



October 6, 2019

“When God Weighs Us”

Daniel 5

Pastor Gary Hamrick

The Bible says that God weighs our integrity and motives. In other words, he weighs the heart according to Proverbs 21:2. What does God see about our hearts when he weighs us? In Daniel chapter five, God weighed the heart of King Belshazzar of Babylon and found him “to be wanting” (or lacking). Pastor Gary looks at four different things that were lacking in Belshazzar’s life so we can learn from his example and take an inventory in our own lives.

Historical Background

1. Babylon

- a. King Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. when he was about 72 years old.
- b. Nebuchadnezzar was king approximately 44 years, which was the longest reign of any of the Babylonian kings.
- c. After Nebuchadnezzar died there was a six-year power struggle among his sons, sons-in-law, and his grandsons.
- d. Nebuchadnezzar’s son-in-law, Nabonidus, won out and became king.
- e. Nabonidus appointed his son, Belshazzar, to be co-regent.
- f. Belshazzar was actually the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.
- g. Belshazzar ruled from 553 B.C. until the demise of the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C.

2. Daniel

- a. The accounts of Daniel chapter five occur in 539 B.C.
- b. Daniel was about 82 years old at this time.
- c. Pastor Gary said, “Daniel [was] still serving the various kings on the throne of Babylon. ... [Daniel was] faithful until the very end. He never compromised his walk with God. He [was] true to the Lord, and he [was] used in a mighty way

to have influence on [those] pagan kings.”

3. Belshazzar

- a. When we read the account of Belshazzar’s feast, we see how he showed contempt for the things of God.
- b. [Daniel 5:3-4](#) - *“Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been 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 and iron, wood and stone.”*
- c. It’s obvious that the changed life and testimony of his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, had little effect on Belshazzar.
- d. [Daniel 4:37a](#) - *“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice.”*

4. The Finger of God

- a. [Daniel 5:5](#) - *“In the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.”*
- b. There are other examples in the Bible of God writing.
 - i. [Exodus 8:16-20](#) - *“So the LORD said to Moses, ‘Say to Aaron, “Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt” ’ And they did so. For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, ‘This is the finger of God.’ But Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said.”*
 - ii. [Exodus 31:18](#) - *“And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.”*
 - iii. [Luke 11:20](#) - *“... I cast out demons with the finger of God...”*
- c. Pastor Gary said, “God is Spirit, but God can manifest himself with physical attributes. [This] is one of those unusual examples of that, [in which] God reveals himself, not entirely in physical form, but simply by a hand.”

5. The Handwriting on the Wall

- a. [Daniel 5:25](#) - *“And this is the inscription that was written: **MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.**”*
- b. [Daniel 5:6](#) - *“Then the king’s countenance changed, and his thoughts*

troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.”

- c. **Daniel 5:26–30** - “*‘This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.’ Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans [Babylonians], was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.*” (Emphasis added)
- i. Darius the Mede was made governor of Babylon by Cyrus, king of Persia, thus forming a co-regency between the Medes and the Persians, which we know as the Medo-Persian Empire.
 - ii. The Medes ruled a small area north of modern-day Iran, which today would include Azerbaijan and Kurdistan.
 - iii. The Persians occupied the larger area of what today is called Iran, which was called Persia until 1935.
 - iv. Isaiah prophesied about Cyrus approximately 150 years before he was born!¹
 - v. Pastor Gary said, “... [God] raises up kings and he deposes them, and God had raised up Nebuchadnezzar for a time, and he raised up the Babylonian Empire for a time because he was teaching his own Jewish people, whom he loved, as a matter of discipline because they were steeped in idolatry. [He] was prying them loose and returning their hearts to him. [God] used the Babylonians for a 70-year season to rid the Jewish people of idolatry, but when those 70 years were up, God tore down an empire and raised up another. [God] providentially raised up Cyrus the king, who would be favorably disposed to the Jewish people. And Cyrus was the one who allowed the Jewish people to go back to their homeland after the 70 years was complete.”

6. The Fall of Babylon

- a. The city of Babylon was fortified by walls that were more than 30 stories tall and 80 ft. thick.
- b. The Euphrates River had been diverted under the walls of the city, and it had been changed so that it would surround the city as a wet moat!
- c. The ancient historian Herodotus wrote that Cyrus ordered the Euphrates River to be dammed up approximately 1.5 miles upstream from the city so that his army could march in under the city walls with the cover of darkness.

¹ [Isaiah 45:1-13](#)

- d. The city of Babylon was conquered on October 13, 539 B.C., and it was on that day that Belshazzar and all of his officials died, thus ending the Babylonian Empire in a single day!

