

CHAPTER FIVE

# DANIEL

A PORTRAIT OF PRIDE  
AND PUNISHMENT





## King Nebuchadnezzar's Successors

Daniel chapter five presents the very familiar story of King Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall.

As the story opens, we see the \_\_\_\_\_ and the licentiousness of an empire at the very end of its existence.

After chapter four, King Nebuchadnezzar disappears from Daniel's narrative without any explanation whatsoever.

But history tells us that he died in \_\_\_\_\_, after a reign of forty-three years.

The famous king was then succeeded by several not-so-famous kings who were not even mentioned by Daniel.

That's because the book of Daniel was never meant to be a comprehensive history of the ancient kingdom of Babylon.

Rather, it was written to \_\_\_\_\_ the Jewish people, showing that even though they had been defeated and exiled, GOD was still sovereignly in control.

He was still working out His plans and accomplishing His purposes, and occasionally the curtain was pulled back, and God allowed them to see His glorious \_\_\_\_\_ on behalf of His people.

Daniel chapter five is one such occasion, along with the fiery furnace of chapter 3 and the lion's den of chapter 6.

These three accounts are some of the most remarkable and memorable stories found anywhere in the Bible.

And as we work our way through this chapter, we will once again see the truth of chapter 4, verse 25, where we are told: *"that the Most High is Ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes."*

Yes, our great God, the God of the whole universe, gives kingdoms to whomever He wills, AND He also takes them away from whomever He wishes.

And the young King Belshazzar is about to find this out.

After Nebuchadnezzar's death, he was succeeded by his son, Amel-Marduk (referred to as "Evil-Merodach" in 2 Kings 25:27 and Jeremiah 52:31-34).

Although he treated \_\_\_\_\_, the exiled king of Judah, with kindness, Evil-Merodach had none of his father's charisma, strength, or abilities.

His reign only lasted for a couple years (562-560 BC).

Then he was assassinated by his brother-in-law, Nergal-Sharezer, who ascended the throne.

That man's reign was also relatively short (from 560-556 BC), and he apparently died from natural causes.

After his death, his son, Labashi-Marduk, ruled for less than a year before he was murdered in a palace coup by a Babylonian noble by the name of Nabonidus.

Nabonidus officially reigned from 556 BC to the end of the Babylonian empire in 539 BC.

He was married to Nitocris, Nebuchadnezzar's \_\_\_\_\_.

But history tells us that Nabonidus began to lose interest in governing the nation, as he became more and more involved in the Babylonian religion.

Nabonidus would spend months at a time at the temple of Sin, the Babylonian moon god, where his mother was a priestess.

And when King Nabonidus was away from the palace in Babylon, he would leave his son, Belshazzar, in command.

And so, as we come to Daniel chapter 5, we find that Daniel has skipped over all of this political drama.

→→ WHY?

Because none of it was pertinent to Daniel's ongoing story and message.

### King Belshazzar's Party (vv. 1-4)



#### ***Daniel 5:1-4***

*1 Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.*

*2 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, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.*

*3 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.*

*4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone.*

Nowhere in this passage are we given a specific time indicator, except that all of it took place on the night that Babylon was taken over by the Medes and Persians.

***Daniel 5:30***

***30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.***

History tells us that occurred on \_\_\_\_\_.

The end of the Babylonian empire appears to have happened overnight.

BUT the truth of the matter was that Babylon had been steadily losing power and territory for a decade prior to the night of this kingly party.

For years critics of the book of Daniel claimed that the last king of Babylon was Nabonidus, not Belshazzar.

BUT more and more texts have been discovered in which the name of Belshazzar is not only found, but he is identified as \_\_\_\_\_ with his father Nabonidus.



*The Nabonidus Chronicle is an ancient Babylonian document which mentions both Nabonidus' reign AND his son Belshazzar's service as regent of Babylon.*

**QUOTE:**

*"...Belshazzar emerged from the shadows as a definite historical character. Today we have abundant textual witness to the fact that he was the son of Nabonidus. More than that, Belshazzar was co-regent and actually in charge of Babylon during his father's ten-year absence from the capital city, thus explaining the reference to him as king." (Benware)*

SO, this young King Belshazzar chose to put on a rather large soiree for his nobles.

