

“Belshazzar’s Banquet” Daniel 5

1. After reigning for 43 years, King Nebuchadnezzar dies in 562 B.C. After several short reigns from other family members, one of the grandsons, Belshazzar, is appointed as coregent with his father, Nabonidus. As chapter 5 begins, Babylon is being besieged by the Persian army while Belshazzar is holding a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles. Then, to show contempt for the God of Israel, Belshazzar orders that the gold and silver goblets (that his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem) be brought to the banquet hall so that the partygoers could drink from them. As they did so, they toasted the gods of Babylon. What gods did they praise?
2. As pastor Tim Keller writes in his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, an idol is “anything more important to you than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.” What are some things in your life, that if not careful, could become idols that you put before God?
3. All of the boisterous noise and revelry of the banquet suddenly stops as a hand appears and starts writing on the wall. What is the king’s response in verse 6?
4. In verses 6-7 the king summons the wise men and promises a reward to whoever could interpret the meaning behind this strange phenomenon. What is the reward?
5. Daniel is once again brought into the presence of the king. What does Belshazzar know of Daniel’s reputation (vv.15-16)?
6. Daniel tells the king to keep the promised rewards or give them to someone else. He then proceeds to summarize God’s dealing with Belshazzar’s predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. What is the summary of Nebuchadnezzar’s rise and fall (vv.18-21)?
7. Belshazzar should have learned from Nebuchadnezzar’s example but Daniel points out that Belshazzar failed to humble his heart and instead exalted himself “against the Lord of heaven”. Perhaps Daniel intended to use a wordplay by adding that God, who held Belshazzar’s life in His *hand*, sent a *hand* to write him a message. The words of the message were: *Mene* (from a verb meaning “to number”) meant that God had numbered the days of the king’s reign and was about to bring it to an end. *Teke* means that Belshazzar had been weighed on a balance. His moral and spiritual character did not measure up to God’s standard of righteousness so he was rejected. *Parsin*, or its singular form, *Peres*, is from a verb meaning “to break in two, to divide”. His kingdom would be broken up and given to the Medes and the Persians (the chest and arms of silver from the statue in Daniel 2:32).

After the interpretation, what happens to Daniel? What else happens that very night? (vv.30-31)

We read in v. 23 that Belshazzar failed to honor God. How can we honor God through our lives?