

Kenny Moorner - The Handwriting On The Wall

Good morning to everyone. Good to see you this morning. Appreciate your interest in spiritual things. And we're glad to have you among us today. I appreciate Jacob reading that. I'm not going to pronounce Belshazzar his name like Jacob did. But there's a lot of names I don't pronounce probably the way they should be pronounced. But I very much appreciate his reading that for us this morning. And the way in which he read that. Public reading of the Bible particularly is important. And when it's done well, like it was this morning, I very much appreciate that, I think it helps us pay the kind of attention to it that we need to. And so, we're going to look at some things from Daniel five in just a moment. It's good to see each of you, we have some who were not with us this morning. A few folks texted me earlier and said they couldn't be here this morning for various reasons. And so, they said they would be watching the live stream, which is, I think, a good reason to have that. Sometimes you don't feel well or others in your household don't feel, and you can't get here. And so, I think having that, and others are simply away, and want to be a part of our worship period this morning. And while it's not the same as being here, I think it certainly is a benefit. And I appreciate those who are watching our live stream today as well. I hope you'll make your plans to come back tonight we're going to spend a period of time singing and appreciate Anthony Horton, arranging that for us. And so, we'll look forward to being together tonight when we are able to do that a little bit more.

The book of Daniel is it's really an exciting book. It's an encouraging book. It's a motivational book. It's instructional, it's all of the things that most Bible books are. But the first six chapters particularly offer stories, and they're legitimate stories, they're true stories. But it's the kind of information that if you're teaching a children's class, you want to make sure you have that quarter. Because it's wonderful to teach these stories. There's a lot in there, and you can think about, and you can gather a lot of information. We're going to talk about one of those stories today from Daniel five, as Jacob read initially from us, but the stories are very interesting.

In Daniel, the first chapter, you have, certainly, you have the story of these three boys who come from Israel, if you will, they're taken into captivity, and they come into the land of the Babylonians, and they're told we want you to eat the king's food. And they all declined. These four men, these four young boys, they declined. They're, probably anywhere from 16 to 18 years old. And they come into the king's palace, and they decline and said, we're not going to eat that. And you know the story of what happened. So, it takes great courage to do what they did. When you get to chapter two, then you have: Nebuchadnezzar has a dream. And he needs somebody, like it in the story today that we're going to look at chapter five, he needs somebody to interpret that dream. And so, Daniel comes into play. Daniel says, I can do that. And Daniel does interpret that it's a great story, but it has even greater meaning for what eventually was going to happen in the future. Then you get to Daniel three, and the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These boys, these three boys that were friends of Daniel, they're thrown into the fire first, because they would not bow down to this image. This golden image. They would not bow down. So, again, courage is seen in that. And then a very interesting story that makes up part of Chapter Four is when Nebuchadnezzar is told that his kingdom is going to pass away. And he should have paid attention, that God is in charge of what happens in the kingdoms of men, and

Nebuchadnezzar is humiliated. He's told that he is going to turn into, some level at least, of an animal. He's going to live with the animals and he's going to do what animals do. He's going to, in some ways, he's going to look like them, and he's going to act like them. And it may very well be according to the language that this lasts as much as seven years. Can you imagine looking something similar to that and living like an animal does for seven years? And that's basically what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, and it brought him down. And it should have brought him down. And God's trying to teach him a lesson. I believe God does teach him a lesson. Then the story that may be the most familiar of all stories in the book of Daniel from Daniel six, where Daniel is thrown into the lion's den. Because He prayed to His God, he was told, don't pray to that God and if you do, the declaration was, if you do, you will be killed. And so, Daniel continued to pray, as was his, as was his habit. The text tells us he prayed all the time. He prayed every day. And when he was told not to, he continued to pray, and so he's thrown into the lion's den. And we all know what happened to him. He was saved as well from the lions. So, those are all, they're all, interesting stories to us.

But there's a story that's found in chapter five. And that story is particularly about a king. His name is, I'll call him, Belshazzar because that's what I've called him all of my life. But it's found in Daniel, the fifth chapter, and Jacob read the first part of that story, I would just want you to think about the first part of that story. As we begin our lesson, today. I'm going to do two things, I'm going to go through the chapter and kind of tell the story. I'm going to do that first by telling part of it, and we're going to do my reading part of it as well. So, we're going to do kind of a combination of those things. And then when we close that part, I want to go back and I want to make three, what I think are three very, very important applications. I think it's really why we're told about Belshazzar. Because this is really what you find in chapter five, is really all we know about this king. It's very interesting. But there are lessons that we need to learn, so I want us to do that.

