



# God Judges Belshazzar for His Pride

*Daniel 5*



## LESSON GOAL

Students will respond to God's warning before they are judged.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Explain why Belshazzar used the vessels from the Lord's temple.
- Describe what happened to the wall and what the writing meant.
- Analyze why Belshazzar was punished.

## KEY VERSE

"But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this...and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified!" (Daniel 5:22a, 23b).

## APPLICATION

- Repent of your own sin when you see God punishing others.
- Glorify God, who gives each breath.
- Witness to your lost friends.

## NEXT WEEK

God Delivers Daniel from the Lions' Den  
Read Daniel 6.

### Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

# Teacher Planning Sheet

## PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Three ways students need to apply this passage are

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Materials Needed

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## POINT

Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

### Presentation Ideas

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Praise/Music Ideas

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul....You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

### Bible Background

Although Nebuchadnezzar ended his letter by warning that God could humble the proud (Dan. 4), future Babylonian kings failed to heed his warning. Nebuchadnezzar’s successor, King Belshazzar, should have been calling out to God to rescue Babylon, but he spent the night mocking God instead. That very night, Belshazzar received judgment for a life spent refusing to humble his heart and glorify the Lord.

#### Belshazzar’s Sin (Daniel 5:1–4)

Belshazzar co-reigned over Babylon with his father, Nabonidus. Because Nabonidus spent the majority of his reign 500 miles south of Babylon, Belshazzar controlled much of the Babylonian empire. Although it is unknown whether he ever was formally crowned, he actively reigned in his father’s absence. (Belshazzar may have promised that whoever interpreted the writing would become the “third ruler in the kingdom” because he and his father were first and second; Dan. 5:7.) The text states that Nebuchadnezzar was the father of Belshazzar (5:2) and Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar (5:22). It is possible that this relationship referred to their relationship as grandfather and grandson, or it could signify that Nebuchadnezzar was Belshazzar’s predecessor.

Belshazzar hosted a feast for a thousand of his lords. Just days before the feast, Nabonidus suffered a crushing defeat by the Persians. The Persian army then turned their attention to Babylon itself and besieged the city. With the Persians outside his city and his father in flight, Belshazzar hosted the feast on October 12, 539 B.C. Perhaps he did so to show his confidence that the city would not fall and to boost the morale of the nobles. Even though the city was besieged, few Babylonians would have feared the Persian army. Two sets of double walls surrounded the city. The first set had one wall 21 feet thick and one wall 11 feet thick, and the second set had one wall 25 feet thick and one wall 23 feet thick. The massive walls would keep invaders out while the river Euphrates flowed through the city and brought life in. Babylon’s fresh-water supply and their stockpiles of food would allow the city to survive for years. Some ancient historians believed that the feast was an annual religious festival. Regardless of the occasion of the feast, it was held while Babylon was besieged by the Persian army. In the midst of the feast, Belshazzar mocked the God of Israel. Instead of heeding Nebuchadnezzar’s warning to humble himself before God, Belshazzar sought to shame God publicly. He specifically asked that the gold and silver vessels that had been used in God’s temple at Jerusalem be brought to the feast (Dan. 5:2–3). Not only did he, his lords, his wives, and his concubines drink from the vessels, but while doing so, they also “praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone” (5:4). Belshazzar intentionally ridiculed the God of Israel and embraced the Babylonian idols. Although he knew that God had humbled

Nebuchadnezzar (5:22), he boldly challenged God to do the same to him. He was confident that city walls and the Babylonian gods would protect him.

### **Belshazzar's Sign (Daniel 5:5–12)**

Within an hour, the Lord pronounced judgment on Belshazzar. The king saw a disembodied hand write on the palace walls (Dan. 5:5). Although he did not understand what the hand had written, Belshazzar's face went pale and his knees knocked together (5:6). He was terrified by what he saw. No doubt he was already connecting the writing on the wall with his wicked use of the vessels from God's temple. Belshazzar screamed for the magicians to come and interpret the writing on the wall (5:7). Even though he promised a high position (with clothes and jewelry) as a reward, the wise men were unable to interpret the sign (5:7–8).

Belshazzar's terror increased until the queen came with a suggestion. Having heard about the writing on the wall, she (most likely Nebuchadnezzar's wife or daughter) told Belshazzar about a man who had "the Spirit of the Holy God" and whom Nebuchadnezzar had made chief of the magicians (5:10–11). (Apparently Daniel was removed from the position when Nebuchadnezzar died.) The queen praised Daniel for his ability to interpret dreams and was convinced that he would be able to interpret the writing (5:12).

