

The Evaluation That Matters

Daniel 5

Daniel 5 tells the story of a Babylonian king, Belshazzar, who, despite knowing his predecessor's experience of the true God (Nebuchadnezzar was removed from his throne for 7 years to be taught a lesson in humbling himself before God), remained arrogant and determined to defy the God of Israel. He toasted Babylonian gods in consecrated cups captured from the temple in Jerusalem.

A hand appears and writes some indecipherable words on the wall. No one can interpret what they mean, so Daniel is called for.

God was delivering a message of judgment to Belshazzar – Time up! He's failed the test! It's game over!

1. Time up!

"Mene, mene" means numbered, numbered. Belshazzar had forgotten the finite nature of his life and reign. Psalm 139 says every day of life is ordained by God. Psalm 90 says wisdom is to know the brevity of our lives.

2. Test failed!

Belshazzar's actions have been weighed on the scales and found insufficient, too light. He seemed totally unaware.

Proverbs 16:2 says that all a person's ways seem right in his own opinion, but the LORD evaluates the motives.

We do well to remember that our own opinions and conclusions (especially as we exit lockdown) maybe wrong.

Beware of conclusions that result in lesser devotion to Christ and service of others.

3. Game over!

Belshazzar's kingdom will be divided and removed from him. It would happen sooner than he thought.

God's evaluation of him was final. 1 Corinthians 3 says that as believers, even though saved by grace, our lives will be weighed by Jesus on that final day.

God is evaluating our lives. If in humility we acknowledge our inadequacy to meet his standard, there is good news. Grace is available.

A human hand...

God wrote the inscription with a human hand... this was an act by a God who wants reveal himself though human flesh. That partial message of judgment conveyed by that hand is filled out in the person of Jesus, who became flesh and dwelt among us.

The hands of Jesus pointed the finger at hypocritical religious leaders and exposed them. But so much more.

His hands blessed children and opened blind eyes.

His finger wrote in the dirt as he dismissed the charges against a woman condemned for adultery.

His hands were spread on the cross and nails driven through. He took the sin off our side of the scales and replaced it with his righteousness.

His hands were shown to Thomas after he rose to life – inviting him to touch and see and believe. His hands were lifted to his disciples in blessing as he returned to the father at his ascension.

The hand of judgment became the hand of blessing. Your judgment is dealt with. Your blessing is assured.

Today he wants to take you by the hand, bless you and recommission you.

Questions for Small Groups

- a) **Do we live as if every one of our days is ordained by God? How does being more aware of that truth affect our judgment of what matters?**
- b) **Are there times we can testify to when we learned that our own opinion on a situation was totally false, and God's wisdom cut through it? What helps us 'tune in' to, and follow, God's wisdom in what matters?**
- c) **Take time to pray and receive afresh God's message of grace and deliverance through the salvation that Jesus won for us. Yes, our days are numbered here on Earth – but Christians will get to spend all the days of eternity in His presence!**
- d) **Pray for one another that we'd be recommissioned to be Jesus' hands in the world, and re-assured of what God has done, is doing, and will do in our lives!**