

“That Same Night”
Daniel 5:18-31
(Preached at Trinity, May 25, 2014)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 5** opens with Belshazzar conducting a party and what a party it was. It was attended by a thousand nobles along with his wives and concubines. The wine was flowing freely and you can imagine the sounds of laughter and enjoyment among all. At the peak of the festivities Belshazzar commanded that they bring in the holy vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had captured from the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. As they drank from the golden cups they shouted the praises of the gods of silver and gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.
2. While Belshazzar was irreverently drinking from the holy vessels of God, suddenly a hand appears and begins writing on the wall:
“MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.”
The heart of Belshazzar was suddenly transformed from frolic to absolute terror. At one moment he was boasting in his own glory, mocking the God of the Hebrew people, and the next moment his legs became as rubber and his knees knocked together.
3. Immediately Belshazzar began searching for an answer to the mysterious writing on the wall. None of his diviners were able to interpret the message. At this point the queen enters. Apparently, she was a woman of greater wisdom than that of the king and his thousand nobles, for she was not a part of the revelry. She enters and tells the king about Daniel and immediately he is brought before the king.
4. Daniel tells Belshazzar God’s condemnation upon his pride and wickedness.
MENE – (A measure of weight – from a verb meaning “to number or reckon”)
“God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.”
TEKEL – (a shekel or measure of weight)
“you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.”
PERES – (a half shekel – it means “to divide”)
“your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”
5. As we saw last time Belshazzar’s life had not gone unnoticed by God. God saw and He remembered. God saw Belshazzar’s frolic as a little boy, his foolishness as a teenager, his folly as an adult.
 - A. God’s word to Belshazzar: "you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient."
 - B. Nothing passes by without God’s notice – Everything in this world is continually before Him
Psalm 33:13-14 NAU - "The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; ¹⁴ From His dwelling place He looks out On all the inhabitants of the earth,"

6. The reality of God's judgment upon Belshazzar is the reality we shall all face.
- A. The judgment of Christ will be universal
2 Corinthians 5:10 NAU - "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."
- B. The judgment of Christ will be personal
1. We will stand before Christ individually
 We will be examined individually
 2. Every detail has been recorded. God not only knows our works, He knows even our thoughts. We will be judged according to the entirety of our personhood – every secret will be exposed and brought to light.
Romans 2:16 NAU - " on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."
7. Tonight, I want us to give careful attention to one other aspect of God's judgment upon Belshazzar. It came suddenly and unexpectedly. Belshazzar would stand before God on that very day.
Daniel 5:30 NAU - "That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain."
8. Belshazzar had filled the cup of God's wrath to the brim and now judgment was crashing down upon him this very night.
- A. At one moment Belshazzar's life was filled with mirth and the things that his flesh delighted in. It might have been the greatest moment of his life. As he was surrounded by 1000 of his nobles for a great feast he had no idea that he was about to stand before God's throne of judgment.
- B. The Parable of the Rich Fool is the New Testament picture of this reality.
Luke 12:16-20 NAS - "And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. ¹⁷ "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?" ¹⁸ "And he said, "This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ "And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry." ²⁰ "But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?"
9. This is a reality that should stir the hearts of every one of us.
Luke 12:20 NAS - "But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you"
Daniel 5:30 NAU - "That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain."
- I. The end of our life upon this earth will most likely come at a time unexpected
- A. The immanence of the return of Christ is always before us
Matthew 24:36 NAU - "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."
Matthew 24:42-44 NAU - "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*."

Luke 12:40 NAU - "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

1. When Christ returns it will happen on a day like any other
Matthew 24:37-39 NAU - "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be."
2. Life was going on as usual for the wicked of Noah's day
 They were eating and drinking. They were beginning new families and planning futures until the very end
3. Most people will be living life as usual – life filled with satisfying self
- B. The reality of our approaching death should carry much greater weight before us
 1. I'm not diminishing the glory of the return of Christ. It is the blessed hope of the believer. But for the vast majority we will rise from the grave to meet Him. Most Christians will die before Christ returns.
 2. The reality of death is ever before us. Thousands rose out of bed today thinking it would be a day like every other. They had no idea they were about to come face to face with God.
 3. This could be the last day for any one of us. Death often comes without warning and completely unexpected.
- C. Satan's great lie is there is still time. Tomorrow will come.
 1. Someone has said, "Too Late" will be written on the gates of hell
1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 NAU - "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;"
 2. Matthew Henry – "We should be alarmed if we were not sure to live a month and yet we are careless though we are not sure to live a day."
 3. Belshazzar and the nobles of Babylon had no idea the end was near
 - a. They were in festive mode. They were drinking and feasting
 - b. That very night Belshazzar stood before the Judge of all the earth
Daniel 5:30 NAU - "That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain."
 - c. God told him that his life was weighed in the balance and it was found wanting.
 4. This is the condition of most people upon this earth.
 - a. They live their lives in emptiness. They make poor decisions. They are going the wrong direction. They waste their lives.
 - b. It should cause us great sorrow as we look upon the great mass of humanity – politicians, Hollywood actors, news people, sports stars, musicians, young people living for today without any sense of accountability before God.