### **Belshazzar Sentenced (Daniel 5:13–29)**

Although Daniel had been in Babylon for 65 years (and was now about 80 years old), Belshazzar apparently had not met him (Dan. 5:13). After Belshazzar explained to Daniel why he had been summoned (5:13–16), Daniel promised that he would interpret the writing, although he had no desire for the king's rewards (5:17). But before doing what the king asked, Daniel boldly proclaimed God's sovereignty to Belshazzar. He praised the Most High God for having given Nebuchadnezzar "a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor" (5:18). While it was true that Nebuchadnezzar had been powerful, all his power had been given to him by God (5:19). Having honestly evaluated the source of Nebuchadnezzar's power, Daniel then honestly exposed Nebuchadnezzar's sin of pride (5:20) and described how God had punished Nebuchadnezzar until he repented (5:21). With unapologetic honesty, Daniel proclaimed the truth of God, man, sin, judgment, and repentance to Belshazzar.

Daniel was not content, however, to tell about Nebuchadnezzar and let Belshazzar go unchallenged. Daniel opposed the world's most powerful ruler and rebuked him for not humbling his heart (5:22), for lifting himself up against God (5:23), and for not glorifying God and choosing instead to worship idols (5:23). Belshazzar had foolishly dishonored the God who grants breath and who kept him alive. Having shown the greatness of God and the foolishness of Belshazzar's sin, Daniel said the words Belshazzar must have been dreading: "The fingers of the hand were sent from Him" (5:24).

Finally, the narrator reveals what had been written on the wall: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN" (Dan. 5:25). The Aramaic word mene means "counted" or "appointed"; tekem means "weighed"; and pharsin means "divided." (The u preceding pharsin is a conjunction like "and.") Daniel explained the significance of each word to Belshazzar. "Mene" signified "God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it" (5:26). God had ordained how many days of Belshazzar's life and reign, and both had come to an end. "Tekel" signified that Belshazzar had "been weighed in the balances and found wanting" (5:27). When judged according to God's holy standard, Belshazzar had fallen short of God's glory. His heart and actions condemned him before God. "Pharsin" signified that Belshazzar's

“kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians” (5:28). Belshazzar was not able to hold together his kingdom, which was on the verge of falling apart and being destroyed.

Belshazzar obviously appreciated the validity of Daniel’s interpretation since he kept his word and rewarded Daniel (5:29). But there is no indication that he humbled himself before God, repented, or even feared impending judgment. The proud Belshazzar was about to be put down.

### **Belshazzar Slain (Daniel 5:30–31)**

That very night, Belshazzar was killed, and the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonians. Ancient history tells how the Medo-Persian army got into the city. In a brilliant maneuver, the army diverted the Euphrates River. Although the river still flowed through the city, it was low enough that the soldiers could wade into the city and not even worry about getting through the four massive walls. Some unknown Medo-Persian general no doubt was rewarded for the victory, but Belshazzar’s defeat ultimately came from God, who had numbered his days, found him lacking on His scales, and determined to dissipate his kingdom.

### **Conclusion**

A life spent enjoying God’s goodness but neglecting His commands is on a horrible path, one leading to destruction. Belshazzar refused to be humbled and even mocked God’s ability to punish him. Although the Lord’s mercy had lasted throughout Belshazzar’s entire life, it would not last forever. Belshazzar’s days were up, and he had no hope but to repent and turn to God. Having failed to do so, Belshazzar went to the destruction prepared for him because he was too proud to submit to God. Every man who fails to humble himself before God is on the same road. Much like Daniel, believers must confront the lost with their sin and beg them to humble themselves before God.

## **POINT TO THE TRUTH**

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth” (Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



### **Review Questions**

*Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.*

What did Nebuchadnezzar ask Daniel to do?

*The king had another dream and asked Daniel to tell him what it meant.*

What was the dream about?

*Nebuchadnezzar saw a large tree that provided food and protection for all the birds and beasts. An angel came and said that it was to be chopped down and stripped of its branches. That would force all the animals to scatter.*

Was the tree going to die?

