

The Writing on the Wall

Teacher's Notes

When King Belshazzar profaned by using the vessels from the temple at his feast, judgment came swiftly; he died and was replaced by a new king that night. We too need the light of truth to shine on our bad habits so we can break free of them and make a fresh start.

Daniel 5 Lesson Plan		Materials Needed
1. Welcome Activity (2-3 minutes)	"Profanation" pp. 1-2	yarn in contrasting colors
2. Focus on the Word (5-7 minutes)	Read Daniel 5 and discuss p. 2	shortened version of text included on p. 3
3. Learn by Doing Choose 1-2 activities (15-20 minutes)	Judgment After Death and Digestion pp. 5-6	variety of foods with higher and lower nutritional value <i>optional:</i> device to show video
	Daniel: The Code Breaker pp. 7-8	strips of paper; tape; assorted pens, pencils and markers
4. Closing (2-3 minutes)	Recitation and Closing p.9	Take Home Cards p. 10

New Church Concept Temple Vessels

By the "temple at Jerusalem" from which the vessels came, is signified in the supreme sense the Lord, in the representative sense His kingdom and church. The kingdom of Belshazzar being "divided" signified the dissipation of good and truth, and he himself being "slain that night" signified the loss of the life of truth and good. *Arcana Coelestia* 9093

Welcome Activity: "Profanation"

Supplies Needed: lengths of yarn approx. 18" (45cm) in two contrasting colors, e.g. orange and purple

Knot the ends of the two strands of yarn together. Ask students to pass the yarn around as you talk with each student adding knots somewhere along the length.

This activity introduces the idea that it is not good to mix what is the Lord's with things that are not sacred. The Writings call this "profanation", and give a unique meaning to this word (see quotation to the right).

Someone in the story today will do something profane. What does "profane" mean? (Profane literally means something not holy or religious; something secular.) New Church teachings expand this teaching that *profanation* is mixing something sacred with something not sacred. For example, saying and telling

[continued on page 2](#)

New Church Concept Profanation

Profanation is mixing and linking good and evil together, and also truth and falsity. *Arcana Coelestia* 3757

A person who profanes is in contact with heaven through truths and at the same time with hell through falsity. In the next life a tearing apart takes place with such people, which destroys the whole of their inner life. See *Arcana Coelestia* 10287

“Profanation” continued

others that the Lord is number one, while believing and acting as if they themselves are number one. Encourage students to come up with other examples.

A person thinking and doing this joins what is sacred and profane inside themselves so it is impossible to separate them after death—just as it’s difficult to separate the knotted strands of yarn. (Look at the knotted yarn.)

Mixing good and bad together in this way destroys a person’s inner life. Pay attention to how the king profanes in today’s story and what happens afterwards.

Focus on the Word

Read: Daniel 5. A shortened version is included on page 3. A copy of the writing in Hebrew is on p. 4.

1. **When Nebuchadnezzar died, his son Belshazzar became king. His name is similar to *Belteshazzar*, Daniel’s Babylonian name. Belshazzar was selfish and did not worship the Lord. This story is all we know of him.**
2. **Belshazzar was drunk when he asked his servants to bring out the special treasures his father, Nebuchadnezzar, took from the temple in Jerusalem to use for drinking wine. Why was this such a terrible thing to do?** Because everything in the Lord’s house was holy—dedicated for use in worship.
3. **What do we hold as sacred today?** The Lord’s Word and His name are sacred, as are things used for worship, such as holy supper dishes.
4. **What are the consequences of using sacred things for secular (non-religious) purposes?** Taking the Lord’s name in vain or making light of the Word mixes what is holy with what is profane (not holy) in us.
5. **As soon as the goblets from the temple were used at the feast a hand wrote “Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin” on the wall. These words were not in their language. The people were terrified. How might you have reacted if you’d been there? Have you had an experience of realizing something you are involved with is wrong? What triggered your awareness that it was wrong?**
6. **The queen (probably Belshazzar’s mother) suggested Daniel might help him to understand the message. Where could you turn for help when something feels wrong?** To the Lord and His Word and to parents, teachers or other trusted adults.
7. **Belshazzar committed the sin of profanation—mixing what was sacred with what was profane. At times we may do this too. Our conscience, may warn us about what we are doing—just as Daniel warned the king. What is conscience?** Conscience is the truths we know from the Word in our minds. It is the Lords’ voice with us. **The Lord warned the Israelites, “Obey and prosper, disobey and perish.” In this story the king disobeyed and literally perished.**
8. **The Lord grants a lifetime of choices before we enter eternal life. Each choice we make during a day nudges us closer to heaven or hell. Our conscience helps us pay attention to these choices, pulling us toward heaven and eternal happiness at every moment.**

The Writing on the Wall

¹King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand nobles. ²While drinking wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so the king and his nobles might drink from them. ³So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles drank from them. ⁴As they drank, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

⁵Suddenly the fingers of a hand appeared and wrote on the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. ⁶His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking.