II. What shall we do?

- A. We need to live with a keen sense of our mortality
Psalms 39:4-5 NAU - "LORD, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am. ⁵ "Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath."
James 4:13-15 NAS - " Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." ¹⁴ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that."
1. Death can come at any moment
 2. How shall we live when we know everything we own shall soon be left behind?
 3. We should see our lives as a wonderful gift from God—one life to live to His glory.
- B. We should live with an eternal perspective.
Colossians 3:1-3 NAS - " If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."
Matthew 6:33 NAS - "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness"
1. We can quickly be consumed by the endless activities of this life, most of which will soon be undone. (My labor in installing our new floor—I can see the labors of the previous floor being undone).
 - a. This is the mind of Solomon
Ecclesiastes 1:3-4 NAU - "What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun? ⁴ A generation goes and a generation comes, But the earth remains forever."
Ecclesiastes 1:11 NAU - "There is no remembrance of earlier things; And also of the later things which will occur, There will be for them no remembrance Among those who will come later *still*."
 - b. This isn't to say our labors have no value. We do all to the glory of God. We reflect our Creator with beautiful things.
 - c. But we need to keep an eye upon the ultimate.
 2. God's people should see themselves as strangers upon this earth
Hebrews 11:13 NAS - "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth."
1 Peter 2:11 NAS - " Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul."
 3. Too often Christians spend the greatest part of their energy building their castle here.

4. Where is your treasure?
Matthew 6:19-21 NAS - "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

C. We must see our lives as a mission filled with purpose and direction

1. Too many Christians drift through life without a sense of God's calling and direction. They live from day to day without a plan. This is why so many see their Christian life as just an appendage; an accessory or an addition to their life.
2. Paul saw his life as being under God's direction. Was this only true for Paul? Does God only use some Christians?
 At the end of Paul's life he spoke words we must hear:
2 Timothy 4:7-8 NAS - "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸ in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."
3. Is your chief pursuit to be more holy, more like Christ? Are you consumed with a passion to be more holy?
Matthew 5:6 NAS - "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."
 - a. Are you actively engaged in this pursuit?
 This is the great object of our prayer life. It is our focus as we read and study God's Word.
2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAS - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
 - b. Our salvation is a life-long pursuit
1 Peter 2:1-3 NAS - "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ² like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³ if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."
 - c. William Gurnall – "The good man cannot think of dying with any willingness till his heart be in a holier frame: and for the peace of the gospel, serenity of conscience, and inward joy. Alas! All unholiness is to it as poison is to the spirits which drink them up."
4. Are you engaged in the pursuit of holiness. Are you fighting the foes that are at war with you – Satan, this world, your own flesh?
 J.C. Ryle – "There is no holiness without a warfare."
 Warren Wiersbe – "The Christian life is not a playground; it is a battleground.

Conclusion:

1. Are you living in light of this approaching Day? As I stated last week, it is near like an approaching storm. We can hear the thunder and see the flashing on the horizon.
2. If today is your final day are you ready to be weighed in the balance.
3. Belshazzar was taken by surprise. As the enemies of Babylon were storming the walls of the city he was feasting. Instead of spending his time in prayer and fasting to the one true God he was enjoying God's bounty and then mocking Him.
He was totally unprepared to meet the judgment of God.
Daniel 5:30 NAU - "That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain."
4. All men will be found wanting. We desperately need Christ. Will you turn while it is still today?
Hebrews 3:12-13 NAU - "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."
5. If your hope is in Christ does your life reflect that you know Him and that you are living in expectation of meeting Him?