In Assyria, Babylon, and Persia, great \_\_\_\_\_ were considered to be an important means of demonstrating the glory of a king and his kingdom.

→→ The question then arises, WHY would Belshazzar throw such a lavish feast for his nobles, when Darius the Mede (5:31) was about to invade Babylon and bring a speedy end to the empire?

Surely he knew that the Medes and Persians were close by. We don't know for sure, because the text doesn't tell us.

BUT one can easily surmise that the young king wanted to get the people's attention off the \_\_\_\_\_ in the kingdom.

And he probably thought that lots of alcohol and immorality would do the trick.

HOWEVER, Belshazzar's foolishness that evening did not stop there.

On top of the first two sins of drunkenness and debauchery, he added the sin of \_\_\_\_\_ to the list.



***Daniel 5:2***

*2 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, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.*

While Belshazzar was drinking—and getting drunk—he got the *very, very* bad idea of sending for the sacred vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem to use them in his drunken orgy.

Verse 2 records the command, and then verse 3, using almost the exact same language, records that that was exactly what they did.

Belshazzar, his wives, concubines, and nobles began using the sacred vessels as common partyware.

Then, adding insult to injury, they added \_\_\_\_\_ worship to their laundry list of sins that particular night.



***Daniel 5:4***

*4 They drank the wine and **praised the gods** of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.*

As one author said, it was “*the night of bad calls*” (Gangel). And THAT it certainly was!

No doubt, the king wanted to make his party memorable. And one way he thought that he could do that was to make a \_\_\_\_\_ of the God of Israel.

Thus, his behavior was intended to mock the God of Judah, and at the same time to declare the gods of Babylon superior.

Apparently, his wives, concubines, and all the other noble guests joined in the blasphemous festivities.



Perhaps Belshazzar was also trying to win the favor and \_\_\_\_\_ of his gods, since his enemies were right at his doorstep.

BUT in putting his trust in the “gods” who were really no gods, he made the biggest mistake of his life.

As a matter of fact, the prophecy of Isaiah 47, a prophecy given more than \_\_\_\_\_ years prior to that evening, was about to be fulfilled.



**Isaiah 47:1, 8-11**

**1** “Come down and sit in the dust,  
O virgin daughter of Babylon;  
Sit on the ground without a throne,  
O daughter of the Chaldeans!  
For you shall no longer be called tender and delicate.

**8** “Now, then, hear this, you sensual one,  
Who dwells securely,  
Who says in your heart,  
‘I am, and there is no one besides me.  
I will not sit as a widow,  
Nor know loss of children.’

**9** “But these two things will come on you **suddenly in one day**:  
**Loss of children and widowhood.**  
They will come on you in full measure  
In spite of your many sorceries,  
In spite of the great power of your spells.

**10** “You felt secure in your wickedness and said,  
‘No one sees me,’  
Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you;  
For you have said in your heart,  
‘I am, and there is no one besides me.’

**11** “But evil will come on you  
Which you will not know how to charm away;  
And disaster will fall on you  
For which you cannot atone;  
And destruction about which you do not know  
Will come on you suddenly.”

Belshazzar and his nobles and commanders appear to have been overly confident in their belief that NO army could penetrate the mighty fortress of Babylon.

**QUOTE:**

“There is no human wall so high, no human accomplishment so great,  
that it is secure against the judgment of God” (Chappell).

## God's Hand of Judgment (vv. 5-9)



### ***Daniel 5:5-9***

*5 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.*

*6 Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.*

*7 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 shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom."*

*8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.*

*9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.*

Just as the party was humming along in full force, the festivities were brought to a screeching halt with the appearance of a detached hand in the kingly court.

The word used in the Hebrew text literally means the “\_\_\_\_\_” of the hand, which would suggest that the hand appeared on the wall right above Belshazzar’s head.

