CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
AUGUST 31 2024

Scripture Story: Daniel 5.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 43.

this party's over



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keytext

"'This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. Here is what these words mean: *Mene:* God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. *Tekel:* You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.'"

(Daniel 5:25-27, NIV)

flashlight

"In his pride and arrogancy, with a reckless feeling of security Belshazzar 'made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.' All the attractions that wealth and power could command, added splendor to the scene. Beautiful women with their enchantments were among the guests in attendance at the royal banquet. Men of genius and education were there. Princes and statesmen drank wine like water and reveled under its maddening influence" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 523).

what do you think?

Life-changing events happen in every life. On a scale of 1 (most difficult to deal with) to 7 (not a problem), rate your reaction to the following life-changing experiences:

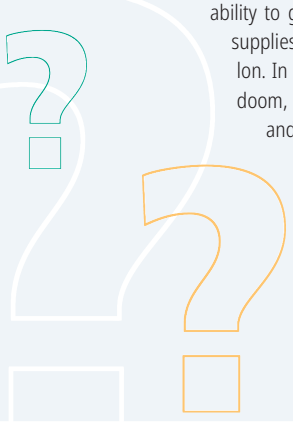
___ A. Your best friend's mom dies.
___ B. You receive several rejection letters from colleges you hoped to attend.
___ C. Your parents decide to divorce.
___ D. Your pet dies.
___ E. Your parents take away your car.
___ F. Several schoolmates hurt you.
___ G. A close friend betrays you.

Explain your choices of the most and least life-changing events.

_____
_____
_____

did you know?

Did you know that at the time that Belshazzar, king of Babylon, threw his ill-fated party, the nation of Babylon was under siege from the Medes and Persians? King Darius and his mighty armies had cut off Babylon's ability to get food and other supplies in or out of Babylon. In spite of this impending doom, Belshazzar chose to party and have a good time.



INTO THE STORY

"King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

"Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking.

"The king summoned the enchanters, astrologers and diviners. Then he said to these wise men of Babylon, 'Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.'

"Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled.

"The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. 'May the king live forever!' she said. 'Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. He did this because Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.' "

(Daniel 5:1-12, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Circle the main characters in this week's Scripture story.

What parts of the story of Babylon's fall are new for you?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Underline the scriptural passages that tell us something about Belshazzar's character.

Place an *asterisk* by those parts of the story that reveal something about Daniel's character.

Place a *checkmark* by those verses where you see God at work.

What exiled persons were at the center of this story but were not mentioned by name?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What are two lessons you have learned from this week's Scripture focus?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What parallels can you draw between the entertainment practices in Daniel's time versus in our times that do not meet God's approval? What are some reasons that such entertainment is displeasing to God?

_____
_____

What parallels can you draw between the role that Daniel was playing in Babylon's kingly court and our role in society today? In what practical ways can you exercise your influence to be an effective witness for God and reflect Jesus in your interactions with others?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" **(Proverbs 16:18, NIV).**

"Then people will say, 'Surely the righteous still are rewarded; surely there is a God who judges the earth' " **(Psalm 58:11, NIV).**

" 'I am with you and will save you,' declares the LORD. 'Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only in due measure; I will not let you go entirely unpunished' " **(Jeremiah 30:11, NIV).**

"Then Daniel answered the king, 'You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means' " **(Daniel 5:17, NIV).**

" 'I will rise up against them,' declares the LORD. . . . 'I will wipe out Babylon's name and survivors' " **(Isaiah 14:22, NIV).**

further insight

"In order to continually increase in spiritual intelligence, and to become more and more efficient, you need to cultivate habits of usefulness in the minor duties lying in your pathway."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 4, p. 380

"Jesus, the served of all, came to be the servant of all. And because He ministered to all, He will again be served and honored by all. And those who would partake of His divine attributes, and share with Him the joy of seeing souls redeemed, must follow His example of unselfish ministry."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 651

Sabbath

Read Daniel 5:4-6.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* activity. What experience did you feel would change your life the most? What experience would be the most difficult to overcome? What radical experience happened in the life of Belshazzar?

_____

How did Belshazzar react to this supernatural occurrence? _____

How do you think the rest of the guests responded? _____

Why do you think God chose to intervene in Belshazzar's life in the way that He did?

_____

Sunday

Read Daniel 5.

Read the *Into the Story* section of this week's lesson and respond to the *Out of the Story* section. Daniel 5 paints a picture of two very different individuals—Daniel and Belshazzar. How would you describe Daniel in a sentence or two?

_____

How would you describe the kind of person Belshazzar was?

_____

Describe an aspect of God's character that comes through in the story.

_____

If you had to share with a friend the most important lesson that God wants us to learn from this Bible episode, what would you say?

_____

Monday

Read Psalm 90:12.

Check out this week's *Key Text.* Daniel shared with King Belshazzar the meaning of the writing on the wall. When God wrote to Belshazzar, "[I have] numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end," do you think Belshazzar knew that his kingdom and his life would end that same night?

_____

What does God tell us to do in today's Bible passage?

_____

What do you think God is asking us to do?

_____

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 16:18.

Read this week's *Flashlight* quotation from Ellen G. White. What are some of the activities that were going on at Belshazzar's big party?

_____

How did alcohol influence Belshazzar's decision making that fateful night?

_____

What are some safeguards to help you resist and avoid drugs or alcohol?

_____

How do you choose friends who have a positive influence on you?

_____

Wednesday

Read the *Further Insight* section of this week's lesson. Why is humility necessary for the Christian?

_____

How can you learn to become meek and humble like Jesus? What are some Bible passages that show you how to be more like Him?

_____

Thursday

Read Daniel 5:13-17.

Daniel's role in the unfolding drama of Belshazzar's dark night is a crucial one. What did Belshazzar promise to give Daniel if he could successfully interpret the writing on the wall?

_____

What was Daniel's reply?

_____

Daniel was summoned by the king to interpret a coded message from God. If God simply wanted to deliver a message to Belshazzar, why didn't He just write in a language that Belshazzar could understand?

_____

Why did God involve Daniel in this process? Why does He choose to use us to warn others of destruction when He could do it Himself?

_____

Friday

Read Proverbs 16:18-20.

Ellen G. White comments: "Many had been his opportunities to know the divine will and to understand his responsibility of rendering obedience thereto. He had known of his grandfather's banishment, by the decree of God, from the society of men; and he was familiar with Nebuchadnezzar's conversion and miraculous restoration. But Belshazzar allowed the love of pleasure and self-glorification to efface the lessons that he should never have forgotten. . . . That which Nebuchadnezzar had finally gained at the cost of untold suffering and humiliation, Belshazzar passed by with indifference" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 522).

What is something that you enjoy doing that may be preventing you from hearing God's voice of warning?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 43.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.