

Daniel

Chapter Five

Daniel 5:1-4

Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, in order that the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

- While Daniel 4 focused on Nebuchadnezzar's pride—Daniel 5 will focus on the pride of Belshazzar
- In each chapter—Though Israel is in captivity—God is in control
- Nebuchadnezzar has passed from the scene—Belshazzar is ruling in his place. Other sources state that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon—so it is thought that Belshazzar was the son of—and the co-regent of Nabonidus (who lived in Tema—500 miles south of Babylon—Nabonidus served moon god Sin—chief god of his homeland, Haran. This devotion angered priests of Marduk—so Belshazzar gains their favor in Babylon, while Nabonidus takes up residence in Tema)—leaving Belshazzar to remain in Babylon and rule
- In Semitic language—son does not always mean the direct offspring
- Belshazzar convenes leaders and those who are important to him
- Days before the party—Babylonians had suffered a crushing defeat at hands of Persian army—who are now camped outside the city
- Only Babylon remained unconquered—and will be defeated at this point (Jer 27:6-7 indicates how long Babylon will rule)
- Historical evidence that there was a banquet in progress the night that Babylon fell (October 12, 539 BC)
- Why party? --To encourage their leadership—a show of confidence—walls of the city seemed invincible—Euphrates River ran through the city.
- When Nabonidus was defeated—Belshazzar may have intended the party to be a coronation
- Drank wine—the word means continuous drinking
- Drinking from the temple cups—a deliberate act of defiance (excessive sacrilege—toastings lifeless gods with Holy cups)

- Knowing the prophecies of Daniel—about Babylon falling to Persians (8:1-4)—Isaiah prophesied that “Cyrus would come to power—who was a Persian king (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1)

Daniel 5:5-6

Suddenly the fingers of a man’s hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing. Then the king’s face grew pale, and his thoughts alarmed him; and his hip joints went slack, and his knees began knocking together.

- Suddenly—at the height of blasphemy/drunkenness
- This is not a vision (something that only Belshazzar saw)—others see it as well
- When wise men are called in—the writing was visible to them
- Archaeologists believe they have uncovered this very room
- Hand suddenly appears without explanation
- As a polytheist—Belshazzar has no idea who is attempting to communicate with him
- Egyptians recognized ‘the hand of God’ at work during the plagues (Ex 8:19)
- Belshazzar becomes limp from panic
- Psalm 8:3
- Ex 31:18

Daniel 5:7-8

The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, “Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me will be clothed with purple, and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom. Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.

- Called out—to cry aloud—to scream for help
- Three-fold reward promised—clothed in purple/necklace of gold (symbols of high rank/royalty)/be the 3rd highest ruler in kingdom (after Nabonidus-Belshazzar)
- Babylonian wise men unable to interpret—they could not read or give understanding

Daniel 5:9-12

Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed. The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners. This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas, and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned, and he will declare the interpretation."

- This queen must not have been Belshazzar's wife—because vs 2 indicates she would have already been present
- Many think that this was the Queen Mother—either the wife of Nebuchadnezzar or Nabonidus
- Daniel—has the spirit of the holy gods—clear parallel between Daniel and Joseph—Genesis 41:38—it is the dominant disposition of his personality/his driving force
- His insight and wisdom are acknowledged as spiritual in nature

Daniel 5:13-16

Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight, and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. Just now the wise men and the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message. But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom."

- Belshazzar acknowledges Daniel's sensitivity to the spiritual realm (yet is somewhat condescending)
- King may well fear—he has just blasphemed the God of Daniel

Daniel 5:17-23

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Keep your gifts for yourself, or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and

make the interpretation known to him. O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory, and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. And because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations, and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed, and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated, and whomever he wished he humbled. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne, and his glory was taken away from him. He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind, and that He sets over it whomever He wishes. Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though knew all this, but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines you have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified.