The text also tells us that it appeared on the wall opposite the lampstand.

This word doesn’t appear anywhere else, but most scholars consider it a reference to some kind of large chandelier holding many candles or torches.

In other words, the hand and the handwriting appeared in a part of the room that was well lit.

And then, in plain view, it began to write on the plaster wall, and the king watched the writing happen.

After the writing was complete, the hand apparently vanished, but the writing itself remained \_\_\_\_\_ for all to see.

Now, it’s interesting to note that God did not appear through a dream or a vision, as He had done with Belshazzar’s grandfather Nebuchadnezzar.

No, this time He made His presence known through visible words written on a wall.

It’s also interesting to note that this was not the first time that the finger of God was used to write visible words for men to see.



God did the same thing with the \_\_\_\_\_ when He wrote them on two tablets of stone (Ex. 31:18).

Belshazzar's response to the disembodied hand and its writing is quite to be expected.



**Daniel 5:6**

**6** Then the king's face grew *pale* and his thoughts *alarmed* him, and his hip joints went *slack* and his knees began *knocking together*.

In a flash, the king was brought to his senses. **First**, Daniel tells us that his "face grew \_\_\_\_\_."

His face had probably been flushed red from being drunk, but now it was white as a sheet.

**Next**, we are told that "his thoughts \_\_\_\_\_ him." I'm sure his mind was spinning.

**Third**, we are told that "his hip joints went slack and his knees began \_\_\_\_\_ together."

This phrase could mean that he tried to stand up, but fell back down again in fear.

OR, as one commentator noted, it could have meant that his lower body lost all control of his most basic bodily functions (Longman).

And so, as the king attempted to regain his composure, he did what all good Babylonian rulers appear to have done, and he cried out for "*the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners*" to be brought into the banquet hall.

When they arrived, he promised them three great rewards, IF they could read and then interpret the writing on the wall.

**First**, he promised that the one who could do that would be "*clothed with purple*." Since purple was the color of \_\_\_\_\_, that was a great honor.

**Second**, he promised them "*a necklace of gold*." That meant great wealth.

And **finally**, he promised any would-be translator "\_\_\_\_\_ as third ruler in the kingdom."

That meant great status.

Clearly, the king was desperate to learn the meaning of the message on the wall.

→→ So, why did Belshazzar promise this person the third position instead of the second?

The answer to that goes back to the current \_\_\_\_\_ of Babylon at the time.

Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus, was still king, but he had left his son in charge while he was away.

So Belshazzar could only offer this person the \_\_\_\_\_ highest position in the kingdom. It was the highest position that Belshazzar, as co-regent, could give.

Now, please note that for the third time in the book of Daniel, the “*wise men*” of Babylon were called in to do a job, but failed.

Here was a group of PhD’s, intellectual elitists who no doubt commanded the respect of the common man—but in the end proved to be absolutely worthless.

These men could \_\_\_\_\_ interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of chapter 2.

They could \_\_\_\_\_ interpret his dream of chapter 4.

And now in chapter 5, “*all the king’s wise men*” were brought in, and once again they could \_\_\_\_\_ interpret the words on the wall.

Now, look at the king’s response in verse 9.



#### **Daniel 5:9**

**9** Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.

When Belshazzar saw that his intellectuals had no answers, he was more \_\_\_\_\_ than ever.

His fear began to spread among the other nobles who were in attendance that evening.

