



# The Landing

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“Honor God in All Things”  
Daniel 5

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## Daniel 5

*“King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. 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.*

*Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, “Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.” Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.*

*The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, “O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”*

*Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, “You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. 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.”*

*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. O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would,*

*he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. 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. He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. 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. And the vessels of his house have been brought in 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, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.*

*“Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. 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.”*

*Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.”*

### **Introduction: Do You Love God as Judge?**

God is judge. But not the kind of judge the world thinks of. God is the perfect, final, holy, just judge that all in the world imagine, but no one achieves. We know this intuitively. Part of our being made in God’s image is a sense of moral judgment we have by which we can tell what is right and what is wrong. Atheists, tribesman, children, men and women, old and young, all peoples everywhere have a razor sharp sense of what is right and wrong. This is because we are made in God’s image. And God is a god of justice.

For all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, God being both our Father and our Judge is the greatest possible news. If you are not trusting in Jesus Christ, God being our judge is the last way you want to ever think about God and you run away from him as judge. God ordained the universe that way. Your spiritual condition is always exposed by a clear vision of God. If you run from God as judge you expose your guilt for all to see. If you run toward God as judge, you bear witness to your hope in his mercy and forgiveness.

Genesis 18:25 says, *“Will not the judge of all the earth do right?”* and Paul writes in I Thessalonians 1:10, *“(we) wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”* So I conclude this: To the degree that you dislike thinking of God as the judge of all

the earth, you have taken your eyes off the precious, glorious, incomparably forgiveness and protection we have in Jesus Christ.

God's judgment is supposed to give you radical hope.

Isaiah 51:5, *"My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; (so) the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.*

Isaiah 59:9, *"Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom."*

Isaiah 59:11, *"We all growl like bears; we moan and moan like doves; we hope for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us."*

You see God is the only just judge. And he will judge the world by His Son Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4:1). The living and the dead will be judged according to the perfect life of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we know the outcome in advance. All fail! No one has lived a life equal to Christ. We have all fallen short of the glory of God in Christ. Yet, for those who trust in Christ, for those who have laid their sins on Christ, and received from his righteousness, they shall have the record of their sins stamped "Not Guilty" and their name changed from condemned to beloved; from enemy to son; from rebel to regent.

Because God is just we can place our hope in him. He will set all things right one day, including our own sins, when we lay them upon Christ.

How then shall we live if we hope in God? To ask the question in view of Daniel 5, how does God's Spirit mean for Daniel's readers, the exiled Jews to live hoping in God? Answer: Honor God in everything. Honor God in everything. Let me show you where I get that answer. Look at Daniel's sentence of condemnation against the evil king Belshazzar in verse 22-23, *"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. And the vessels of his house have been brought in 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, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored."*

This is the crux, the kernel, the essence of this chapter and the main point of my message: Honor God in all things. Eating, drinking, festivities, politics, money, sex, family, business, leisure, war, peace, in everything honor God. Someone might say, "That seems over-bearing and too much to put God in the center of everything. Can't we just assume God in most things and think about him for an hour on Sundays? My answer to that question is this: God hates to be assumed. He exists to be honored. He is worthy of all praise by all persons all the time. So the Apostle Paul makes no exaggeration when he says, *"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* (I Cor. 10:31).

Let's walk through this remarkable account of God's handwriting on the wall, and see how God means to be honored and how we can live in honor of him in all things.

## **I. The Story Unfolds**

Belshazzar was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar, but his grandson. Belshazzar's father was a king named Nabonidus, who had become king after Nebuchadnezzar. Nabonidus was very unpopular in Babylon, for he was a cruel king. And so he was run out of the city and was living in exile. His son Belshazzar, whose name means Bel protect me, reigned in his place until such time as his father could return. But Belshazzar was more evil than his father. Once on a hunting trip Bel killed his own teenage son because the boy shot an arrow better than him and he feared a coup.

