

Rebuilding After the Apostasy
Lesson 4 – Rebuild so Your Efforts Will Last!
(A Study of Daniel 5)

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Introduction: So many problems in this life could be avoided if we could only see things as God does

A. God is not limited by time! **(Isa 46:9-10)**

1. We focus too much on the beginning! **(Prov 20:21)**
2. If we can understand how to begin and then how to build we then will have a good ending!

B. Worldliness and worldly religion cannot see past the immediate. **(1 Jn 2:15-17)**

1. If we were to judge by appearances at any time in history we would conclude the cause of Christ is failing.
2. It is the worldly religions that we would think would hold the future!
3. Worldly religions and movements have the glitter, the numbers and the money.
4. However, There is one thing they do not have! **(Col 2:18-23)**
5. Look at the emphasis on the above two passages. What will last in the Lord's work?

“All that is not eternal is eternally out of date.” - C. S. Lewis

C. The work of Daniel verses the Babylonian kingdom.

1. During Daniel's lifetime the Babylonian kingdom seemed invincible.
2. To the worldly mind the prophecies of Israel's return within 70 years seems impossible! **(Jer 25:11-14)**
3. Look at Daniel and the few who had a living faith in contrast to the great nation of Babylon. What's the use in being a part of such an “irrelevant few?”
 - a. Maybe Daniel needed some experts of “church growth” to come and help him get his numbers up! No!
 - b. All Daniel had to focus upon was building the right way. God would take care of numbers! **(1 Cor 3:5-7)**

“When I lived in Atlanta, several years ago, I noticed in the Yellow Pages, in the listing of restaurants, an entry for a place called Church of God Grill. The peculiar name aroused my curiosity and I dialed the number.

A man answered with a cheery, "Hello! Church of God Grill!"

I asked how his restaurant had been given such an unusual name, and he told me: "Well, we had a little mission down here, and we started selling chicken dinners after church on Sunday to help pay the bills. Well, people liked the chicken, and we did such a good business, that eventually we cut back on the church service. After a while we just closed down the church altogether and kept on serving the chicken dinners. We kept the name we started with, and that's Church of God Grill."

This incident is not unlike many churches, denominations, and individuals who over time, have drifted away from their original purpose.”

-- From Making It Happen, by Charles Paul Conn, p. 95

4. There is no other way to build than God's way. **(1 Cor 3:10-15)**

- a. I would do you no good unless the teaching I give you will prepare you for eternity. Anything less would be tragic. Is this popular?
- b. The other kind of building was used over generations that finally caused God to start over with Israel! **(Isa 30:9-10)**

I. The Folly of Belshazzar (5:1-4)

A. Belshazzar's attitude and practice was just like the worldly man of today.

1. The most prominent king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar died in 563 BC. The events in this chapter take place decades later, in 539 BC.
2. Belshazzar was son of the current ruler Nabonidus. He was in charge in Babylon in the absence of his father.
3. As king of Babylon he had no need to worry. It was not possible for their "peace and safety" to be interrupted at this time in history? Right?
4. We do not know how to live until we treat each day as doomsday! **(Ps 90:12; 1 Thess 5:1-4)**

"He who has no vision of eternity will never get a true hold of time." - Thomas Carlyle

B. Belshazzar sought the "escape" of alcohol. **(Prov 23:29-35)**

1. Worldly people often seek escape from the meaningless life they lead! On the outside they seem happy, but their happiness is temporary. **(Isa 57:19-21)**
2. On thing the social drink will do, it will remove your inward restraints.

C. Belshazzar willingly forgot unpleasant truths.

1. He knew about what the one true God did to Nebuchadnezzar! **(Dan 5:20-23)**
2. How many times have unsound minds reasoned: "nothing will happen to me!"?
3. Those in Noah's day made the same mistake. **(2 Pt 3:3-6)**
4. How many today associate with others who laugh at the judgment of God?