#### **QUOTE:**

*“Where does one turn in such moments? Why, to religion, of course. Or at least that’s what Belshazzar did. He turned to his “faith.” He hollered for the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers (v. 7) to come in and interpret the mysterious text. So these losers came traipsing in again (cf. 2:2, 10-11, 27; 4:7). Once more they fail (v. 8), and Belshazzar’s alarm only intensifies (v. 9). This is sometime God’s pattern—to aggravate our helplessness by exposing the uselessness of our favorite props, even our favorite religious props. You may have your own paganism of choice—occultism, pluralism, machoism, feminism, agnosticism, moralism—and they will prove as petrifyingly useless as the Babylonian variety.*

*The human defiance is quite clear, but you may wonder where the divine opportunity appears. Precisely here, at the end of verse 9! God has frightened Belshazzar; religion has failed him; he is reduced to a shivering, sniffing mess with no supports whatsoever. He is therefore on the edge of the abyss of hope, is he not? He is the object of God’s terror, but in one sense it is a kind terror. God does Belshazzar the favor of leaving him without any recourse, in utter helplessness—and hence with a huge opportunity. Whenever God brings a man to the end of himself, smashing all his props and wasting his idols, it is a favorable moment indeed. IF he will but see it” (Davis).*

But back to the banqueting hall....

There was one royal person *not* at Belshazzar's party, and she proved to be the only one with \_\_\_\_\_ enough to know what to do.

### Daniel's Eventual Return (vv. 10-16)



#### **Daniel 5:10-16**

**10** *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.*

**11** *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.*

**12** *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."*

**13** *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?"*

**14** *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.*

**15** *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.*

**16** *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."*

Remember, Belshazzar's wives and concubines were at the party with him.

So this appears to be the \_\_\_\_\_, Nitocris, Nebuchadnezzar's daughter.

Apparently the queen mother had received a report of the happenings at the king's party.

And so, in the midst of all the pandemonium, the queen calmly "*entered the banquet hall*" and made her way to the king.

Then after she gave the traditional greeting—"O king, live forever!"—she tells him in no uncertain terms to get a \_\_\_\_\_ on himself because she knows what to do.

She confidently declares to him that there is someone in his kingdom who is capable of interpreting the heavenly handwriting.

Now listen how she described Daniel.

First, she says that he served in the days of his father, King Nebuchadnezzar.

BUT this poses a bit of a conundrum, because we know that \_\_\_\_\_ was actually Belshazzar's father.

And yet, the expression "*Nebuchadnezzar, your father*" is used several times throughout this chapter (vv. 2, 11, 18, 22).

→→ So, how should we understand this?

There are a number of possible solutions, and I don't have the time this evening to go into each one of them. So let me give you the solution that I believe is most likely the right one.

Remember, Nabonidus had married Nitocris, one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters, making Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar's grandfather.

The Scriptures don't use a specific Hebrew word for "grandfather," but instead used "father" to mean a \_\_\_\_\_ or ancestor, and context would dictate what exact relationship was meant.

So the queen mother, Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, would have grown up very familiar with the tales of her father's dreams and of the Jewish man Daniel who had interpreted them.

Look at her detailed description of Daniel.

She informed the king that this man possessed "*a spirit of the holy gods*" (v. 11).

Next, she mentioned that he was given "*illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods*" during the days of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 11).

And she told Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar had promoted Daniel to the position of "*chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners*" (v. 11).

And finally, she ended her praise of Daniel by saying that "*an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel.*"

In other words, Daniel had done far more than interpret \_\_\_\_\_ visions during his time as chief of the wise men.

He had apparently solved all kinds of riddles and problems and was a source of extraordinary wisdom for the kingdom of Babylon.

And so, after giving her son this impressive resume, she encouraged the king to call for Daniel, whom she said could solve this enigma for the king.

It's also clear from the queen's words that Daniel was no longer \_\_\_\_\_ in his former position.

Apparently, during all the political turmoil in Babylon, Daniel had at some point been "put out to pasture."

But the queen advises her son to call this man out of retirement, in order for him to "*declare the interpretation*" to the king (v. 12).

Now, after Daniel arrived at the banquet hall, his identity was questioned by the king.

He began by asking him, "*Are you that Daniel who is **one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?***" (v. 13).

One can sense the slight jab from the king as he refers to Daniel as "*one of the \_\_\_\_\_ from Judah.*"

And that is not at all surprising, given the fact that Belshazzar and his party guests had all just been using the gold and silver vessels from the Jewish Temple as common partyware.

