

"Living for God in the Midst of Difficult Times"

Part 8

Daniel 5

Introduction: Today we shall continue our journey through the book of Daniel and as we do we shall continue with our same theme of "Living for God in the Midst of Difficult Times". It was not my first desire to look at Daniel 5 but God had another idea so we shall look at what I consider to be a very alarming study today.

I. The History

Now before we step into Daniel 5 we need to consider the gap which exists between Daniel 4:37 and Daniel 5:1.

Notice Daniel 5:1

When we step into Daniel 5 there is another king on the throne in Babylon. His name is Belshazzar. This then raises a question, "Where is Nebuchadnezzar?" He has died. There is a gap between chapter 4 and chapter 5 of about 23 years of which Daniel gives us no detail. But history does give us some of the details so let me try to fill you in.

Nebuchadnezzar had reigned 43 years before he died. After he died one of his sons took over and he was then assassinated by his brother in law. His brother in law died after 4 years and his young son took the throne and was bludgeoned to death after 9 months by conspirators. They then appointed a man to be the king and his name was Nabonidus. He was not of the family of Nebuchadnezzar so he then married into the family of Nebuchadnezzar. He most likely married a daughter of the former king. She had a son by the name of Belshazzar whom we find as the king in Daniel 5. This man was most likely the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Now Nabonidus was also a king at this same time. But he moved his throne south of the city of Babylon and he allowed Belshazzar to reign within the city of Babylon. So as we step into Daniel 5 the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar is on the throne. But there is more.

Now as we approach Daniel 5 we must understand that at this time the Medes and the Persians have been working their way toward the Babylonian Empire and are at this time just outside the city planning an attack against Belshazzar and the people of Babylon. They have already captured Nabonidus and defeated his army. The city of Babylon is locked up tight because of the enemy who is outside the gates.

So here is the scene. The Medes and the Persians are just outside the walls of Babylon hoping to penetrate the city and conquer the Babylonians. Belshazzar and the people within the city know what is happening. The city is under siege. They know the Medes and the Persians are outside the city. They know that Nabonidus has been defeated.

Keep all of that tucked within your mind for we will need to pull it up again in a few minutes.

Let me now take you inside the city walls and into the palace of the king.

II. The Deception

Notice Daniel 5:1

Here we see that the king made a great feast to 1000 of his lords and they drank wine. Now we need to understand that this was a huge drunken orgy. This was a sex party and the details of what they did are far too disgusting for us to even consider.

But this all raises a question, "How could the king and his lords get all caught up in this party when the city was under siege by the Medes and the Persians?" They were deceived into thinking that no one could conquer them. The Babylonians were a super power in their day and so they believed there was no army that existed that could ever penetrate the walls of their city.

Now the city was a fortress beyond what we can ever imagine. Let me paint you a picture so that you can understand the deception of these people. The walls of the city were believed to be about 87 feet thick. They were 350 feet high which is equal to a 35 story building. There were towers on top of the wall that were another 100 feet high which made them from the ground about 450 feet high. They were able to drive chariots side by side on top of the wall. The city was 15 miles square. They had everything in the city which they needed. The Euphrates River ran under the wall and through the city. At the wall they had iron bars that went down in the water so as to prevent anyone from floating down the river and into their city. There were around 50 iron gates which led into the city.

So the point I am making is that this city of Babylon was a fortress and the king and all the people within the city felt perfectly secure within the walls. THEY WERE DECEIVED!!

Notice Daniel 5:2-3

In the midst of this drunken party the king remembers that his grandfather had taken the silver and gold vessels from Jerusalem when he had invaded the city about 70 years

earlier. So the king gives the command to bring the vessels into the party so that he and his guests can drink their wine from these vessels which had originally been dedicated to God.

This was nothing short of blasphemy! This was the same as the king spitting in the face of God! He knew what he was doing. He was showing complete disrespect to God. This man knew how God had promoted his grandfather and then had humbled him as he allowed him to eat grass as an ox for 7 years. Belshazzar knew all about this but he had no room for God in his life. He took the Truth which had been given to him and he suppressed it. He would not bow to God but instead he would live his life completely immersed into the sensual pleasures of immorality.

Notice Daniel 5:4

As they drank wine they continued to sink deeper and deeper into their depravity. Here we see that they then turned to their idolatry. This again is a slap in the face to God.

This entire drunken party thrown by the king seems to have been a time for the king to show his disrespect to God. Everything that was done was done as blasphemy against God: The immorality, the drunkenness, the use of the vessels, and the worship of the false gods. This man had a hatred for God and he was determined to let everyone know he did not need the God of Israel.

III. The Panic

Notice Daniel 5:5

When the king began to drink wine from the vessels from the house of God it was then that God got his attention. In the midst of the party there appeared the fingers of a man's hand that began to write upon the plaster of the wall. This took place by the lampstand to be sure the king could see it plainly.

