

Daniel 5

“The handwriting is on the wall”



Review

- **Daniel 1** prepared us for the rest of the book, and showed us God's care for Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.
 - Highlight: Daniel refusing to defile himself (1:8).
- **Daniel 2** reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great image, and Daniel's interpretation of it. It portrays the rise and fall of four earthly kingdoms, and in the days of the last one, the establishment of a heavenly kingdom that would stand forever.

Review

- **Daniel 3** highlights the faith and courage of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and God's mighty power to deliver His servants.
- **Daniel 4** tells us how God humbled a very proud man, King Nebuchadnezzar. He would learn "that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men" (4:17, 25, 32). No more "look what I built"! (4:30).

Date

- Historical records outside the Bible tell us the event recorded in this chapter (i.e., the fall of Babylon) took place in 539 B.C.
- Daniel was taken captive in 606/605 B.C., so IF he was around 16 at that time, he would **now** be about 82 years old.

Historical Background

- In 550 B.C, the Median and Persian armies met in battle. Cyrus of Persia conquered the Median army and made himself monarch of the empire.
- Cyrus combined the name of his own kingdom (**Persia**) with the name the empire already had (**Media**, which had become a very large empire), and thus you now have a full grown **Medo-Persian** empire.

Historical Background

- Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, hurriedly sought alliances with Croesus, king of Lydia, and with the Egyptians—but to no avail. In 546 B.C. Cyrus added the wealthy kingdom of Lydia to his empire.
 - Note that while Nabonidus was away, his son Belshazzar reigned in his stead.
- Cyrus continued to expand his empire and in 539 B.C. turned toward Babylon.

Historical Background

- Cyrus and his army defeated Nabonidus on their way to the city of Babylon.
- They moved forward along the Euphrates river and at a certain point, dug a new channel or channels by which the water could be diverted from the city.
- Well fortified and fully stocked, Babylon successfully withstood the Persians at first. But Cyrus waited patiently for this great festival which would involve most of the city's population (Daniel 5).

Historical Background

- When the water level dropped (recall the diverted waters), Cyrus and his army followed the river bed and went wading in beneath the wall.
- Cyrus claimed that Marduk “got him into his city Babylon without fighting or battle,” but according to Xenophon, a terrible massacre occurred.
- Other records suggest that many inhabitants readily accepted Cyrus, and yet some were put to death. Among those killed was Belshazzar (Daniel 5:30).

Historical Background

- The kingdom of Babylon, which is now simply a part of the Medo–Persian empire, was placed under the leadership of a man called Darius the Mede (5:31). **This Darius was a servant of Cyrus, not the man later called Darius the Great, who ruled over the entire Persian empire.**

Nebuchadnezzar's son?

- As mentioned already, Belshazzar was actually Nabonidus's son.
- Terms like “father” and “son” are sometimes used to speak of successors rather than blood line.
- Belshazzar may have been the adopted son of Nebuchadnezzar.
- Belshazzar may have married Nebuchadnezzar's widow to legitimize his claim to the throne.
- Some inscriptions seem to indicate that Nabonidus married Nitocris, daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.

Questions

- “He gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels...” (5:2). Which vessels in particular, and what did they do with them?
 - They drank wine from God’s holy vessels while praising the “gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone” (5:4).
 - “Each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor” (1 Thess. 4:4).
 - “**Glorify God** in your body and in your spirit” (1 Cor. 6:20).

Questions

- The king's mood and demeanor sure changed in a hurry, didn't it (5:6)? Beating your chest one moment and your knees knocking together the next.
 - What caused such a dramatic change? (5:5).
 - What popular phrase is derived from this incident?
 - Can you think of any event that MIGHT cause a similar reaction in us?

Questions

- “Now all the king’s wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation” (5:8). Sound familiar?
 - What reward did Belshazzar offer? (5:7).

Questions

- In comes the queen (perhaps the queen mother) with some good news. What good news did she have for him? (5:11–12).

Questions

- So Daniel is brought before the king; the king relates to Daniel what he has heard about him, and then offers the same reward (5:13–16). What was Daniel's response to the offer of a reward? (5:17).

Questions

- “But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this” (5:22). Knew all what? (5:18–21).
 - How many times do you suppose WE act contrary to what we know?
 - E.g., we know the Israelites “complained and were destroyed by the destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:10), and yet we do the same thing.

Questions

- What charge did Daniel make against Belshazzar, besides not humbling himself? (5:23).

Questions

- So what was written on the wall, and how did Daniel explain its meaning? (5:25–28).
 - Are we RIGHT now being “weighed in the balances”?
 - Any possibility that what God has given us might be given to another?