

Bible Study – Daniel

Week 7 – Chapter 5

I. The Fall of a Kingdom and the Setup

- a. Why do Kingdoms fall? - Psalm 9:17
- b. 70 years have passed since the captivity began; 23 years have passed since the end of chapter 4.
- c. Nebuchadnezzar has died after 43 years of reigning – 562 B.C.
- d. He was succeeded by his son, Evil-Merodach (Babylonian Amel-Marduk; **2 Kings 25:27**). He was then assassinated by Neriglissar, his own brother-in-law. Neriglissar reigned four years, then died in 556 B.C. He left the throne to his infant son, Labashi-Marduk. After nine months, Labashi-Marduk was deposed by an anti Marduk priestly revolution, and Nabonidus was made king in 556 B.C. Nabonidus was not part of the King's line, so he likely married into the Kingly line and adopted Belshazzar for legitimacy. It is hard to say whether Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar's son or grandson or great-grand. Hebrew has no word for Grandfather, only "Father".
- e. The Medes and Persians captured Nabonidus and exiled him. They had been sieging Babylon for 2-4 months at the start of this chapter.

II. Daniel 5:1-4

King Belshazzar made a great festival for a thousand of his lords, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. ² Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar commanded that they bring in the vessels of gold and silver that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. ³ So they brought in the vessels of gold and silver that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. ¹

- a. Belshazzar was related to Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar ruled as co-regent in Babylon while his adopted father (Nabonidus) ruled in the city of Tema, about 500 miles south of Babylon. He was about 36 years old here. There have been objections from Historians that there was ever such a person as Belshazzar. These

¹ *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Da 5:1–31.

objections were quieted after the discovery of the Nabonidus Cylinder. This recovered Babylonian artifact mentions Belshazzar.

- b. This feast is basically a drunken orgy.
- c. It was not even an exceptionally large feast, as there are records of Persian kingdoms with feasts that fed 15K people, daily.
- d. When he became drunk, he asked for the vessels from the temple of God to be brought in. Superstition alone would have made bringing in holy items from the temple unthinkable unless he was drunk.
- e. They praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone above the true God.
- f. This banquet could have been a call to these deities to save their city.

III. Daniel 5:5-9

⁵ Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and began writing on the plaster of the wall of the royal palace, next to the lampstand. The king was watching the hand as it wrote. ⁶ Then the king's face turned pale, and his thoughts terrified him. His limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. ⁷ The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the diviners; and the king said to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever can read this writing and tell me its interpretation shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around his neck, and rank third in the kingdom." ⁸ Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king the interpretation. ⁹ Then King Belshazzar became greatly terrified and his face turned pale, and his lords were perplexed.

- a. Immediately, God acted supernaturally.
- b. The fingers wrote in a place where it could be seen well. It could have been right above the king's head, given that he would have had the place of glory, and the lampstands would have illuminated this position the most.
- c. Silence fell over the entire group and everyone was afraid.
- d. The King lost the strength to stand and his knees collapsed for beneath him.
- e. Again the Chaldeans are brought in and told that they would be promoted to 3rd ruler if they could interpret what the writing meant. Again, they failed.
- f. The words were in Aramaic so the Chaldeans most certainly understood them, but their meaning was incomprehensible to them.
- g. The color purple signifies royalty. A chain of gold was the highest gift you could give someone as only someone of the highest rank could wear one.
- h. The reason why it was to be 3rd in rank of the kingdom was because Belshazzar and Nabonidus were the co-regents.

IV. Daniel 5:10-12

¹⁰ The queen, when she heard the discussion of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall. The queen said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts terrify you or your face grow pale. ¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom who is endowed with a spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father he was found to have enlightenment, understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners, ¹² because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret

dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.”

- a. The Queen, either the widow or daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, here is the Mother of Belshazzar. We believe this because she referred to Daniel in the same way as Nebuchadnezzar did, “endowed with a spirit of the holy gods”.
- b. She tells the King that Daniel is the smartest and the best of the wise men.

V. Daniel 5:13-16

¹³ Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, “So you are Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? ¹⁴ I have heard of you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that enlightenment, understanding, and excellent wisdom are found in you. ¹⁵ Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and tell me its interpretation, but they were not able to give the interpretation of the matter. ¹⁶ But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you are able to read the writing and tell me its interpretation, you shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around your neck, and rank third in the kingdom.”

- a. Daniel always enters alone; separate from the rest of the pagans. Obviously, he was not present at the banquet and participating in the blasphemy.
- b. He knew of Daniel, and knew what he had done, but obviously did not know him personally.
- c. Daniel may have been semi-retired and withdrawn from the court at this time.

VI. Daniel 5:17-21

¹⁷ Then Daniel answered in the presence of the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, rewards to someone else! Nevertheless I will read the writing to the king and let him know the interpretation. ¹⁸ O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar kingship, greatness, glory, and majesty. ¹⁹ And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. He killed those he wanted to kill, kept alive those he wanted to keep alive, honored those he wanted to honor, and degraded those he wanted to degrade. ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he acted proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his glory was stripped from him. ²¹ He was driven from human society, and his mind was made like that of an animal. His dwelling was with the wild asses, he was fed grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and sets over it whomever he will. ²² And you, Belshazzar his son, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this! ²³ You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven! The vessels of his temple have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know; but the God in whose power is your very breath, and to whom belong all your ways, you have not honored.

- a. He answers, but does not bother to say, “Long live the King”.

- b. He tells the King to keep his gifts; he doesn't want what the King is offering. He couldn't be bought; he had the upmost integrity. This likely was to imply that the gifts of God could not be purchased for any price.
- c. He tells the King that he will interpret the writing, but then proceeds to lecture the King on his disbelief and arrogance.
 - i. Belshazzar knew what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, but still sinned. He sinned against his own knowledge.
 - ii. Belshazzar blasphemed God
 - iii. Belshazzar worshipped false gods.

VII. Daniel 5:24-28

²⁴ “So from his presence the hand was sent and this writing was inscribed. ²⁵ And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. ²⁶ This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; ²⁷ TEKEL, you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting; ²⁸ PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

- a. After all of these sins, God declared judgment.
- b. The Words are in Aramaic.
 - i. Mene – Your days are numbered. This is repeated twice
 - ii. Tekel – “weighed and found too light”
 - iii. Parsin and Peres – same root word, just different forms. It means “to divide” – Parsin, being the plural, could have signified the dividing of the Babylonian Kingdom by the Persians. Another interpretation is that the kingdom would be destroyed and broken into countless parts.
- c. Daniel told him that this was the end of his reign.

VIII. Daniel:29-31

²⁹ Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed in purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made concerning him that he should rank third in the kingdom. ³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed. ³¹ And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

- a. Daniel was promoted to 3rd in rank.
- b. It was around October in 539 B.C. The Medes and Persians under the command of General Ugbaru, built a dam on the Euphrates. After diverting the water, soldiers marched in under the wall, killed the guards, and opened the gates.
- c. There is no historical record of Darius the Mede. This instead could have been a title given to Cyrus. Chapter 6:28 could be translated as Darius even...Cyrus. This would indicate that Darius is Cyrus.
- d. Darius could have also been a subordinate King, under Cyrus.

IX. Today's Application

- a. How does America today mirror the society of Babylon?

- i. Pride, Pleasure, Greed, Corruption, and turning away from God
- b. Psalm 9:17