



# The Book of Daniel: No Compromise

## Daniel 5

Pastor Brad Wood

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What happens when God writes a message we can't ignore? In Daniel chapter 5, we encounter one of Scripture's most dramatic moments: a disembodied hand inscribing judgment on a palace wall during a drunken feast.

King Belshazzar, grandson of the humbled Nebuchadnezzar, had learned nothing from his grandfather's experience. While enemy armies surrounded Babylon's supposedly impregnable walls, he threw a lavish party, mocking God by drinking from the sacred temple vessels. His arrogance was met with divine intervention—literal handwriting on the wall spelling out his doom.

The archaeological evidence supporting this account is remarkable, from cuneiform cylinders naming Belshazzar as co-regent to prophecies written 200 years earlier by Isaiah, even naming Cyrus as Babylon's conqueror. But the real power of this passage lies in the contrast between two hearts: Nebuchadnezzar, who, when humbled, repented and acknowledged God; and Belshazzar, who despite knowing this history, refused to humble himself.

The question for us is profound: when we see the writing on the wall in our own lives—those warning signs, those areas God is calling us to surrender—how do we respond? Do we stand in obstinate pride, or do we come with broken and contrite hearts? God's mercy endures as long as we have breath, but it requires our response. This passage reminds us that the God who controls kingdoms also holds our very breath in His hands, and He deserves our humble worship

## Key Takeaways:

1. **God is sovereign over all kingdoms and rulers** - He raises up kings and brings them down according to His purposes.
2. **Archaeological evidence confirms biblical accuracy** - The historical details in Daniel align with discoveries about Belshazzar, Nabonidus, and the fall of Babylon.
3. **God fulfills His prophecies with precision** - Isaiah prophesied Cyrus by name 200 years before the events, and Jeremiah predicted Babylon's rulers would be drunk at their fall.
4. **The difference between fear and repentance** - Belshazzar was terrified but unrepentant, while Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself before God.
5. **God's mercy extends to all who come with a contrite heart** - As long as there is breath, there is opportunity for repentance.

## 5-Day Devotional and Small Group Guide

### Day 1: God Knows the End from the Beginning

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*Reading: Isaiah 44:24-45:7; Philippians 1:6*

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Devotional: Two hundred years before Cyrus was born, God called him by name and declared his purpose. This stunning prophecy reminds us that our God is not limited by time or circumstance. When anxiety grips your heart about the future—whether personal, national, or global—remember that the God who orchestrated the fall of Babylon holds your tomorrow. He sees what you cannot see and works all things according to His purposes. The same God who opened bronze gates for Cyrus can open the impossible doors in your life. Today, surrender your fears about the unknown future to the God who already knows every detail. Trust that He who began a good work in you will complete it.

## Day 2: Pride Before the Fall

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*Reading: Daniel 5:1-12; Proverbs 16:18*

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Devotional: Belshazzar's arrogant feast reveals the deadly nature of pride. Despite knowing his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation, he mocked God with the sacred temple vessels. Pride blinds us to our vulnerabilities and numbs us to God's warnings. Where has pride taken root in your heart? Perhaps you've ignored spiritual "writing on the wall"—conviction about a relationship, a habit, or an attitude. Pride whispers that you're strong enough, secure enough, or justified enough to continue. But God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Examine your heart today. What warnings have you dismissed? What areas have you refused to surrender? Remember: God doesn't want to destroy you; He wants to save you from yourself.

## Day 3: A Broken and Contrite Heart

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*Reading: Psalm 51; 2 Chronicles 7:14*

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Devotional: David's response to his sin stands in stark contrast to Belshazzar's. When confronted, David didn't make excuses or minimize his actions—he broke before God with genuine repentance. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise." True repentance isn't just feeling sorry; it's allowing God access to those "back closets" of your heart you've kept locked. What are you holding onto that God is asking you to release? Unforgiveness? Secret sin? Control? God's mercy is extended as long as you have breath. Today is your day of salvation. Bring your broken heart to Him, and experience the restoration only He can provide.

## Day 4: God Raises and Deposes Kings

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*Reading: Daniel 4:34-37; Romans 13:1-7*

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Devotional: "The Most High God rules in the kingdom of men and appoints over it whom He chooses." This truth should anchor our souls in turbulent times. When political turmoil, cultural upheaval, or societal chaos threatens your peace, remember that no ruler, government, or power operates outside God's sovereign control. He orchestrated Nebuchadnezzar's humbling, Belshazzar's fall, and Cyrus's rise—all for His purposes and His people's good. This doesn't mean we're passive, but it does mean we're peaceful. We can engage our world without being consumed by anxiety because our God reigns supreme. Today, release your grip on outcomes you cannot control. Trust the God who holds nations in His hand to hold your circumstances too.