Belshazzar is the king. The text is going to tell us that Nebuchadnezzar is his father. What the text probably means is that Nebuchadnezzar was his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar's son, was probably Belshazzar his father. And Belshazzar probably co-reigned with his father after Nebuchadnezzar passed. And so, when you see in the text, he's talking about Nebuchadnezzar as being Belshazzar his father, it probably means his grandfather. But Belshazzar plans a great feast. It's in a great banquet hall, which was pretty popular even in Babylon and even from what the architecture and archeological digs tell us. Great, great feast areas were found where many people could gather and assemble and that happens on this particular occasion. At least 1000 people come and what's involved in that is Belshazzar calls for this great feast. And, and as Jacob read for us, kings and wives and concubines, and others come who are friends of the king, and they come to this area, and they have a big drinking party. That's basically what happens. And very probably, the King, King Belshazzar, is elevated on some platform. And he begins drinking, and apparently, to show the others what he wanted them to do. So, this turns into exactly what it says it turns into. And that is just simply a drinking party. Except Belshazzar brings the vessels that his grandfather had taken from God's temple, from God's house. And he wants all the people who are at his party to drink from these vessels. And the text tells us that he wants that to happen, so that they are practicing and honoring the gods of the gold and silver and brass and iron and wood. And just think about that. They're honoring the gods of what I just mentioned. And they're not honoring Jehovah God. And they're using the vessels of Jehovah God that was in His house, to drink the wine and to have this this drunken party, if you will. And that's the kind of man that

Belshazzar is, that's the kind of king that Belshazzar is. And while they're having this party, fingers begin to write on the wall. Really can't see the hand, the text would tell us, but it's the fingers that appear. And the king sees these fingers writing these words on the wall, and the text tells us that he is terrified. Verse 16, "then the king's countenance changed. And his thoughts troubled him so that the joints of his hips were loosened, and his knees knocked against each other." What does that picture bring to your mind? He's terrified. He's seeing fingers writing on the wall. He doesn't really know, at that point in time, what it means because he's going to try to find out what it means. But he's terrified. His thoughts are terrified. Physically he's terrified. Emotionally he is terrified. He's concerned about what happens. And so, this great party that they're having quickly turns into nothing but a nightmare for him. And the text tells us that he called for his people. He wanted his soothsayers, he wanted all those people who could theoretically interpret dreams for him, he wanted those people to come and tell me what these things mean. So, those people come, and they can't tell him what it means. They can't tell him what the handwriting means. So, verse 10, tells us this, "the Queen, because of the words of the King and his lords came to the banquet hall. The Queen spoke saying, Oh, King, live forever. Do not let your thoughts trouble you nor let your countenance change. There's a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the Holy God, and 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 magician's astrologers, Chaldeans and soothsayers. In as much as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the King named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he'll give you the interpretation." The Queen, he calls for the queen or the queen comes into the banquet hall, she's evidently not there. And it probably was, or at least it could have been, Nebuchadnezzar's widow. Could have been his grandmother. She at some point had been a queen. And the queen comes in and she looks at what again, is her grandson and says, Listen, you don't need to worry about anything, I can tell you how to handle this. There's a man who's a part of the kingdom already, and he can tell you. He can tell you what these things mean. He's done that many times before. And he can tell you. He helped your grandfather understand these things. So, the text tells us that Daniel was brought in. And Daniel was brought in, and he was told by Belshazzar, I'm bringing you in, because I know you can help me understand all these things. And he says, I can. And he said, Well, if you can, I'm going to make you even more wealthy than you are. I'm going to give you power that you don't have. But if you can help me understand this, then I will give you all these things. And basically, Daniel says, "Let your gifts" verse 17, "let your gifts be for yourself and give your rewards to another. Yet I will read the writing to the king and make know to him the interpretation." I don't want your gifts, King. I'm going to tell you what this means. But I don't need anything. He didn't say this, but I'm sure he was thinking this. I don't need anything because it's not going to last. Because in a few hours, you're going to be dead. But I'm going to tell you the interpretation of the dream. And so, Daniel does that. He tells him the interpretation of the dream. And when you get to verse 24, the dream is really told by him and it says this, this is what Daniel said, "then the fingers of the hand were sent from him. And this writing was written." We know that it was done earlier in the chapter. Now we're going to hear about what it means. Verse 25, "and this is the inscription that was written: Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin. This is the interpretation of each word. Mene: God has numbered your kingdom and finished it. Tekel: you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Peres: your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians." These words, written in Aramaic, appear on the wall. Mene means numbered your kingdom; the days of your kingdom have been numbered. You don't have long, and he didn't say specifically that