*No. The tree would not die because its stump would be protected.*

How did this dream represent what would happen to Nebuchadnezzar?  
*Nebuchadnezzar would live like an animal for seven years.*

Why was all this going to happen to Nebuchadnezzar?  
*This would happen so that everyone would know that the Most High rules.*

Did the king humble himself before God?  
*No. He did not receive the warning. Instead, he boasted about all that he had done.*

What happened to the king?  
*Nebuchadnezzar's mind became like an animal's. His hair became matted like eagles' feathers. His nails became overgrown, and he ate grass like a beast.*

Did he stay that way?  
*Just as God had promised, after seven years, he lifted his eyes humbly toward heaven. His senses came back to him, and he praised God.*



### A China Teacup

Show the students a china teacup, and let a few of them carefully hold it. Ask them whether their parents have nice dishes like this at home. When do they use them? Ask the students to name some things that a nice teacup never would be used for—working in the garden, feeding the dog, storing paper clips, etc. Tell them that in today's lesson, Belshazzar decides to take dishes from God's temple and use them in a wrong ways.



### Write on the Wall

Hang a large piece of butcher paper on the wall, and write MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN in large bubble letters on it. When the students enter the classroom, they can color in or finger-paint the letters. For a "wall" look, sketch in bricks or rocks around the words. During the lesson, act out the writing on the wall as a visual aid.



### Writing on the Wall

Materials: clay, wooden craft sticks or toothpicks

Directions: Give each student some clay. Instruct the students to flatten the clay and then use a craft stick or toothpick to write on it MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN. Discuss what these words mean. Ask the students how they would have felt it they were at a big party and suddenly a hand appeared and began to write on the wall.

# PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

*“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).*

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

## Bible Lesson

### Introduction

Has anyone ever told you to be more humble? Sometimes that can be a difficult thing to do. It is easy to be proud and to trust in one’s own strength rather than depending on God and giving Him the glory. In today’s lesson we will learn about a king named Belshazzar who was very proud. Let’s find out what happened to this proud king.



### Leadoff Questions (LOQs)

**LOQ:** Did Belshazzar listen to Nebuchadnezzar’s warning to be humble?

**Answer:** No. Belshazzar did not listen but was proud.

**LOQ:** Why was Belshazzar so proud?

**Answer:** The city of Babylon was being attacked, and Belshazzar believed that he was invincible against the attack. He trusted in his own strength rather than the strength of God. He was so rebellious against God that he even used some special cups that were reserved for special things. That was a mocking of God rather than a dependence on Him. Instead of praising God, Belshazzar and the Babylonians praised the gods of gold, silver, and wood.

**LOQ:** What did the king see?

**Answer:** The king saw a hand writing a message on a wall.

**LOQ:** What did the message say?

**Answer:** The message said “counted, counted, weighed, divided.”

**LOQ:** Could the king understand what the writing said?

**Answer:** No. Neither he nor the people there could tell what it said.

**LOQ:** What did the king do when he could not read the message?

**Answer:** He called for the wise men to try and interpret the message.

**LOQ:** Could the wise men tell the king what the message meant?

**Answer:** No. None of the wise men was able to interpret the message on the wall.

**LOQ:** Why was Daniel asked to interpret the message?

**Answer:** The king’s wife had heard of Daniel and his ability to interpret dreams.

**LOQ:** What did Daniel say that this message meant?

**Answer:** Daniel explained that God had numbered Belshazzar's kingdom and ordained how many more days he would live. He also had weighed the king and found him wanting.

**LOQ:** What did the king do when he heard the news?

**Answer:** He rewarded Daniel for his interpretation.

**LOQ:** What happened to the king that night?

**Answer:** That night King Belshazzar was killed when the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon.

### Summary

In the city of Babylon, there ruled a king named Belshazzar. Belshazzar ruled the kingdom with his father sometime after King Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar had not learned the lesson of humility from Nebuchadnezzar. He was a proud king and did not trust God to protect Babylon from the Persians. He was so proud that when the army attacked, he had a party instead of praying to the Lord for safety. At that party, he mocked God. He worshiped the gods of silver and gold and wood rather than the one true God of the universe. While the party was going on, a hand appeared and wrote a message on the wall. The king was not able to understand what it meant, so he called all the wise men to explain it. They were not able, so his wife suggested Daniel. Daniel came and explained the message. The words said, "counted, counted, weighed, and divided." Daniel explained what the message meant. He told the king that God had numbered his kingdom and his days. He had been measured in the balance and found wanting. That night, God required Belshazzar's life, and he was killed when the Persians entered the city.

### Application

God taught Nebuchadnezzar a valuable lesson. That lesson was to trust in God and not in oneself. Even though Belshazzar ruled after Nebuchadnezzar, he did not learn the same lesson in humility. When we think of Nebuchadnezzar and what he learned and when we remember Belshazzar and the consequence for his sin, we should not forget that God desires our praise and glory. Our confidence should come not from ourselves but from the Lord.

