

End-Time Accountability



Week Five

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
Daniel 5

CHARACTERISTIC TO AVOID

Accountability is a word that brings with it feelings of fear and dread. This word is typically not used in positive terms. However, imagine a world without accountability. What if our judges were not held accountable to uphold the law? Or our police to enforce the law? Or our bankers were not held accountable to be honest? Without accountability there is no trust, and without trust there is no relationship.

Daniel 5 is a story of a king's accountability. More than that, it is the story of end-time accountability. It is the story of a king who squandered the opportunities and the light that had been given to him. Out of the eight stories in Daniel, this is the second narrative that reveals characteristics that we are to avoid as the prophecies are being fulfilled.



inScribe

Write out Daniel 5 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Daniel 5:18–28. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Daniel 5. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

Think of examples in your life where you have been blessed with God revealing Himself to you. How has God blessed you with opportunities, light, and truth?

SQUANDERED OPPORTUNITIES

The city of Babylon has been surrounded by the army of Cyrus. Babylon was considered to be impregnable with enough food to last twenty years. Belshazzar the king of Babylon held a drunken feast in defiance of the siege. In the midst of his debauchery, Belshazzar had the sacred vessels that were taken by Nebuchadnezzar from the temple in Jerusalem and drunk his favorite alcoholic beverages out of them, declaring the god of gold and silver. Suddenly, a mysterious supernatural hand emerged and wrote on the wall. The music stopped. In a moment of instant sobriety, the king's knees began to knock together and Daniel was summoned to interpret the handwriting on the wall.

Daniel came in and gave a history lesson, a theology lesson, and a reading lesson in one chapter. First, Daniel recounted how Nebuchadnezzar had been humbled by God for seven years as a beast. Then he gave a theology lesson on accountability stating, "But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you known all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven" (Daniel 5:22, 23a). Finally, Daniel gave the king a reading lesson by interpreting the handwriting on the wall, predicting the fall of Babylon. That very night, Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians.

The words of Daniel to Belshazzar "although you have known all this" ring as a warning to those living in the end of time. It is not how much you know; it's what you do with what you know. Belshazzar had been given much light. He had been given a front row seat to witness Nebuchadnezzar humbled by heaven as well as converted to the God of heaven.

The lesson of Daniel 5 is a lesson of accountability. "Belshazzar's example stands out as a beacon to admonish us of what we ought never to do—ignore or make light of the truths we have received from Scripture." (Leslie Hardinge, *Jesus in My Judge*, p. 74).

At the end of time, there will be unprecedented light that will be given to mankind. Revelation 18 reveals that the whole earth will be lit with the glory of God. Everyone will be given a chance to make an intelligent decision. God is going to reveal Himself to the world with unprecedented light and truth. However, "to whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Luke 12:48). With much light comes much responsibility. The example of Belshazzar is a warning to those who squander and even openly defy the privileges of light that have been given to them.

A DEEPER LOOK INTO CHAPTER 5

What are the parallels between ancient Babylon in Daniel and end-time Babylon in Revelation?

1. They both cause their subjects to be drunk (Dan. 5:1; Rev. 17:2).
2. They both have wine in golden cups (Dan. 5:3; Rev. 17:4).
3. They both mix the sacred with the pagan (Dan. 5:1–4; Rev. 9:14; 18:1–3).
4. They both are defeated by kings from the east (Isa. 45:1–5; Matt. 16:12; Rev. 16:12).
5. They both are built over the river Euphrates (Isa. 44:27, 28; Rev. 16:12; 17:6, 15).
6. They both fall when the river Euphrates dries up (Isa. 45:1–5; Rev. 16:12, 19)

The fall of ancient Babylon reveals characteristics of how symbolic Babylon in the book of Revelation will fall. The fall of ancient Babylon came about because of the rejection of light and truth in the same way the fall of end-time Babylon will come because of the rejection of light and truth.

Does God hold everyone to the same level of accountability?

“God’s test of the heathen, who have not the light, and of those living where the knowledge of truth and light has been abundant, is altogether different. He accepts from those in heathen lands a phase of righteousness which does not satisfy Him when offered by those of Christian lands. He does not require much where much has not been bestowed” (Ellen G. White Comments, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1121).

James 4:17 states, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” The principle that emerges is that accountability is directly proportional to the amount of light that we have been given. Less light means less accountability. More light means more accountability.



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

What thoughts surface when thinking about accountability to God?



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

John 9:41; 12:35; 13:17

2 Peter 2:21

Revelation 16:12; 18:1–10

Isaiah 45:1

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Daniel 5?

Review your memorized verse from Daniel 5.

RELATIONALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

God loves us and He desires to reveal Himself to us. He does this through nature, through His Word, and most profoundly in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The knowledge of God brings with it great blessings and the responsibility for accountability.

Accountability seems like anything but a relational word. We typically view it in terms of accountability to authority or accountability to institutions. However, we are accountable to our children and spouses in a relational sense. Relationship without accountability is no more of a relationship than we can have with our cars and homes. In other words, accountability implies free intelligent moral agents. Relationships, love, and intimacy can only exist where there are free moral agents; and with free will comes accountability—accountability is the other side of the same coin of free will.

In terms of our relationships, we can know that our accountability will always come from a Being who is the very definition of fairness and love. There will never be any misunderstanding for He is omniscient. There will never be injustice for He is justice. There will always be mercy for He is mercy. In the end, there is no one that we can be more grateful to be accountable to than to God.



inVite

Where do you see Jesus
in Daniel 5?



What is He saying to you through
these texts?

How do you see Jesus differently
or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to
seeing Jesus in this way?



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

After this week's study
of the chapter, what are
personal applications you are
convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications
you must make in your
relationships?

REBELLION'S CONSEQUENCES

Before that terror-stricken throng, Daniel, unmoved by the promises of the king, stood in the quiet dignity of a servant of the Most High, not to speak words of flattery, but to interpret a message of doom. 'Let thy gifts be to thyself,' he said, 'and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.'

The prophet first reminded Belshazzar of matters with which he was familiar, but which had not taught him the lesson of humility that might have saved him. He spoke of Nebuchadnezzar's sin and fall, and of the Lord's dealings with him—the dominion and glory bestowed upon him, the divine judgment for his pride, and his subsequent acknowledgment of the power and mercy of the God of Israel; and then in bold and emphatic words he rebuked Belshazzar for his great wickedness. He held the king's sin up before him, showing him the lessons he might have learned but did not. Belshazzar had not read aright the experience of his grandfather, nor heeded the warning of events so significant to himself. The opportunity of knowing and obeying the true God had been given him, but had not been taken to heart, and he was about to reap the consequence of his rebellion. (*Prophets and Kings* by E. G. White, pp. 529)



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



Who are some individuals you can think of who have been given less light than you? Who are some individuals that have been given more light than you?

What role do you think the opportunity to receive truth plays in accountability? In other words, what if I don't know truth but I have the opportunity to know truth? How does that play into God's accountability?

What is your gut response when you hear the word accountability?

What are some examples of how accountability has played out in your relationship with your parents? Significant other? Institutions? Works?

How does your picture of God affect your view of accountability?