⁷The king summoned the enchanters, astrologers and diviners. Then he said to these wise men of Babylon, “Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.”

⁸Then the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell what it meant. ⁹So the King became more terrified and grew more pale. ¹⁰The queen, hearing the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. She said, “Don’t be alarmed! ¹¹There is a man in your kingdom who has the Spirit of the Holy God in him. ¹²Call Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.”

¹³So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, ¹⁴“I have heard that the Spirit of God is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and wisdom. ¹⁵The wise men were brought to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it. ¹⁶If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.”

¹⁷Then Daniel answered the king, “You may keep your gifts and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means. ¹⁸“Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom and majesty, and glory and power. ¹⁹All nations feared him. ²⁰But when the king’s heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, ²¹he was driven away from people and given the heart of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth.

²²“But you, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. ²³Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from His temple brought, and you and your nobles drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways. ²⁴Therefore He sent the hand that wrote the inscription.

²⁵“This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN ²⁶“These words mean: *Mene*: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. ²⁷*Tekel*: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. ²⁸*Upharsin*: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” ²⁹Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

³⁰That night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, ³¹and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

(Daniel 5:1-31 adapted from the NIV)

The Writing on the Wall

The Word does not tell us what language the writing on the wall appeared in. But because the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the words there would look like those just below.

מֵנֵה מֵנֵה
תֵּקֵל
וּפְרָסִין

**MENE MENE
TEKEL
UPHARSIN**

Judgment After Death and Digestion

When King Belshazzar profaned, he died. How does the Lord judge our actions? Many believe in a judgment after death when people are condemned to hell, or raised to heaven. The New Church offers a new idea, “Hell is *in* an evil person and heaven *in* a good person. After death everyone comes into that hell or into that heaven with which they had been associated while in the world” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8918). After death good and evil are separated because good and evil cannot be mixed either in heaven or in hell. All remaining evil is removed from those entering heaven, and all remaining good is removed from those entering hell. The Writings compare this process with digestion. Explore the sorting process that takes place by sorting foods and reading a comparison between human digestion and the preparation for eternal life.



Materials Needed

various foods, napkins, copy of *The World of Spirits and Digestion* p. 6 for each student *Optional*: device to show video

Prepare in Advance

Purchase and prepare food. A variety of foods with higher and lower nutritional values will encourage thinking about the spiritual value of ideas we take into our minds.

1. King Belshazzar’s profane act brought quick judgment. Was this a positive or a negative thing? Explain your answer.
2. What is the ultimate goal of judgment or punishment? To make a person pay for what they’ve done? To bring about change for a better life?
3. We constantly make judgments—about what we wear, eat, and do. But some judgments can only be made by the Lord—e.g. if a person is going to heaven or hell. After death good and bad loves are separated as people are prepared for eternal life in heaven or hell.
4. Bring out foods to sample. Invite students to snack as you continue talking. Foods we eat are like ideas we take in. Good and true ideas, like nutritious foods, strengthen us. False and bad ideas are like junk food, which may appeal, but can eventually be harmful. We often hear that it is healthier to mostly avoid junk food. It is always important to avoid false ideas.
5. Heaven is in a human form, which the Writings call the Grand Man. People in hell live outside the Grand Man and symbolize things that are full of disease. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2996.)
6. *Optional*: Watch *How the Digestive System Works—Emma Bryce* (about 5 minutes) at bit.ly/HowDigest. This TedEd video traces food’s path through the digestive system. (Use case and space sensitive bitly links in the browser bar at the top of your page.)
7. Hand out copies of *The World of Spirits and Digestion* (p. 6). Read and discuss.

New Church Concept Judgment

The Lord says, “Judge not, that you be not condemned.” (Matthew 7:1) This cannot mean judging someone’s moral and civil life but judging someone’s spiritual and heavenly life. One is not permitted to judge the inner mind or soul within—what a person’s spiritual state is and so their fate after death, because it is known to the Lord alone. Nor does the Lord reveal it until after death, in order that everyone may do what they do in freedom, and that good or evil may consequently be from them and so in them, and the person thus live their own life and be their own person to eternity. See *Conjugal Love* 523

The World of Spirits and Digestion

The Writings compare the journey people take when they are being prepared for heaven or hell to the way food is processed in the alimentary canal. People who have completed this journey are either assimilated as angels into the Grand Man like nourishing food, or rejected as evil spirits to hell. The Writings describe this process.