Daniel was an old man at this time, probably somewhere in his \_\_\_\_\_.

He had been instrumental in the life of Belshazzar's grandfather and in the overall administration of the empire for a long time.

AND YET, even that didn't stop the king from making his subtle insult.

The king then essentially repeats back to Daniel the queen mother's praise, revealing that his reputation had clearly preceded him (v. 14).

Belshazzar also recounts to Daniel the \_\_\_\_\_ of his own wise men to interpret the writing on the wall (v. 15).

And finally, he reaffirms his promise of purple, gold, and a promotion in the kingdom, IF Daniel could interpret the mysterious handwriting on the wall (v. 16).

## Daniel's Direct Admonition (vv. 17-24)



### **Daniel 5:17-24**

*17 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.*

*18 O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father.*

*19 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.*

*20 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.*

*21 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.*

*22 Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this,*

*23 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 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 all your ways, you have not glorified.*

*24 Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.*



### **Daniel 5:17**

*17 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.”*

Daniel wasn't speaking disrespectfully to Belshazzar, but he was direct.

First, he made it clear that he wasn't interested in anything that Belshazzar could give him. He didn't need or want any of the kingly rewards.

Daniel wasn't for \_\_\_\_\_. No prospect of material gain would either encourage nor prevent him from speaking the truth.

He was merely interested in doing what was right.

Daniel realized that the king probably thought of him as just one more court magician who could be bribed by princely rewards.

But as Belshazzar was soon to find out, Daniel was different.

And so, after clearing up any possible misunderstanding, Daniel made clear to the king that he would both read the inscription AND make its interpretation known to him.

And beloved, before we move on, let me just challenge each one of you to live like Daniel lived.

And one way that we can be modern-day Daniels is by NOT having a price attached to our \_\_\_\_\_.

When Jesus sent the twelve disciples out to preach and heal, He said to them, *“Freely you received, freely give”* (Mat. 10:8b).

Beloved, God has gifted every single one of you with a spiritual gift that He wants you to use in the body.

Peter said so in his first epistle.



**1 Peter 4:10**

**10** *As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

Before Daniel interprets the inscription on the wall, he does a little preaching and schools this proud young king with a brief history lesson alongside some good \_\_\_\_\_.

Look at verse 18.

Daniel begins his address to Belshazzar with the simple words, *“O king.”*

For whatever reason, he doesn’t begin with the normal greeting of *“O king, live forever.”*

Perhaps it was because he knew what was about to come upon the king that very night.



**QUOTE:**

*“Daniel proceeded to scold the crown prince like he was a naughty schoolboy” (Tsarfati).*

Daniel begins his soliloquy by first informing Belshazzar what “*the Most High God*” had granted his father Nebuchadnezzar.

He said that “*the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty*” to him (v. 18).

This was most likely a \_\_\_\_\_ to Belshazzar’s jab about Nebuchadnezzar having conquered Judah.

Daniel says in essence, “The only reason Nebuchadnezzar was able to conquer Judah was because Yahweh allowed it. In fact, the only reason he became such a great ruler was because the God of Israel gave him that glory.”

Belshazzar probably thought of Yahweh as **only** the God of the \_\_\_\_\_.

But in calling Him “*the Most High God*,” Daniel was very clearly elevating Yahweh above all the false gods of the Babylonians—the same gods that Belshazzar had been praising earlier that evening (v. 4).

(See Psalm 7:17; 9:2; 47:2; 57:2; 73:11; 83:18; 91:9).

And by saying that it was God Who made Nebuchadnezzar the great and glorious king that he had been, Daniel was pointing out that God is \_\_\_\_\_ over ALL human leaders (Dan. 2:21; Psa. 75:7).

Daniel continued his history lesson in verse 19 by saying that it was because of all the glory and grandeur that **God** had bestowed on Nebuchadnezzar that people from both far and wide feared him.

He said that a single word from the king could keep people alive or put them to death.

Then in verse 20, he came to the point that he wanted Belshazzar to really hear with both ears.