In the year 539 when this event takes place, uprisings from the Babylonians people had been quelled with bloodshed by these two evil kings, father and son. And they were fighting with the Medes and Persians in war and losing. So Belshazzar decides to throw a party, the biggest melee in the most evil city on earth. Verse 1 says a thousand lords attended, meaning this was the largest party ever. And the aim was just to drink. The king led and all followed into swirl of debauchery beyond what is appropriate to share in this setting.

To make everything worse, we're told Belshazzar goes into his grandfather's museum of gold and silver vessels he had stolen from Jerusalem 62 years ago Israel was first captured, vessels dedicated to the worship of Yahweh, and he decides to not only drink from them in his wild debauchery, but he worships the idols of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone! Even his grandfather had the integrity not to defile those vessels, but now Belshazzar doubly offends God: he drinks from holy vessels and worships demonic idols.

It's almost as if he is saying, "Yahweh, you humbled my grandfather, and my father is a coward, but you will never humble me!"

Belshazzar's people hate him. His enemies are at the gate of the city walls. So he throws the wildest party Babylon has ever seen. Why? Why this party? I will give you my opinion. I think it is arrogant, godless, folly. As the worldly perversion of Ecclesiastes goes, "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." This is Belshazzar going down in a blaze of drunken glory.

What he doesn't realize is this: it is God's judgment that he is experiencing, because he refused to honor God. There is something worse than dying, and that is dying under the wrath of God. Belshazzar had every opportunity to repent; but he would not.

At the height of the party, the fingers of a human hand appear on the plaster wall opposite where the king sits. Just near a burning lamp so everyone can see plainly. And in terror the king watches as a hand writes four words in Aramaic on the far wall. Silence falls upon the room. The passage tells us the king was so terrified his knees knocked together and his legs went to jelly, his guilty thoughts horrified him and his blood ran from his face.

As his grandfather had done, he called the magicians and enchanters (v.7). Predictably they could do nothing; even motivated by power and wealth. So a

surprising character emerges, the Queen Mother. She arrives to remind the king, her son, of a retired advisor to his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, whose name is Daniel. He gave wisdom to your grandfather, and he has the spirit of the gods, *“because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel.”* (v.16). Her presence needing to guide Belshazzar shows how myopic, and egocentric he is, he cannot even recollect the man who interpreted his grandfather’s dreams for the good of the nation!

Daniel arrives and the king insults him. Listen to verse 13 and 14, The fearful King says, *“You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.”* Daniel is now a retired advisor of about 85 years old. He is still called an exile of Judah, and only the kind of old man that his dead grandfather knew. But the spirit that resides in Daniel, is not his special personality or clever skill. It is the Spirit of the Living God himself. One who dwells in each person who trusts in Christ, and who lives to guide and instruct us in the very same way as Daniel.

Daniel rejects the king’s petty offer of power and wealth, so as to show his counsel cannot be swayed or bribed. Listen to his speech in verse 17-21, *“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. O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. 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. He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.”*

Then Daniel turns to Belshazzar, *“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. And the vessels of his house have been brought in 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, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.”* Belshazzar knew everything he was doing was wrong. He knew whose God Daniel’s was. He knew who owned the vessels. He knew what had happened to his grandfather. He knew it all and rejected God and used his wealth to give dark worship to idols.

All the idols that see our dark worship are the same: sexual rebellion. Lust for power. Lust for private pleasure. Lust for self-defining control. There is nothing new. Romans 1 says, *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things”* (v.18-23).

No one whom God ever sends to hell will be surprised they are there. Every important thing about God is plain to see nature, but we in our sin choose to rebel against the good design of God in nature and we dishonor him. We refuse to thank him for his design and we mock him. And we know this. That is why the good news of Christ’s forgiveness is so hard to believe.

Then Daniel describes the four words God inscribed on the wall (verses 25-28): *this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. 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.”*

Layers of meaning rise here. First these are money values: mina, mina, tekkel, parsin is like mina (500 shekels) and tekkel is 1 shekel and parsin is a half of shekel. Its like he said, dollar, dollar, nickel, penny. Some scholars have compared these values to the kings of Babylon: Nebuchadnezzar, Nadonidus, Belshezzar, then Persia. Other scholars can’t help but see how Daniel’s inspired interpretation yields a sentence of God’s judgment: God has numbered you, and found you lacking in the scales of justice and so you are destroyed by Persia!