way. But he says your days have been numbered and he repeats that for emphasis's sake your days have been numbered. Your days have been numbered. Hear that. Hear what the text tells you. Here's what it says. And then Tekel, you are weighed on scales and those scales don't balance. That was a measure by which they could make the balances could be the same. They could be equal. You put a weight on one side, and it was a true weight and you put a weight on the other that was true. And you could tell because they would balance each other. And he says your life, Belshazzar, has been put on the side of this balance. And it doesn't equal what it needs to equal. And because of that, upharsin or Peres in verse 28. It's really the same idea. Maybe two different kinds of meanings. Your kingdom has been divided. And it's been given to the Medes and the Persians the text tells us.

I'll tell you how quick it was going to happen. They were outside the gate. The army that was going to conquer Babylon was outside the gate. They were outside the city walls. Walls that stood as high as 30 feet in many areas. So, that those who were inside the gate gave no thought to the fact that somebody's going to come and overtake them. Water was flowing into the city. There's no way anybody's going to come in and take over our land. No way that's going to happen. And yet we know from history that the water outside the gate was diverted, and the army went in underneath and overtook Babylon. And in a matter of possibly even minutes, the kingdom of Babylon, the kingdom now, the kingdom of Babylon, to conquered. It probably just, as I said, probably just in a matter of minutes. And then when you get to verse 29, and 30 I think the outcome of what happened is really juxtaposed. It's as if he's putting 29 and 30 together, so you can see how quickly things change. 29 Daniel takes what the king, the gifts, that the king said would happen. You've interpreted the dream so I'm going to give it to you, and apparently Daniel accepted those. Daniel had said, I don't need the gifts, I don't want the gifts, I'm not going to accept the gifts. And then when he had interpreted the dream, it appears as though Daniel takes the gifts. And it probably because he knew it wasn't going to matter. He may have had no time to really say to the king, you remember what I told you, I don't want any of this stuff. And it may have been that the king had already put the things on Daniel. And then the next verse says that the king was slain that night. The king was slain that night. Historians tell us that that night was October the 12 539 BC, October the 12 539 BC. A kingdom, like the Babylonian kingdom, that had been so well established. That was the Great Empire of the world, was taken down in a matter of minutes. And it was because of the kind of leadership that they had, and the kind of attitude that those leaders had. That's the story. That's really the story of Belshazzar. And he's mentioned seven times in Daniel. Five of those are in chapter five. I think once in chapter seven, and once in chapter eight, if I'm not mistaken. But this is really all we know about Belshazzar, and he was slain. And he slain because he did not see the handwriting on the wall.

There are great, great lessons for us. And I want to offer three of them to you this morning as we think about this. Great lessons about the handwriting on the wall. See, that's what happens when you don't double check your PowerPoint. You can figure that out. There's a time for judgment and not warning. That's the first application. There's a time for judgment and not warning. I want you to think about something. You know every time you open your Bible or every time you hear a lesson from God's Word, or every time you're in a Bible class, or every time you think about God, you're in the warning phase, I want you to think about this. You're in the warning phase. See, we're all today sitting here in the warning phase. None of what God said is going to happen to people who are not accountable to him in the right way, none of what he says is going to happen, has happened. Did you find that