D. Belshazzar has a false sense of security.

1. After all, Babylon had built a very formidable series of walls around the city. There was also a river to supply water and food to the city. No army could take them, right?
2. The Jews in his midst could have told him about false security! **(Jer 7:3-4)**
3. Outside the city at this time was the great army of the Persians. While they were diverting the river for an attack under the walls, the Babylonians did nothing. **(Prov 16:18)**

Class Discussion:

1. What is the ultimate goal of the work of Christians? **(Col 1:28-29)**
2. How does modern "church growth techniques" accomplish this goal?
3. What then should our attitude be about the work of the church?
4. Why do many people "willingly forget?"
5. Should a Christian participate in social drinking?

II. The Terror and Helplessness of the Unprepared (5:5-9)

A. God will allow the wicked to continue for a time. There however will be a day of

reckoning that will be filled with terror. **(Mt 8:12; 13:41-43)**

1. While this pitiful miserable event was brought on by God, He had done all that could be done to prevent it. God gets no joy out of it! **(Ezk 18:23)**
2. Why did God do the many things He did with Nebuchadnezzar?
Nebuchadnezzar went so far as to make an empire-wide statement. **(Dan 3:29; 4:1-3)**
3. More importantly did Nebuchadnezzar teach his children?

B. When a man comes to see the power of God and knows he is lost, this is a terror difficult to describe. **(5:5-6)**

1. Like Nebuchadnezzar before him, all thoughts are now turned to know what a living God wants.

“Death has an amazing power of altering what a man desires because death profoundly affects his outlook.” - Oswald Chambers

2. Sadly he does not have a clue as to how to find this desperately needed answer.
The fakes could not help his father nor could they help him! **(5:7-9)**
3. Did he not know of Daniel? ...of the past failures of the soothsayers?
4. It never pays to “willingly forget.”

“Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live.” - Norman Cousins

Class Discussion:

1. What factors create terror in an individual?
2. How does the word of God free us from such terror?
3. In what area was Nebuchadnezzar a failure?

III. The Sad End of the Proud (5:10-30)

A. Belshazzar is reminded how to find his answer. **(5:10-16)**

1. His memory is now stirred to recall the power of God. **(5:14)**
2. He offers Daniel that which he thought was a great gift. **(5:16)**

B. Daniel knew that Belshazzar has nothing that he wanted. **(5:17)**

1. What made these things of no value to Daniel?
2. Do we see life this way? **(1 Tim 6:6-10; Mt 6:19-21; 19:21)**

“I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast so set eternity within my heart that no earthly thing can ever satisfy me wholly.” -John Baillie

C. Daniel gave Belshazzar a lesson on pride. **(5:18-23)**

1. There are several words that indicate pride: “Haughty, vainglory, high look..”
 - a. Paul uses the word: “Puffed-up” - “to inflate, blow-up, blow out, to cause to swell up...fig. To make proud.”
 - b. Have you ever said that someone is “full of hot air.” **(Prov 25:14)**
2. Pride is an unrealistic view of ones abilities.
 - a. The scriptures clearly warn us. **(Gal 6:3; Rom 12:3)**
 - b. Be sure you do not confuse the Bible sin of pride with self-respect. There is a realm wherein we “ought to think”.

- c. An “inferiority complex” is not humility. Often these people will turn to pride as a mask of their internal insecurities.
 - d. “Let us make sure that the kind of pride we possess is the kind that keeps the head and chin up and not the nose!”
 - 3. Pride comes from abundance, achievements and blessings, that is why it is so dangerous.
 - a. Knowledge is good, but watch for pride. **(2 Cor 8:1-2)**
 - b. Be careful at who you put into positions of responsibility. **(1 Tim 3:6)**
 - 4. Why did Belshazzar’s pride find comfort in idolatry?
 - a. He would never be rebuked! **(Jn 3:19-21)**
 - b. The desire for control made him blind to the obvious. **(5:23; Ps 115:4-8)**
 - D. There are times where opportunity has passed and one faces the terror of the Lord. **(5:25-30)**
 - 1. This is like a doctor who can only tell the patient the end is near.
 - 2. Even now Belshazzar does not get it! What do these gifts possibly mean at this time?
 - 3. Even if he had made some appeal to God it would be one of terror and not of faith. **(Prov 1:23-28)**
- “Every man must do two things alone; he must do his own believing and his own dying.”
- 4. Some in their pride will die never understanding why life has ended this way nor what now lies ahead. Consider King Saul. **(1 Sam 31:4)**
- “I have talked to doctors and nurses who have held the hands of dying people, and they say that there is as much difference between the death of a Christian and a non-Christian as there is between heaven and hell.”
- 5. If we know the end of the unrighteous what then should our attitude be? **(2 Cor 5:10-11)**
- “God’s eternity and man’s mortality join to persuade us that faith in Jesus Christ is not optional.” - A. W. Tozer