## Day 5: Ambassadors in Darkness

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*Reading: John 6:35-40; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21*

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Devotional: Jesus promised, "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." This is the message we carry as ambassadors of Christ. In a polarized world that demands we choose sides, our calling is to represent Jesus to all people—not just those who agree with us. God's heart is that all would come to know Him; He died for all, not just some. This requires the supernatural peace that comes from trusting God's sovereignty over history. When you're at peace, you can minister to anyone—the anxious, the angry, the antagonistic—with the love of Christ. Who has God placed in your path that needs to hear this message? Don't write anyone off as "them." Today might be their day of salvation, and you might be God's messenger. Walk in peace, extend grace, and watch God work.

## Practical Applications:

### Option 1: Self-Examination

- Set aside 15-30 minutes for honest prayer and self-reflection
- Ask God to reveal any "back closets" in your heart that need attention
- Journal about what He shows you and your commitment to let Him work in those areas

### Option 2: Peace Practice

- When you encounter news or situations that typically cause anxiety, pause and remind yourself: "My God knows the end from the beginning"
- Write down Isaiah 45:5-7 and carry it with you as a reminder of God's sovereignty
- Share this peace with at least one person who seems anxious this week

### Option 3: Grace Extension

- Identify someone you've written off as "them" (politically, culturally, or personally)
- Pray for them daily this week
- Look for an opportunity to show them Christ's love in a practical way

### Scripture Memory

**Isaiah 45:5-6a** *"I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides me. I will gird you, though you have not known me, that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides me."*

## Small Group Guide: The Writing on the Wall

### Discussion Questions:

- How does the archaeological evidence confirming the biblical account of Belshazzar strengthen your confidence in Scripture's reliability, and how might this affect how you approach difficult or contested passages?
- What does the contrast between Nebuchadnezzar's eventual repentance and Belshazzar's hardened pride reveal about the nature of true humility before God?

- In what ways might we, like Belshazzar, know the truth about God yet still fail to honor Him in our daily lives and decisions?
- How does the reality that God holds our breath in His hand and owns all our ways (Daniel 5:23) challenge our sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency?
- What 'writing on the wall' might God be showing you right now—what warnings or promptings have you been ignoring or dismissing?
- How does understanding that God prophesied Cyrus by name 200 years before his birth affect your trust in God's sovereignty over current world events and leaders?
- What is the difference between being terrified of consequences (like Belshazzar) and having genuine repentance with a contrite heart (like David in Psalm 51)?
- How can knowing that God's mercy endures as long as we have breath change the way we pray for and minister to those who seem far from God?
- In what ways does our culture's 'you're either with us or against us' mentality conflict with God's heart that all would come to know Him, and how should this shape our witness?
- What areas of your heart—those 'back closets'—might God be asking you to open up and surrender so you can more effectively represent Christ to others?

## Further Discussion Questions:

- **Historical Context:** How does understanding the succession of Babylonian kings (from Nebuchadnezzar through Belshazzar) help us appreciate the accuracy and reliability of Scripture?
- **Contrast in Character:** Compare and contrast Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4) and Belshazzar (Daniel 5). What were the key differences in how they responded to God's warnings?

- **The Writing on the Wall:** Why do you think God chose such a dramatic and public way to communicate His judgment to Belshazzar? What does this tell us about God's character?
- **Daniel's Response:** In verse 17, Daniel refuses the king's rewards before interpreting the message. What does this reveal about Daniel's character and priorities?
- **Warning Signs:** In his sermon, Pastor Brad asked, "What should we do when we see the writing on the wall?" What are some ways God tries to get our attention when we're headed in the wrong direction?
- **Heart Examination:** Psalm 51:17 says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart." What's the difference between being scared of consequences and having genuine repentance?
- **Hidden Areas:** Pastor Brad mentioned "those back closets of your heart that you just don't want to open and let God in." Why do we resist letting God into certain areas of our lives?
- **Peace in Chaos:** How can knowing that "God knows the end from the beginning" give us peace during uncertain times in our nation and world?
- **Ambassador Role:** Pastor Brad emphasized being "an ambassador of Christ" regardless of cultural or political turmoil. What does this look like practically in your daily life?
- **Extending Grace:** How does remembering Christ's sacrifice in communion help us extend grace to others, especially those who may be "walking in darkness"?

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