interesting? None of us have yet to ascend into the final judgment phase. In the book of Daniel up to, really, up to chapter five, that's really not true, but at least for Belshazzar it's true. Everything prior to that had been a warning. But this is a story about judgment. This is not a story about warning because that can change in a split second. Do you know, and I know you do, but let me just for emphasis's sake say to you. Do know that while we're sitting here this morning, the moment could change from warning to judgment in a split second? I want you to think about that. From the time I stand on this leg till the time I move over and stand on this leg. Everything can change. Things can go from warning to judgment. That's exactly what was happening to Belshazzar. He was he was not given, in this story anyway, he was not given a time to be warned. The text in verse 22, listen carefully, the text in verse 22, Daniel says to Belshazzar, you remember what happened to your dad or your granddad? He said, you knew that. You know this. Everything I'm saying to you, you already know. And my guess is, at least to some degree, Belshazzar saw what was happening to his grandfather. I don't know the timeframes of all that, but I think he probably knew something about it and he for sure had heard something about it, don't you imagine? Well, Daniel said yeah, you knew about that. Although you know, how much of it? All of it. Although you know, all of it. Although you've seen the warnings, Belshazzar, you're still doing it. You've still done what you know you shouldn't have done. You still in essence followed your grandfather. You shouldn't have done that. You know, all this. What is the application? We know all this. Everything that Daniel says to Belshazzar about his kingdom we know folks. We all know it. That the same could be said of us. Kenny, you know all this. Ann, you know all this. Milton, you know all this. So, see the handwriting on the wall. You know. You know what happens when people don't follow God. Understand that you know all this. And my good friends, all of us know all this. And the good part about knowing about it, we're still in the warning phase, at least this split second we are. But at some point, the accountability phase will not be forgotten. Keep His commandments. The accountability phase will be you failed to fear God and keep His commandments. It's too late. It's too late for all of us. Think that's one of the greatest lessons, there's a time for judgment, not warning. Fortunately, we're still in the warning phase. And every time God blesses us to come together, you're going to hear me or someone else talk about the fact that the end of lessons that there's a time to respond to the gospel, if you need to, I'm going to do it today. If you need to respond the gospel, then you need to do that. You all know that. I know that. And yet, and yet, people just put it off. And they wait until they can't wait any more. Until there's no more waiting. Until it's Judgment Day. And I don't know when that's going to be you don't know when it's going to be. But Belshazzar was warned. And then he was told its time. It's time.

The second thing that I would suggest to you is that we have to get the right purpose. There's nothing about these points that are hard. Nothing. But we have to get the right purpose. And let me say it to you this way: we cannot value what the world generally values. We can't do that. We can't value what the world generally values. And so, our purpose needs to be right from the get-go. And again, I'm saying this this morning, kind of as a warning. But again, I'll go back to point one, there comes a time when there'll be no more warnings. When the fact you won't be able to hear you need to get your purpose in life right. You won't hear that anymore. There's going to come a time where you might not like to hear it, you won't have to hear it anymore. There'll be no other opportunity for you to get your purpose in life right. But right now, there is. There's an opportunity for that to happen. And thinking about this point, I read something that I thought was just really good. I'm going to share it with you. This is from Psalm 39. I'm sure, I would think I've read this passage before, but when I read it, it just blew me away and I want

to read it in you're hearing this morning, but you listen to it. "Lord, make me to know my end. And what is the measure of my days. That I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths and my age is as nothing before you. Certainly, every man at his best state is but a vapor. Selah." Selah could have meant two things in the Hebrew language. It could have meant; it could have been a musical notation. It could have been something as if to say, while you're singing this particular psalm, just pause or stop, or take a break. Or it could have been interpreted as this needs to be emphasized. When I read this, it may have been a notation to help in the singing of the psalm. But this is something that should be emphasized too. "Every man that his best state is but a vapor. Surely every man walks about like a shadow. Surely, they busy themselves in vain. He heaps up riches and does not know who will gather them." I occasionally say this, but I would highly recommend that in your Bible, you circle these verses, you highlight these verses, or do something that when you turn to that passage, make a note in the front of your Bible that says this is a reminder about how quickly my life will pass. This is a reminder about how shallow really my life is. Do something with these passages that help you remember these passages. Get the right purpose in life.