Class Discussion:

- 1. What is pride?
- 2. Why do many find pride appealing?
- 3. How can one identify pride in others?
- 4. What is the worst fruit of pride?

IV. The Continued Protection of Daniel (5:30-31)

A. Remember our chronology? Daniel is now in his eighty’s.

Chapter 1 – 17 years old

Chapter 2 – 19 years old

Chapter 3 – 21-22 years old

Chapter 4 – 47-52 years old

Chapter 5 – early-mid 80’s

Chapter 6 – 85 years old

- B. God still had a mighty work for him to accomplish.
- C. Consider what Daniel possessed in contrast to Belshazzar.
 - 1. He patiently waited on God. **(Isa 40:31)**
 - a. What has Daniel experience in his lifetime?
 - b. Rather than conclude God had forsaken him, he kept on serving the Lord.
 - 2. He possessed a wisdom the world cannot know. **(Prov 8:32-36)**
 - a. The wisdom of God cannot be known by the world! **(1 Cor 2:14-15)**
 - b. When worldly men get in trouble, whom do they turn to?
 - 3. He has an understanding of what will last.
 - a. What did Daniel think of Belshazzar's offer? Why? **(Dan 5:17)**
 - b. Daniel learned to think this way from youth! **(Dan 1:8)**
 - 3. He had the protection of God.
 - a. Daniel knew what was to happen that very night! Was he afraid?
 - b. When a man serves the Lord for years he knows the protection of God. **(1 Pt 3:12-13)**

“In his beautiful book, *I Shall Not Want*, Robert Ketchum tells of a Sunday school teacher who asked her group of children if any of them could quote the entire twenty-third psalm. A golden-haired, four-and-a-half-year-old girl was among those who raised their hands. A bit skeptical, the teacher asked if she could really quote the entire psalm. The little girl came to the rostrum, faced the class, made a perky little bow, and said: "The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want."

She then bowed again and sat down. She may have overlooked a few verses, but that little girl captured David's heart in Psalm 23.”

- 4. Contrast the fear of Belshazzar to the confidence of Daniel. **(Phil 1:28)**
- “He who does not fear death has no fear of threats.” - Pierre Corneille

Dying Words of Atheists

Hobbs: "I say again, if I had the whole world at my disposal, I would give it to live one day. I am about to take a leap into the dark."

Ingersoll: "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul, from hell, if there be a hell."

Tom Paine (He wrote *The Age of Reason*, predicting it would replace the Bible. The same presses used to print his book were later used to print Bibles.): "Stay with me, for God's sake. I cannot bear to be left alone. O Lord, help me. O God, what have I done to suffer so much? What will become of me hereafter?"

Voltaire (He predicted that in less than 100 years the Bible would be discarded and Christianity swept from the earth. Like Tom Paine, his press was used to print Bibles, and his home was used by the *The International Bible Society* as a depot to store Bibles before shipment.): "I am abandoned by God and man; I will give you half of what I am worth, if you will give me six month's life," to the doctor treating him. When told it could not be done, he continued, "Then I shall die and go to hell."

Sir Thomas Scott: "Until this moment I thought there was neither a God nor a hell. Now I know and feel there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty."

Class Discussion:

1. What could Daniel have been discouraged about?
2. What gave him the strength to live each day for the Lord?
3. Where does assurance before God come from? Do you have it?