Still referring to Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said...

**Daniel 5:20**

**20** *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.*

In short, Daniel said to Belshazzar, “when your father became \_\_\_\_\_ and full of pride, God chopped him down to size and caused him to live like a beast alongside the wild donkeys and cattle.

And God did this to him, until”—



**Daniel 5:21b**

*21 ...until he recognized that **the Most High God is ruler** over the realm of mankind and that **He sets over it whomever He wishes**.*

Daniel pointed to Nebuchadnezzar's life as a demonstration of the danger of pride and arrogance.

Nebuchadnezzar had been warned, but had remained stubbornly arrogant until God brought him so low that he was forced to learn \_\_\_\_\_.

Now look at verse 22, where Daniel hits this king with the truth that he had failed to learn from his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar.



**Daniel 5:22**

*22 Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, **have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this,***

Belshazzar had heard his family \_\_\_\_\_. I'm sure people talked about it for generations.

And Daniel was saying that he should have learned from the painful and embarrassing lesson that Nebuchadnezzar had undergone.

Instead of following in the footsteps of his sinful pride, Belshazzar should have learned how to walk in humility.

But like so many, he failed to grasp the critical lesson that Jesus taught centuries later in Matthew 23.



**Matthew 23:12**

*12 **Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.***

Now look at verse 23, because Daniel wasn't done chastising this young man quite yet.



**Daniel 5:23**

*23 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 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 all your ways, you have not glorified.***

This was quite the \_\_\_\_\_!

In essence, Daniel told the king, “Instead of humbling yourself, O Belshazzar, you have exalted yourself *against* the Lord of Heaven by defiantly using His holy vessels for your wild party.

“And instead of giving glory to the Most High God, you praised the gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood and stone ‘*which do not see, hear, or understand*’” (cf. Psa. 115:1-8; Isa. 37:19; 44:10-17; Jer. 10:1-5, 15; 14:22; 50:38; 51:17).

Belshazzar worshipped gods that have no true \_\_\_\_\_ in them, all the while ignoring the living God on Whom his very life-breath depended.

Now think about this.

Daniel daringly said all of this in front of the king, his wives, his concubines, and one thousand of his nobles, not to mention all the \_\_\_\_\_ of Babylon.

And before all of them, Daniel declared that their *gods* were no gods at all.

We can only imagine the stunned silence that must have fallen over that great hall as those nobles listened to what this old Jewish prophet pronounced to the king.

And folks, the reason why Daniel was so \_\_\_\_\_ was because he feared God more than he feared man.

And once again, my dear brothers and sisters, may that be a mighty lesson for every one of us.

We must love God and fear Him more than we fear man, or more than we love the praise of others.

Don’t forget what Paul said to the Galatians:



***Galatians 1:10***

***10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.***

Daniel’s candid words must have produced a sort of collective gasp among the guests that night.

→→ WHO in their right mind would dare to talk to the king like that?

And yet, there the king sat and took it all in.

→→ WHY?

Probably for a couple of reasons.

**First**, as I noted before, Belshazzar was not the \_\_\_\_\_ king that Nebuchadnezzar had been.

He didn't have enough gumption to stand up to this old prophet.

**Second**, he knew that what Daniel was saying was the \_\_\_\_\_.

And **third**, he needed Daniel's \_\_\_\_\_.

He was still desperate to know what the heavenly handwriting meant, and Daniel was the only man in his kingdom who could help.

And that is precisely what Daniel did.

### Daniel's Straightforward Interpretation (vv. 24-28)



#### **Daniel 5:24-28**

**24** *Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.*

**25** *“Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENĒ, MENĒ, TEKĒL, UPHARSIN.’*

**26** *This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENĒ’—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.*

**27** *‘TEKĒL’—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.*

**28** *‘PERĒS’—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”*



#### **Daniel 5:24**

**24** *Then the hand was **sent from Him** and this inscription was written out.*

Without hesitation Daniel told the king that the hand and the inscription were “*sent from Him.*”

In other words, the \_\_\_\_\_ God that had severely chastised his father Nebuchadnezzar for his pride and arrogance was responsible for the message to Belshazzar.

