

Daniel 5

"The Handwriting on the Wall"

Part 1

Introduction: Tonight, in our study of Daniel, we have come to Daniel chapter 5. In this chapter, Daniel will bring us to the end of the Babylonian kingdom. As we pass from Daniel 4 to Daniel 5, we must understand that there is roughly a 30-year gap between the 2 chapters. Nebuchadnezzar had died about 23 years before this chapter. As we step into the first verse, there will now be a new king sitting on the throne of Babylon. Israel has been in the captivity now for about 67 years. Daniel is now in his 80's and the decisions he made as he was younger are now bringing dividends in his later years as we shall see.

➤ **The Party is Over**

Notice Daniel 5:1-2

The first thing that we are going to consider is the new king. His name is Belshazzar and in verse 2 we are told that he is the son of Nebuchadnezzar. But archeology paints a different picture. Let us notice a list of kings that came before and after Nebuchadnezzar.

Naboplassar was the father of Nebuchadnezzar, and he reigned from 626 - 605 BC.

Nebuchadnezzar reigned from 605 - 562 BC.

Evil Meradoch was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, and he reigned from 562 - 560 BC.

Neriglissar was the brother-in-law of Evil Meradoch, and he murdered him and he reigned from 560 - 556 BC.

Labashi - Marduk was the son of Neriglissar, and he only reigned 3 months until he was assassinated. He reigned for those 3 months in 556 BC.

Nabonidus was part of the group who assassinated Labashi-Marduk, and he then reigned from 556 - 539BC.

Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus and he co reigned with his father in 539 BC.

We see from this that there were 6 kings between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. So, the question is how could Belshazzar be the son of Nebuchadnezzar? There are several

possibilities. Some say that anyone who inherited the throne was considered a son of the preceding kings.

Luke 18:38

³⁸ *And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

Jesus was often referred to as the son of David, but he was not the biological son of David, but he will sit upon the throne of David in the Kingdom. But there is yet something else to consider, and that is the Words of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 27:6-7

⁶ *And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.*

⁷ *And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.*

This is a time sensitive prophecy. Jeremiah tells us that it would be Nebuchadnezzar and his son and his grandson that would reign in Babylon until the kingdom was overthrown. Therefore, it is very possible and very likely that Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Notice the words of A. C. Gaebelein.

"Nabonidus "had a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar for wife and therefore Belshazzar from his mother's side was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar."

We can be sure that Belshazzar and Nabonidus coreigned together.

Notice Daniel 5:7

Here we see that the king offers to the one who can read the handwriting on the wall to be made the 3rd ruler in Babylon. The 3rd because there are already 2 men ruling, Belshazzar and Nabonidus.

Notice Daniel 5:1 again.

There is much behind this verse that we do not see. This was a great feast that was held by the king. Notice the history of these feasts.

"This was extravagant to the max, but it was typical of the Persian kings who followed Babylon. In fact, oriental kings were notorious for their extravagant feasts, archaeological

discoveries revealing that some Persian monarchs were known to dine daily with 15,000 guests at a meal. At Alexander the Great's marriage 10,000 guests attended his wedding dinner. Ashurnasirpal II had a banquet for 69,754 guests at a banquet dedicating his new capital city Calah in 1879 BC. Athanasius describes the food at these banquets writing that "1,000 animals are slaughtered daily for the king. These comprise horses, camels, oxen, asses, deer, and most of the smaller animals. Many birds are consumed, including Arabian ostriches, geese, and chickens."

Let's get back to the king's feast. What was the occasion? Possibly it was to calm the fears of those who served him. You see, the king is basking in the pleasures of his kingdom while he is surrounded by the Medes and the Persians. He feels very secure behind the walls that he sees as impossible to penetrate. They have more than 20 years of food stored inside the walls and the Euphrates River ran under the wall, so water was always available.

The king found his security in that which surrounded him. But he had not given any thought to his soul, and he should have known the prophecy that was given to his grandfather in Daniel 2 concerning the Times of the Gentiles and in that prophecy, he would have known that Babylon would not last forever.

Notice Daniel 5:18-22

No doubt his grandfather shared the dreams with his family. But this king had been deceived by the wealth which he possessed. This king reminds us of the man Jesus spoke of.

Luke 12:16-21

¹⁶ *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:*

¹⁷ *And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*

¹⁸ *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.*

¹⁹ *And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

²⁰ But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

²¹ So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

This man's life would change overnight and so would Belshazzar's life. The king had a false sense of security with all that surrounded him.

Application:

There are many people today who feel secure because of what they possess. They trust in their job, their bank account, their health, the government, and the list goes on. Some people feel very secure because there is a Republican in the White House. The truth of the matter is that when God's plan is unfolded it makes no difference who is president and it makes no difference what we have surrounding us. The only place where there is True security is in Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:18-21

¹⁸ Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

²⁰ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

²¹ That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here in verse 21, we see the security that we have in Jesus Christ. Sin guarantees death and grace guarantees eternal life.

Romans 8:34-39

³⁴ Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

³⁶ *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

³⁷ *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

³⁸ *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

³⁹ *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Notice Daniel 5:2-4

Here we see the king's attitude toward Daniel's God. Nebuchadnezzar had taken the vessels from Jerusalem, and he carried them back to Babylon. But it seems as though he was very careful with them and he had them put up somewhere. Belshazzar had no respect for the vessels and when he became intoxicated, he had the vessels brought into the party and they drank wine from them and praised all the false gods. No doubt they toasted these gods of gold and silver and brass and iron and wood and stone.

Application:

There is something here that we need to see. In these verses, we see the blinding power of idolatry. This king had suppressed the Light that God had shined in his life and he then turned to idols and here we see him mocking God by desecrating the vessels of the temple.

Evidence of the True God is all around us today.

Psalms 19:1-5

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

² *Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*

³ *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*

⁴ *Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,*

⁵ *Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.*

Many have ignored the evidence and turned to idols. Let me remind you what happens to people who get caught up in idolatry.

1 Corinthians 10:19-21

¹⁹ *What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?*

²⁰ **But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God:** *and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.*

²¹ *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.*

Here in verse 20, we see that those things which people sacrifice to idols they sacrifice to devils/demons. What does this mean? It means that demons attach themselves to idols and when the idol is worshipped the demon gains great influence over the worshipper. This is exactly what we are seeing in our society today. Between God removing the moral restrains and demonic influence, people do things that go completely against common sense. Have you ever wondered why people do and believe things that make no sense? The answer is that they have lost their moral compass because they rejected the Light which God has shined into their lives and this has brought upon them the consequences that we are seeing. Then there is the demonic influence that comes through the idolatry.

John 3:19-21

¹⁹ *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

²⁰ *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

²¹ *But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

Conclusion:

It is good for us to be reminded that we too can fall into idolatry. John tells us that it will hinder our spiritual growth.

John 5:20-21

²⁰ And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

²¹ Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.