Conclusion: There is only one way to have a good end to those things that really matter.

- A. We must build with the One who holds the universe in His hands. **(Rev 1:8; 22:13)**
 1. Will you drink of the fountain of life that will satisfy your real thirst? **(Rev 21:6)**
 2. Please make sure you will be of that number who will "last forever!"

A survey was taken recently of people who are over 95. The people were asked one question. It was an open ended question they could answer any way they wished. The question was: If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently? Among all the different answers, these three answers came back most frequently:

1. If I could live my life over again, I would reflect more.
2. I would risk more.
3. I would do more things that would live on after I'm dead.

B. Let us be determined to build in a way to stand in the day of judgement.

1. We must become "workmen" in God's word. **(2 Tim 2:15)**
2. Will you consider beginning a home study group with others?

Two Churches Want To Grow
Bill Hall

Two churches want to grow, but their attitudes toward growth differ greatly.

The first church looks upon growth as its primary purpose. Goals are placed before the membership: "We want to double our membership within the next three years," for instance. Success (or failure) is judged almost entirely on the basis of that congregation's numerical growth.

The second church looks upon the saving of souls as its primary purpose, and any growth in membership is just a natural result of that primary purpose. Members of the second church are infused with the value of immortal souls rather than with a sense of congregational pride.

Members of the first church become eager to get people to the water. Baptism is the point at which people are added to the membership list; consequently, it's going to take so many

baptisms to keep pace with their great goal of doubling their membership. They must not only get them to the water, they must get them there within the time period that has been arbitrarily set by their leaders.

Members of the second church are far more eager to get people to repent. Their concern is for additions to the Lord's body rather than additions to a membership list. Their approach is to bring sinners to a consciousness of their sin and the consequences of remaining in sin. If they can do this in one study, great! But if considerable time is required to uproot false concepts and to plant the true seed of the gospel, they patiently accept this. Their only sense of urgency grows out of the uncertainty of life and its duration. But they know that shortcuts are not the answer; that baptism without repentance is worthless; and that once people are brought to true repentance, having been properly taught, baptism for the remission of sins will follow. So they wait with longsuffering until the gospel brings about its desired effect in the hearts of those whom they are teaching.

Members of the first church will be tempted to use questionable tactics in their approach to people. The old methods and approaches don't seem to be effective anymore. New and more positive approaches must be found. So the members of the first church make their appeal to the pride of people. They persuade them of their self-worth; they build their self-image; they tell them how valuable they would be to the congregation. "We need you," they tell their prospects. They might extol the virtues of the congregation, persuade their prospects of the value of being a part of such a vibrant, growing group of people. So, people "become members," and they conform to the rules that are placed before them for acceptance within the group, but there may have been little grief over sin; in fact, they might even still believe they were Christians before they "became members. "

The members of the second church recognize that the gospel never makes its appeal to the pride of people. They bring people to see their spiritual bankruptcy; that they have "nothing to pay"; that their true worth is not to be found in self, but in Christ; that they must humble themselves and look to Christ for their exaltation; that they are sinners in desperate need of salvation; that their only hope is to be found in Christ.

The first church may become compromising in its teaching. Its elders intend to maintain doctrinal soundness, but there is the pressure to produce, to maintain **the growth** rate set before the congregation. When doctrinal soundness becomes an obstacle to that purpose, the elders may succumb to the pressures and ease up on its teaching. The second church faces no such pressure, for in its concern for the spiritual well-being of people, there is desire for truth on every subject vital to salvation.

The emphasis of the first church is organizational and institutional; the emphasis of the second church is spiritual and heavenly.

We commend the second church to our readers. Serious problems can result when churches see growth as their primary purpose. If goals are to be set-and goals can serve a good purpose-let them focus on the numbers to be taught rather than the number to be baptized. If new approaches are needed, let them be conceived only if they are compatible with God's wisdom. In efforts to reach others, let all determine to know nothing "except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." When churches thus become really serious about saving souls, God will give the increase, and growth will take care of itself.

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