Now, we could talk about that, we could talk about that a long time. But I want to, I want to talk about it by the last point. And that is then have the right priorities. See purpose is determined by priority. See, purpose and priority. Those are fun things for preachers to talk about. Because it kind of gets to the heart of it, right? What's your purpose? What's the one purpose that you have in life? What's your, what are your priorities that help lead toward that purpose? So, let me talk with you just a moment, just for a few more minutes. Just very, very straightforward. No fluff, just very straightforward. Everything in your life, and my life, everything in your life needs to have at its very core and its very foundation, what God thinks. I want you to think about that. Everything about your life is not first: what do I want? It's not that. Has nothing to do with it. Not if you're going to be godly. Everything about your life at the front end, at the very beginning, says: what is it about this that's what God wants? Everything. Everything friends. Jesus would say it this way, "Seek first, the kingdom," right? "Seek first the kingdom of heaven and all of these things will be added to you." Matthew 6:33 tells us that. It's probably a verse that if I said What does Matthew 6:33 say? Most of you in this audience could say I can quote that. You've heard so much. What does that mean? You know what it means. You know everything that it means. You know everything about it says: everything in my life has got to start with what does God want. You see that's what Belshazzar didn't do. How would you state what Belshazzar wanted? That's easy, right? He wanted what he wanted. He got what he got. He did what he did. Because that's what he wanted. Now what God wanted. That's why the hand came up on the wall. That's why the hand said what it said. In, probably, in a different translation, it might have said Belshazzar, you totally you totally missed everything. You failed about as miserably as a person could fail, Belshazzar. And it wasn't but a few hours evidently, when the hand wrote on the wall that he died. That can happen to us too.

So, how would I close? How would I close this up? I would say this: Don't play games. Don't play games with God. Don't play games with what you want as opposed to what God wants. Don't think that, at some point, all that's just going to, you're just going to flip a switch. And it's just going to be that. Now you can make a decision and be determined and do that. But that's not going to happen without you thinking about okay, here's my life. Here's what I am. It's really about me, it's not about Him. You have got to change that. You got to. You and I both have to change it. If that's the situation that we're in, we have to change it. Don't play games with your faith in your Lord. That's how I wrote down my notes.

Don't play games with your faith in your Lord. So, have a serious talk with yourself and have a serious talk with your family. And those over whom you have some influence. And say, are we seeing? Are we seeing the handwriting on the wall? Are our days numbered? Have we been weighed in the balances and found wanting? Am I weighed in the balances? If the handwriting came to your house, if it was on your wall, and you saw it? What would you think? If it was about you and not about Belshazzar, what would you think about it? That's my question. What would I think about that? A lot of people use the phrase handwriting on the wall. And it's clear, it's clear where it came from, right? But this is a very serious mural, if you will, that all of us need to see. And make sure we ask ourselves, have I been weighed in the balances? And what does it say? What did the balances show about me? Would God be pleased with me? Would God be pleased with the way I live my life? Well, that's it. That's all I got for you today from this particular story. But it's a great story. And I think it's teaching us a lesson. I think it's not just about Belshazzar. But it's about me. It's about you. I hope you'll take it with you today.

I do give thought, believe it or not, to what I want to say at the end of sermons. Because it really is all about trying to encourage people to respond to the gospel. I've thought about a long time. I've preached a lot of sermons, and I've tried to think about what I want to say at the end of the sermon, try to motivate people, encourage people and even instruct people about what they need to do to get their life right with God. And it always comes back to the same thing, I just make a plea and say, you know what, you're the ones got to figure that out. God's told you what you need to do to have the relationship with him. Are you willing to do that? And so that's what I tell you today. Kenneth is going to lead us on like we always do, Just as I am, I come broken. Wonderful song. It's got great words. It's very instructional and very motivational. But I hope that the words and the lesson and I even hope what you're going through in your life would somehow motivate you to do what you know you need to do. And it might be that you need to in a public way let that be known. You don't have to come forward to give your life to Christ. You don't have to do that. You can talk to me; you can talk to anybody else afterwards. And we'd be happy to baptize you into Christ without anybody here. What a wonderful thing to let all of us rejoice with you at the decision you've made by coming forward. By making a public coming forward today and say I want to be baptized into Christ for the remission of my sins. That would be something that all of us would treasure and we'd be able to see that. So, if you need to do that, we'd encourage you to do that. Or if there's a public, some something public that you need to say to the rest of us about your life. That I haven't been what I ought to be, I've asked God to forgive me, but I want you to pray for me. You to help me. Then we'd love to do that with you as well. It's all about it's all about being right with God, isn't it? Anything more important than that? No. Ask Belshazzar and ask so many others. Could we this morning help you and your obedience to the gospel. If we can come as we stand and as we sing.