- Daniel does not refuse gifts out of pride/rudeness—but to demonstrate that God’s gifts are not available for purchase
- Reproof/reprimand from Belteshazzar to Belshazzar—he reminds the king of the consequences of pride in life—using Nebuchadnezzar as a witness/example—then condemns king’s blasphemy of God Most High
- Daniel states that God Most High had established Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom—and because his heart became hardened toward God—he acted in pride
- Comparison to Nebuchadnezzar was designed to call Belshazzar to repentance
- Major role of the prophets—serve as the role of the conscience to the king/people
- When kings were tempted by their power—prophets reminded them of the True King
- Judgment comes due to: blasphemy (inexcusable)—arrogance—idolatry

Daniel 5:24-31

Then the hand was sent from Him, and this inscription was written out. Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.’ This is the interpretation of the message: “MENE—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. ‘TEKEL—you have been weighed on the scale and found deficient. ‘PERES—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians. Then Belshazzar gave order, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom. That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

- Message has 4 words
Mene=numbered (written twice—assuring divine decision had certain fulfillment)
Tekel=weighed (and found wanting/lacking/deficient)
Upharsin=divided (into pieces/destroyed/dissolved)
- Message: Belshazzar's evil rule will soon be over

Daniel Chapter Five-----Workbook

Project:

This is a 'Learning to Listen' exercise—

Begin by asking the Holy Spirit to lead—teaching you the scriptures. Pray for your time and thoughts to be protected.

Sometimes, if you choose a portion that you are very familiar with, it helps to meditate on that portion from a different translation. Seeing this from a different translation allows different phrasing to recapture your attention.

Read slowly—allowing your eyes/mind to take in each word.

Read until:

Something captures your attention

A word seems to 'stick out' in a fresh way

You notice something that you had not seen before

You are aware that you really don't know what a certain word means

A question on your heart is answered by this verse

There is a point of conviction

This is all about learning to linger—to digest—be inspired—have heart revelation—rather than just information and a cognitive response. When the Lord begins to speak from His word—we begin to experience conviction, encouragement, comfort, etc—any of the variety of ways that the Holy Spirit works.

As you begin to sense the Holy Spirit using a verse (or a word)—addressing you in a personal way (giving application, fresh understanding, a gentle or intense correction)—be responsive.

Respond with thanksgiving, asking questions, repentance, action, journaling.....etc.

Since meditation allows for the penetration of truth to our inner man—it may expose an area where we have been believing a lie. According to I John 1:9—if we confess our sin (believing a lie)—He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins—and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Harmonize:

Read Matthew 13:10-17

Dig:

- 1) Who attended the great feast Belshazzar threw in Babylon in chapter five?
- 2) What took place at the moment the vessels from the House of the Lord were used inappropriately?
- 3) What was the reward for interpreting 'the handwriting on the wall'?
- 4) What attributes did the Queen recognize in Daniel?
- 5) What name did she use for Daniel?
- 6) List the ways Belshazzar sinned against the Lord in chapter five.
- 7) List the ways Belshazzar sinned against the people in chapter five.
- 8) List who is present at the feast in the order that they appear. What insights can you gain?
- 9) What is different about the way Belshazzar's pride is addressed from the way that God dealt with Nebuchadnezzar?

Discuss:

- 1) What makes someone prone to pride?
- 2) Discuss the attitudes in a people or culture that lead to the fall of an empire (Romans 1 may give insight).
- 3) What qualities does the Lord extend to leaders that must be received with humility?

Point of Prayer:

Pray for the Lord to expose any way you or your church are walking in pride rather than humility.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) Have you been in—or a part of a group—where the Lord was being blasphemed? What did you do?
- 2) Read II Peter 2:7-8. Have you experienced being oppressed by what is happening in the surrounding culture?
- 3) What is your response when you hear the word 'discipline'?

- 4) Has church 'discipline' been carried out in your congregation? What was your reaction?

- 5) In Hebrews 12—it states that the Lord disciplines those He loves—how does this change the way we might view discipline?

- 6) What do you do when you read a portion of scripture that you do not understand?

- 7) Who do you turn to for spiritual counsel? Why?

- 8) When you are convicted of sin—how do you respond? How has this produced liberty?

- 9) An empire ends due to pride in this chapter—Why is this such a dangerous sin?

- 10) What makes children prone to pride or humility?