What we cannot avoid is the raw, utter justice of God over the high-handed sinners of the world. God will judge sinners who reject him utterly. This is why the mission of the church to tell of God’s saving grace in Jesus Christ is so utterly important while we are in the time of God’s patience.

The king knows Daniel spoke truth. So he commands that Daniel be promoted. But there is no kingdom for Daniel to be promoted into. Look at verse 30, *“That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed.”* What does that mean? It means this party took place on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 539 B.C. historical records show this. The very next day, October 12<sup>th</sup>, Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians. This too is fully verified. They even recount that there was no blood-shed when they took control of the city. The Babylonian people welcomed the Persians as liberators. The only person who died in this take-over was the king, who was executed by the Median general in charge, a man named Darius.

Where Belshazzar and the vast majority of the human race fails is simply this: they refuse to honor God. Even some religious Christians go through the motions on Sunday, but Monday through Friday they are practical atheists. It's hollow, empty, and deadly. The gospel can be reduced to this: cherish or perish. Cherish the glory of God revealed in the gospel of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, or perish for eternity.

## **II. Four Truths Fueling our Honor of God**

I draw four conclusions from this chapter for us here at The Landing that I want to leave weighing heavy on you and fueling your desire to honor God in all you do.

### **A. Honor God for His Word Always Comes to Pass**

First, honor God because His Word will always come to pass. You see where I get that don't you? Back in chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a statue made of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay. Meaning his golden kingdom would be replaced with a silver kingdom and so on. We'll that is exactly what happened here. Belshazzar so weakened the Babylonian kingdom by his idolatry of gold, silver, bronze iron, wood and stone that the kingdom fell with only one death: his.

Isaiah the prophet said, "Isaiah 45:1-3

*Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, (that is the Persian king) whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: "I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name."*

This is a prophecy centuries earlier of the Median king named Cyrus who will free God's people by "loosening the belts of kings" v.1), which is the same phrase in Hebrew as Daniel 5, verse 6 when it says the kings "limbs gave way." It literally means his loins came undone. Then by his general Darius, King Cyrus takes Babylon in one day.

God always keeps his word, therefore he is to be honored. Everything God says will come to pass, and so the wise among us will learn, understand, believe and obey with joy everything God says in His Word.

### **B. Honor God for His Judgment Always Falls on Idolatry**

Second, honor God for his judgment always falls on idolatry. The specific sin Belshazzar committed was he cherished idols. Daniel 5:4, "*They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.*"

Not merely those of gold, silver, bronze and stone, but those of drunkenness, sexual impurity, and love of power. Isn't it ironically sad that those who are speaking truth to power in our culture do so in the name of sexual rebellion?

Idols are anything we do or have that we cherish more than we cherish God. These idols are deadly because God's judgment falls on idolatry – always. Idols offend God and destroy our hope. God is grieved by both: God is grieved when he is offended and when we whom he loves are destroyed. So listen to Paul describe idolatry for our lives: *“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.”*

I agree with those who say this is the most important passage in the Bible that helps answer what idols are and why they are so spiritually evil. It's a heart disposition to love God less than family, than freedom, than country, than our ideas, than our church, or boyfriend or girlfriend, or success, or approval of others, music or sports or homes or whatever!

When Revelation wants to tell us what future judgment will be like it makes clear allusion to Daniel 5. Listen to Revelation 9:20-21, *“The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”*

Believers have all turned to God from idols. And whenever we are convicted that an idol has risen in our hearts, we slay it. (I Thess. 1:9). Because it means to tempt us to offend God and destroy ourselves! So we honor God by slaying all idols in our lives.

### **C. Honor God for His Judgment Always Comes with Merciful Warning**

Honor God fourthly, because his judgment always comes with a merciful warning. God is not capricious. Allah is capricious. Satan is capricious. Belshazzar is capricious – he killed his own son on a hunting trip because he feared his skill. God is never capricious. In his wrath he always remembers mercy, even in his wrath against final judgment (Hab. 3:2).