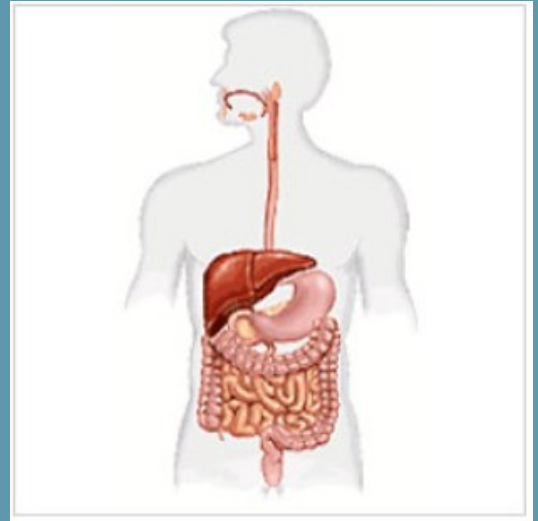
When a person dies and enters the next life, his or her life may be compared with food which is received in a gentle manner by the lips and then passed down through the mouth, throat, and esophagus into the stomach. The whole process is modified by the person's character, which was formed during the person's lifetime by the things he or she did.

To begin with, the treatment most spirits receive is mild. They are kept in the company of angels and good spirits. This is pictured by what happens to food, when at first it is touched gently by the lips and then tasted by the tongue to see what it is like. Food that is soft, containing what is sweet and oily is received instantly through the veins and carried into the bloodstream. Food that is hard, and contains things that are bitter, disagreeable, and of low nutritional value is harder to break down and is sent down through the esophagus into the stomach where it is refined by various methods and violent actions.

Food that is even harder, even less agreeable, and of even less value is forced down into the intestines and at length into the rectum where the first hell is situated, and is then finally expelled and becomes feces.

A person's life after death is like this. At first a person is kept in outward things. A person who has led a decent life on the outside is among angels and upright spirits. But once the person is no longer restricted to them, what the person had been like inwardly—what the person was like as far as his thoughts and affections were concerned, and at length so far as his core purposes were concerned—is revealed. Those purposes determine the life that lies ahead for the person.

See Arcana Coelestia 5175



For Reflection

Choose one or two foods—perhaps one with high nutritional value and one with low nutritional value. Discuss how these might relate to the ideas we take into our lives, e.g. sugary drinks taste good, but can rot teeth and have little nutritional value. Compare this with the way teasing someone may seem like fun, but afterwards you might feel rotten that you have hurt a friend.

Daniel: The Code Breaker

When King Belshazzar received a message he could not understand, the queen suggested he call Daniel. With the Lord's help, Daniel explained the message.

Like Belshazzar we may occasionally get caught up in something wrong. We might even see the "writing on the wall" warning us that things are about to change. When this happens, true ideas from the Word can shine a light on what we've done, just as the queen called Daniel (representing conscience) to shed light on the message.

To illustrate the importance of accurately interpreting messages, students will wrap a strip of paper around a pencil or marker and write a message on it. When unwrapped, the message will be impossible to read. Students then try to decode others' messages by finding a pencil or marker with the same diameter—similar to the way in which we must align ourselves with the Lord to truly understand His Word.

1. Can you read words in a foreign language? Have you ever read words in a language with different symbols or letters? What if someone told you a message in different symbols that was crucial to your survival?
2. Belshazzar received a message in a foreign language he couldn't read. Sometimes the message of the Word is hard to "read" too. For example, on the surface the Daniel stories may not seem either Divine or relevant—yet hidden within it is a message about our salvation.
3. We're going to write and interpret coded messages. Give students a strip of paper, two pencils or a pencil and a marker, tape, and a copy of *Pig Pen Code* (p. 8).
4. Tape one end of the paper strip to one end of a pencil or pen so the strip lies *diagonally* across the pencil. Wind the remainder of the paper tightly around the pencil and secure the other end with tape.
5. Write a message in Pig Pen code *horizontally* along the pencil on the strip of paper. (See picture on p. 8.)
6. Take the strip of paper off the pencil and give to another student to read. How clear was the message?



