valued his treasure.**
 - v 29 – “Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck...”
 - (2) **He still exercised his authority.**
 - v 29 Then Belshazzar made a proclamation concerning (Daniel).”
 - (3) **He still presumed upon his kingdom.**
 - v 29 “Then commanded Belshazzar...and made a proclamation concerning (Daniel), that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.”
 - In bold and ignorant arrogance, Belshazzar continued to act as though he called the shots.
 - It was not time for Belshazzar to act like he was still in charge. Such is the ultimate of arrogance and ignorance.

WHAT IS THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER?

-- Read V 30-31

-- ARROGANT – IGNORANT – JUDGED

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