### Presentation Ideas



#### A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



#### Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



#### An End Is Coming

In Daniel 5:26, Daniel interpreted the word *mene* and told Belshazzar, "God has numbered your kingdom and finished it." Help the students to understand the idea of God "numbering" the Babylonian kingdom by giving examples of some other things that are numbered. You could cut out pictures from an issue of a sports magazine. Many students will know that a baseball game lasts for nine innings. The game is numbered; it will not last forever. Similarly, a basketball player has





only a limited amount of time, 24 seconds, in which to make a free-throw basket; the time is numbered by the clock. These two examples (and many others) can demonstrate the idea of a definite end coming.

### **Pull-Off Calendar**

To illustrate that our days are numbered and what God meant in His warning in Daniel 5:26, bring in a daily pull-off calendar. (You also could make your own by gluing papers together at the top edge, or you could use a large flip-chart numbered from 10 down to 0.) Throughout the lesson, or after you explain this concept, pull (or flip) the pages until they all are gone. Talk about what it means when we have no days of our lives left.



### **Handwriting on the Wall**

Materials: latex glove, cotton stuffing, hot glue gun and glue sticks, dry-erase marker, dowel

Directions: Lightly stuff a latex glove (or a thin winter glove) with cotton. Use hot glue to attach a dry-erase marker to the index finger, gluing it on the underside so that the marker does not show. Shape and glue the other fingers so that it looks as though the “hand” is writing. Insert a dowel inside the glove, and staple it in place on the palm side. You could even attach a sleeve for added effect. Draw the students’ attention to the whiteboard as you recount what was happening at Belshazzar’s feast when suddenly a hand appeared. Use the hand to begin slowly writing cryptic-looking symbols on the board. Ask the students to tell how they think the people at the feast would have felt—terrified, unable to move, speechless, etc.

### **Praise and Worship**

*Glorify Thy Name*

*He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands*

*Holy, Holy, Holy*

*In My Life, Lord, Be Glorified*

*My God Is So Great*

*Rescue the Perishing*

*We Will Glorify*

## **PRACTICE THE TRUTH**

*“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).*

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



### **“Handwriting on the Wall”**

Materials: copies of the “Handwriting on the Wall” craft pages (page 5.11 printed on brown paper and page 5.13 printed on white cardstock), sheets of colored paper large enough to trace a child’s hand on, scissors, glue, crayons or paint

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft pages. Instruct the students to cut

out the brown “bricks” and place them in the correct places (according to their numbers) on the cardstock page. They will see the message that Belshazzar saw. The students can trace the letters with crayons or paint. Then trace each child’s hand on a sheet of colored paper. The students can cut out their hands, glue the last three fingers down (so the hand looks appears to be pointing), and glue the hand to the wall (so it appears to be pointing to the words)



### “Number Our Days”

Materials: copies of the “Number Our Days” craft page, scissors, glue, crayons

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft page. Instruct the students to cut out the craft pieces along the solid line. They should also cut the slits where indicated. Then they should fold the edges along the dotted line to form a box. They can thread the number strip through both sets of slits and then glue the ends together. Next, they should glue the box together. The numbers should slide through both sides for a countdown. If time permits, they can decorate their boxes with crayons or other decorations.



### In the Balances

Materials: white cardstock, yellow circles (four inches in diameter), 7x1/2-inch black strips, 3x4x4-inch gray triangles, verse cards with Daniel 5:27 written on them, 2x4-inch pieces of yarn (colors suggested below)

Directions: Give each student the materials to create a balance. First, instruct the students to hold the cardstock sheet horizontally and glue the verse card to the bottom. Next, they should center and glue the black strip about one inch from the top of the page. They should fold the string in half and glue the center to the ends of the black strip. They can cut the circle in half to create the two cups for the scale. The flat side of the half circles should face up. Then the students should take the two ends of the string and glue them to each side of the half circle. Finally, they can glue the triangle with the smaller end downward and the top point touching the bottom of the black strip. It should be centered in the middle of the black strip. When complete, this should resemble an old-fashioned balance.



### “God Punishes Belshazzar”

Use this work sheet to reinforce the key truths of today’s lesson. The work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



### Journal Page: “God’s Standards”

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. The students can complete the page individually, in small groups, or at home.

### Coloring Pages

Give each student a copy of the coloring pages at the back of the lesson. students can color the pages in class or at home.



### MEMORY VERSE

“Whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe” (Proverbs 29:25b).

# Handwriting on the Wall

Handwriting practice sheet for the words "ENEMY MEN" and "TELEPHONE". The words are written in a large, bold, black font within dashed-line boxes. Each letter has a small number indicating the stroke order for writing.