Materials Needed

strips of paper; tape; assorted pens, pencils and markers; copies of *Pig Pen Code* p. 8

Prepare in Advance

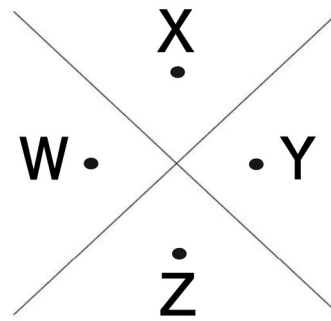
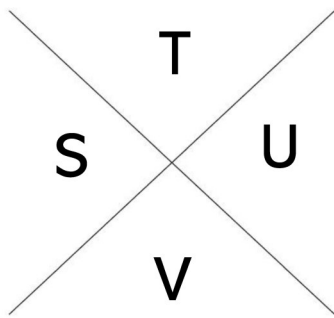
Gather supplies. Cut paper into strips. Make copies of *Pig Pen Code* p. 8.

New Church Concept The Word's Message

The obscurity in which natural people live gives rise to either truth or falsity. When people allow themselves to be enlightened by the Word from the Lord, their obscurity is turned into brightness, for the internal path is opened and so influx and communication from the Lord by way of heaven takes place. But when people do not allow themselves to be enlightened by the Word from the Lord, but by their own intelligence, their obscurity is turned into darkness and so into falsity, for the internal path is closed and no influx and communication from the Lord takes place. See *Arcana Coelestia* 3870.22

Pig Pen Code

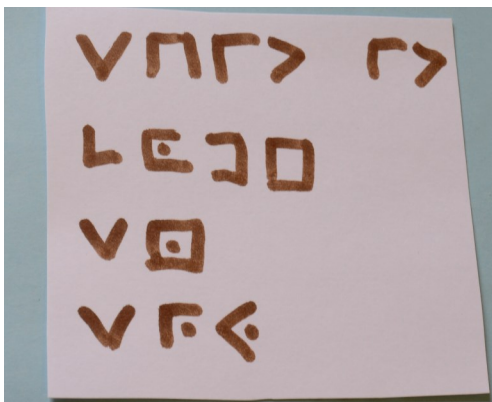
A	B	C	J.	K.	.L
D	E	F	M.	N.	.O
G	H	I	P.	.Q	.R



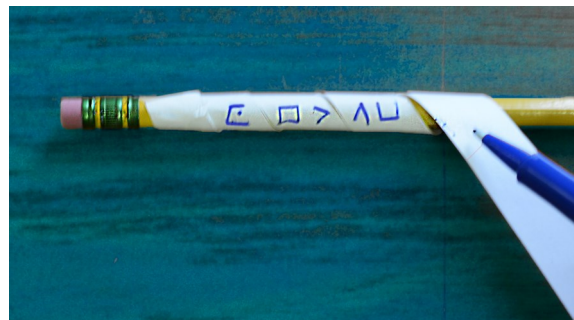
In the Pig Pen code, the symbols for each letter consist of the part of the grid in which the letter is found. So the word "code" looks like this:



Here is a longer sample to decipher:



Wrap a pencil diagonally and write a message horizontally.



Recitation and Closing

The Book of Daniel contains beautiful prayers. We are focusing on one quotation during the close of each lesson. Most of the quotations were spoken by Daniel after he received the power to explain Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2). They are arranged in an order that reflects the story for each week. The quotation for lesson three was spoken by Nebuchadnezzar after he recognized the Lord as the true God (Daniel 4).

For this lesson, focus on quotation 5: "And He changes the times and the seasons. He removes kings and raises up kings." Read the verse aloud and invite the students to repeat it with you.

What might removing a "king" look like in your own life?

Closing

Daniel is one of the true heroes in the Word. Daniel's name means "God is my judge". When King Belshazzar profaned by using the vessels from the temple at his feast, judgment came swiftly; he died and was replaced by a new king that very night.

We too need the light of truth to shine on our bad habits so we can break free of them and make a fresh start.

Give students a Take Home Card (p. 54) as they leave.

Written on the Wall

Belshazzar received a message from the Lord, written on the wall, telling him that because of his evil actions, he would die that night. The Lord sends messages to us too, through insights we get reading the Word or praying or talking to friends. Sometimes the messages might be warnings, but the Lord also sends us message of love and encouragement, such as He gave to Joshua in another part of the Word: "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).



In the space below the message sent to Belshazzar in the picture above, write a message that the Lord has sent to you or one that you think He might send.

Prayers in Daniel

1. Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His.
2. He reveals deep and secret things. He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.
3. How great are His signs and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. And His dominion is from generation to generation.
4. He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those who have understanding.
5. **And He changes the times and the seasons. He removes kings and raises up kings.**
6. I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers. For You have given me wisdom and might.

Daniel 2:20-23; 4:3 adapted

Jake Home Cards

Cut the Take Home Cards apart and give one to each student.

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