Where do I see that here? First, God gave Daniel, old, wise, retired, prophetic, bold, honest, praying Daniel to Belshezzar. Even though he never respected or consulted him. He was there. How many godly voices sit in our libraries, and are available to listen to on the internet, and are all around us that we simply ignore and dismiss?

Second, Daniel said Belshazzar, “You knew all this” (v.22). You knew what happened in the past, you can't plead ignorant. You know it and live in rebellion anyway. So with us. We know who God is and what he is like. We've heard it for a long time. We choose to rebel anyway. That's what sin is like. We need a new heart. We need a miracle of new birth. We need to be saved! If that's you, cry out to God. If that's someone you know, cry out to God for them. There is nothing God loves to do more than to perform the miracle of saving sinners.

And it was a mercy that a miraculous hand appeared to write with a divine finger on the wall! Right by the lamp! I'd of repented of all my sins and all the

sins of everyone in the room if I had seen that. But we have no evidence that Belshazzar repented. When God shows wrath, he always includes mercy.

#### **D. Honor God for His Judgment Always Brings Hope to His Beloved in Christ**

Finally, honor God for his judgment always brings hope to his beloved in Christ. Did you notice the detail in Daniel 5:30–31? *“That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.”* Darius was 62 years old. Why is that there? What does it matter how old he was? Just this: if you are a Jew in exile you’ve been keeping a record of how many years you and your people are in Babylon. You know the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah that a deliverer would come. You know that since Jerusalem fell in 602 A.D. at the time of Belshazzar’s fall has elapsed 62 years. And then you hear that a man, a good man, from Media, raised up by God to be your liberator, from the evil king, was born the very year your people went into exile.

Is that a coincidence? No. There are no coincidences with God; only providences. God provided a liberator in Darius. And he wants Israel to know. I planned for him to come from the very first day. I caused your liberator to be born, the very time I sent you into exile. Take hope Israel. My judgment always gives hope.

From eternity past God planned for you to be liberated from the Babylonish idolatries of your sin, and appointed his Son, Jesus Christ from before the foundation of the world to come into this world and die on the cross for your sins and for mine. He not only liberates us from sin; he liberates us from wrath and we are restored fully and freely to God.

An excellent book by an excellent author is “The Quest for Godliness” by J.I. Packer. Listen to how Packer states this: If we do not preach about sin and God’s judgment on it, we cannot present Christ as Saviour from sin and the wrath of God. And if we are silent about these things, and preach a Christ who saves only from self and the sorrows of this world, we are not preaching the Christ of the Bible . . . Such preaching may soothe some, but it will help nobody; for a Christ who is not seen and sought as a Saviour from sin will not be found to save from self or from anything else”<sup>1</sup>

Dear ones of my faith family, hear this: Christ’s shed blood saves you not only from the hardships of this world and from the sorrows, fears and anxieties of your own life; but he does so precisely because he saves us from our worst fear: the just wrath of God against sinners. *“For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith”* (Rom. 3:23-25).

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<sup>1</sup> Packer, J.I. “The Quest for Godliness” Wheaton: Crossway Pub. 1990, pp. 164,165.

Your heart could be filled with a thousand more idols than Belshazzar and the blood of Christ is sufficient to cleanse you and absorb fully on your behalf all God's wrath against you. Never underestimate the infinite value of Christ's death for sinners. There is more power in the cross than there is sin in the world.

### **III. How Then Shall I Live in This Hope?**

How then shall we live this life? Three challenges rise to the surface:

Repent of every sin for which you are convicted, and ask the Holy Spirit of God to gently reveal sin to you always.

Read the Word to yourself and your loved ones for an ever clearer vision of God, his ways and his reminders of his love and forgiveness deeply and often.

Release your voice in the Spirit of wisdom, just like Daniel, to speak boldly to our day the warnings of hope in God.

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