ENEMY MEN

TELEPHONE



# Handwriting on the Wall

1 2 3  
YOUR DAYS

4 5  
ARE

6 7 8  
NUMBERED



# Number Our Days

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

0

“So teach us to number our  
\_\_\_\_\_ days, that we may gain a heart  
\_\_\_\_\_ of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

This is the interpretation of the word

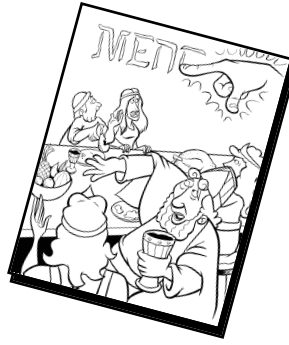
\_\_\_\_\_ MENE

“God has numbered your kingdom and  
finished it” (Daniel 5:26).





# God *Punishes* Belshazzar



Daniel 5

Name \_\_\_\_\_

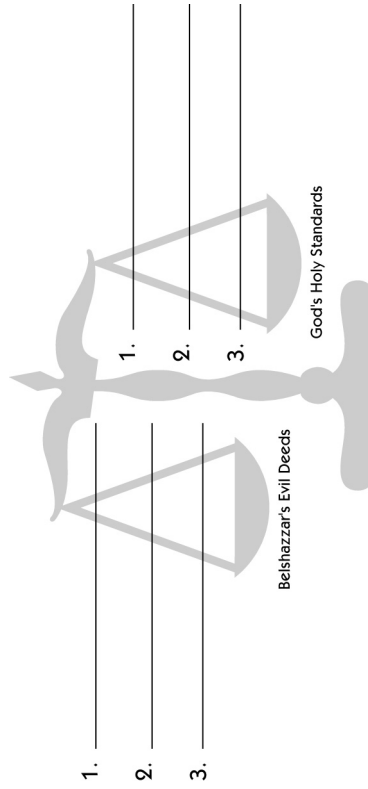
1. True or False: Belshazzar was a godly man. \_\_\_\_\_
2. List two ways Belshazzar dishonored God at the feast.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What did Belshazzar see that changed his mood? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why did Belshazzar call Daniel to interpret the writing? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Daniel told Belshazzar that he had not \_\_\_\_\_ his heart (Dan. 5:22).
6. Daniel rebuked Belshazzar for worshiping \_\_\_\_\_ and not \_\_\_\_\_.
7. How was Belshazzar punished? \_\_\_\_\_



# God's Standards

“But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified” (Daniel 5:22-23).

Have you ever watched your mother weigh vegetables or fruits at the supermarket? She probably put some vegetables or fruits on the scale and then either added some more or took some off. When she was doing this, she was balancing the amount on the scale with the amount she wanted to buy. In today's Bible story, Belshazzar is weighed on God's scale and is found lacking. That is, the scales did not balance because he did not meet God's standard of perfection. On the left side of the scales below, list three of Belshazzar's evil deeds from this week's Bible verse. On the right side of the scales, list three of God's holy standards.



Why are the scales unbalanced?

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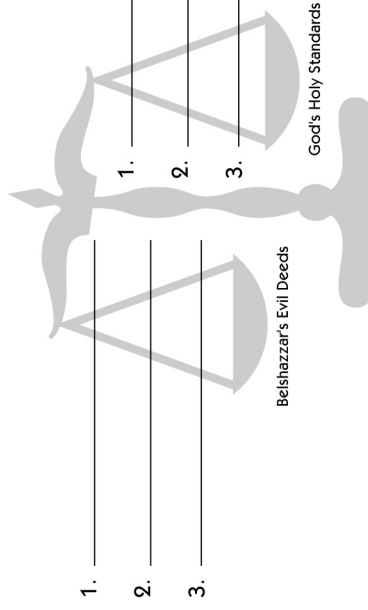


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In 1 Peter 1:16 God commands us, "Be holy, for I am holy." That's God's holy standard, but people cannot meet this command because they are sinners. We were all at one time lacking on God's scale of perfection (holiness).

What has Christ done to make a sinner holy?

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What should sinners do?

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Have you repented of your sins?

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Whom can you tell about God's holy standard and His forgiveness this week?

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**PRAYER**

Thank the Lord for dying for your sins. Ask Him to help you be mindful of His standard every day. Pray for your friends who are still in their sins, and thank Christ that He has the power to forgive them.

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**“In the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote” (Daniel 5:5).**



ME NE ME NE TE KEL UPHARSIN