God Weighs Us

7. **Job 31:5-6** - *"If I have walked with falsehood, or if my foot has hastened to deceit, let me be weighed on honest scales, that God may know my integrity."*
8. **Proverbs 16:2** - *"All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD."* (1984 NIV)
9. **Proverbs 21:2** - *"All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the Heart."* (1984 NIV)

Accountability

10. **Daniel 5:18-25** - *"O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your [grandfather] a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. **But you his [grandson], Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house 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, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written. 'And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.'*** " (Emphasis added)
11. Pastor Gary said, "The more you know, the more accountable you are. If you have been exposed to a greater light, you have a greater responsibility. Too many times people are worried about what God's going to do with the '[mysterious, fictitious guy on an island who never hears the Gospel?]' ... Instead, [they should look in] their own hearts [and asking themselves this question:] 'Where do I stand with God?' ...

The Bible says in [2 Peter 2:21](#) that God has more grace for someone who has never heard than for somebody who has. ... So, God has apparently has some kind of gracious provision in mind for those who have never heard, and that's God's way of dealing with those who have never heard never known and don't understand. But for us who know who have heard who understand who have been exposed to a greater light, we are more accountable. There's no excuse for us. ... God had revealed himself to Belshazzar through the life of his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. And he witnessed his own grandfather's life and testimony, [but] nevertheless, it had no impact. So, God [told him that he was lacking in this area].

- a. [2 Peter 2:21](#) - *"For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them."*

Humility

12. [Daniel 5:22](#) - *"But you his [grandson], Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart..."*
13. Pastor Gary said, "Pride positions us in the place of God where we start to take credit for what God has done, either intentionally or unintentionally. We begin to lose sight of the goodness of God, and the blessings of God, and the mercies of God and the grace of God. And we begin to believe the lie that we, somehow, are the source of all [those things], that all of our possessions, and all of our accomplishments, and all of our abilities, and all of our skills and success are the result of our own hand instead of the hand of God. This is pride, the self-sufficient life that exists apart from God. ... [Our] culture is making [everything] about 'me.' [People believe it's about what they can do, what they can achieve or accomplish, what they own.] The idea behind being a Christ-follower means that we crucify self, we humble self and acknowledge God."
14. [Proverbs 8:13](#) - *"... I hate pride and arrogance..."* (1984 NIV)
15. [James 4:10](#) - *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord; and He will lift you up."*
16. [Proverbs 29:23](#) - *"A man's pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor."*

Sanctity About God

17. [Daniel 5:23](#) - *"... And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them."*
18. Belshazzar was found lacking in sanctity about God because he didn't revere God;

he didn't see God as [being] holy; he didn't honor God as being righteous and just and sacred.

19. Pastor Gary said, “[Belshazzar] used these sacred vessels, these gold and silver goblets, taken from the Temple of God, just as common, every day drinking cups. He used them to get drunk! ... [He] used the sacred as secular. He used [these holy things as something unholy].”
20. Our bodies are holy vessels in a sense, and we are to dedicate ourselves to the Lord.
 - a. **1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, 7** - *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God... For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.”*
 - b. **Romans 12:1** - *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable [act of worship].”*

Fidelity Toward God

21. Belshazzar was found lacking in fidelity or faithfulness toward God because he worshiped other gods, which were made of metal, wood, and stone.
22. Pastor Gary said, “Anything that we elevate above God is idolatry. [People, possessions, ambitions, and we, ourselves can become idols.] Anything has the potential of being adored more than God, and when that happens God does not get the glory that he is rightfully due.”
23. **Daniel 5:23** - *“And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.”*
24. **Isaiah 42:8** - *“I am the LORD, that is My name; and MY glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.”*
25. **Psalm 115:1** - *“Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your love and faithfulness. (1984 NIV)”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Daniel 5:1-12** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.

2. Provide an overview of the background of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Daniel. (See #1 through #3 above)
3. Read and discuss [Daniel 5:5-6](#) and [Daniel 5:25-30](#).
4. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when the Lord spoke through his Word, a pastor or a Christian friend with a “the handwriting is on the wall” message.
5. Read and discuss [Job 31:5-6](#), [Proverbs 16:2](#) and [Proverbs 21:2](#). (See #7 through #9 above)
6. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s comments about being accountable to the Lord. (See #11 above)
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks concerning humility. (See #13 through #16 above)
8. Allow the people in your group to share examples of the ways people demonstrate the ugliness of pride and how markedly different humility is in the life of a Christ-follower.
9. What are some of the ways Christians can be found lacking when it comes to honoring God and being reverent toward God?
10. Read and discuss [1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, 7](#) and [Romans 12:1](#). (See #20 above)
11. What are some of the ways Christians can be found lacking in faithfulness to God?
12. What does it look like for a person to live a life of faithfulness to God?
13. Do you think it’s a matter of “doing” or “being”?
14. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s comments about idolatry. (See #22 above)
15. Read and discuss Isaiah 42:8 and Psalm 115:1. (See #24 and #25 above)
16. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)