Notice Daniel 5:6

The king's face turned white. His knees began to knock together and the king almost passed out. We are told here that his thoughts troubled him. This tells me that he knew he was guilty. His conscience brought into his mind all that he was guilty of.

Notice Daniel 5:7-9

The king calls in all of the "wise" people that he has in his court. He called the soothsayers, the astrologers, and the Chaldeans. He promised to the one who could read the words that he would be made the 3rd ruler in the kingdom. But out of all the wise men that the king had there was not one who could read the hand writing on the wall.

There was a reason they could not read the message and it was because it was from God.

1 Corinthians 2:14

¹⁴ But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

IV. The Interpretation

Notice Daniel 5:10a

This lady is believed by many to be the widow of Nebuchadnezzar. It is very important to notice that she would have nothing to do with this party. She had to be brought in from the outside.

Notice Daniel 5:10-12

It is also very important to notice that Daniel was on the outside. The queen knew Daniel and I can assure you that king Belshazzar knew of Daniel also. He had however seen no use for Daniel so the 2 were not close. By the way, Daniel is in his 80's at this time.

Notice Daniel 5:13-16

Here we see that the king knew about Daniel but as I said, the king and Daniel had nothing in common. Daniel had remained true to God and Belshazzar despised God. The king offers to Daniel the scarlet robe and the chain as well as to be 3rd ruler in the kingdom.

Notice Daniel 5:17

I love what Daniel says here. He told the king he could keep his "stuff". You see Daniel was a man who could not be bought. He was a man of integrity. He would interpret the hand writing but he did not desire anything which the king had. You see in those days most men would tell the king what he wanted to hear. Daniel was different. He would deliver the Truth to the king undiluted.

Application:

There are 2 points I need to make from this:

1. There is such a need today for men today with integrity like Daniel. It is very rare today to find a man who cannot be bought. In our society today people will do almost anything for personal gain. Let us be like Daniel.

2. There is a need for men who have courage like Daniel today who will stand up and proclaim the Truth of God's Word.

Notice Daniel 5:18-22

This man knew the Truth and he suppressed it. We shall get back to this.

Notice Daniel 5:23-24

There is something here that I do not want you to miss. Daniel was not at the party but he knew all the details. HOW? God revealed it to him! This tells us God was fully aware of all that was happening at the drunken party that night. This entire party was done in rebellion against God and God was fully aware of everything. Belshazzar knew the city was surrounded but he believed the fortress which surrounded him would keep him safe. He did not need God.

God in His grace gave Belshazzar the warning of the hand writing on the wall before the judgment would come.

Notice Daniel 5:25-26

"Mene" meant NUMBERED. God was telling the king, "Your number is up."

Notice Daniel 5:27

"Tekel" meant "found to be lite". This was God telling the king he did not measure up to God's Righteousness. He was far short. He had been weighed on the balances and been found to be lite.

Notice Daniel 5:28

"Peres" meant "divided". This meant that the kingdom which he was king over was about to be absorbed into the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians.

V. The Fulfillment

Notice Daniel 5:29-31

The king and his people believed they were safe inside the city walls. That night the Medes and the Persians diverted the water in the Euphrates River which lowered the water entering the city under the wall. They then entered into the city and quietly killed the

guards and opened the gates which allowed the armies to walk right in and take over the city.

Conclusion:

Now the question is, "What does that mean to us?"

Let me first of all explain why God brought the Babylonian Empire to an end that night.

1. Immorality.
2. Disregard for the things of God.
3. Idolatry
4. Disregard for the God's people. Daniel had been pushed aside.
5. Suppression of the Truth.
6. Sin against the Truth they knew.

We live in a Nation that is a mirror image of Babylon. Let me explain.

- ✓ Our Nation has come to the place where the leaders refuse to acknowledge the principles upon which this Nation was founded upon.
- ✓ The Truth of God's word is being suppressed more and more every day. People have removed the Ten Commandments from many places.
- ✓ They have taken prayer and Bible reading out of schools.
- ✓ We are a Nation full of idols.

We cannot and we will not continue to exist on the path we are on.

Romans 1:18-23

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

This passage in Romans is seen in Daniel 5.

God has placed this message on my heart as a warning. The judgment is coming.

I look at our Nation and I am reminded of how much we are like Babylon that night in Daniel 5. There are many people who feel as though we are secure because we are a super power. We have confidence in our military and our Special Forces. Let me just remind you that God is greater than any military or any group of Special Forces.

Now as a point of encouragement let me remind you that Babylon fell but the Jews were preserved. Daniel will go on to serve under the Medes and the Persians.

There are some verses in Judges that remind me of what we are seeing in our Nation today also.

Judges 2:8, 10-11

⁸ And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

¹⁰ And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

¹¹ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

When the judgment comes upon this Nation it will be very severe.

Luke 12:47-48

⁴⁷ And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

⁴⁸ But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.