The writing on the wall was written in Aramaic as “MENĒ, MENĒ, TEKĒL, UPHARSIN” (v. 25).

There would have been no vowel markings, and the letters would have all been written together.

Thus, Daniel's first step would have been to separate the letters into their appropriate words.

And according to verse 25, this produced four distinct words: “MENĒ, MENĒ, TEKĒL, UPHARSIN.”

And if we translate those, word for word, we get: “numbered, numbered, weighed, \_\_\_\_\_.”

Daniel then provided Belshazzar with the devastating interpretation (vv. 26-28).



**Daniel 5:26-28**

**26** *This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENĒ’—God has **numbered** your kingdom and put an end to it.*

**27** *‘TEKĒL’—you have been **weighed** on the scales and found deficient.*

**28** *‘PERĒS’—your kingdom has been **divided** and given over to the Medes and Persians.”*

The first word, “MENE” was an Aramaic word that means “numbered” or “counted.”

This word appeared twice, apparently for emphasis.

Because of Belshazzar’s pride and wickedness, God had numbered his days and the days of his kingdom, and that time was now up.

The invading Medo-Persia army was right at the door, maneuvering under the walls of Babylon that very \_\_\_\_\_.

Belshazzar’s time was also up, because God had “weighed” (TEKEL) him and found him to be deficient.

God had weighed the king and his kingdom on His divine scale.

The righteous standard of God was placed on one end of the scale and Belshazzar and the Babylonians were placed on the other end, and they came up sadly \_\_\_\_\_.

And folks, that is exactly what the Bible teaches in both Testaments.



**Psalms 62:9**

**9** *Men of low degree are **only vanity** and men of rank are a lie;  
In the balances they go up;  
They are together **lighter than breath**.*



**Romans 3:23**

**23** *for all have sinned and **fall short** of the glory of God.*

When compared to God we all “fall short” and in essence are all “lighter than breath.”

Daniel then interpreted the third word “PERES” (UPHARSIN).

PERES means divided.

UPHARSIN is simply the \_\_\_\_\_ of PERES, and has the “U” attached to it, which is like our English word “and.”

The great empire of Babylon was about to be destroyed and \_\_\_\_\_ among the next world empire of the Medes and Persians.

Now, before we move on we must not forget that God will one day weigh all the nations and all the peoples of those nations in His perfectly just and righteous \_\_\_\_\_, and even we, as the mighty “American Super Power,” will, in God’s eyes, come up short or deficient.

Compared to God, we Americans are all “*lighter than breath*” (Psalm 62:9).

No person or nation ever gets to \_\_\_\_\_ or neglect God’s truth.

Remember, a day is coming when “*every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Phil. 2:10b-11).

But for everyone who has ever repented from their sins and placed their faith in Jesus, then there is great \_\_\_\_\_.

Because if you are in Christ, then all of your sins have been placed on HIM at Golgotha.

And the Bible also tells us that all of His \_\_\_\_\_ has been transferred into your account.



**2 Corinthians 5:21**

**21** *He made Him Who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

And that, dear men and women, is the ONLY way that we will be able to survive that holy and righteous judgment.

One might think that after hearing such direct words of judgment that Belshazzar would have put Daniel to death on the spot.

Instead, the king kept his \_\_\_\_\_.

## The Empire's End (vv. 29-31)



### **Daniel 5:29-31**

**29** Then Belshazzar gave orders, 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.

**30** That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.

**31** So **Darius the Mede** received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

Now, it's interesting to note that chapters 2, 3, and 4 all end with some kind of confession by Nebuchadnezzar (2:46-47; 3:28-29; 4:34-37).

BUT we find no such confession in chapter 5.

Yes, Belshazzar was true to his word and bestowed the rewards on Daniel that he said he would give to anyone who could interpret the divine message.

BUT Belshazzar showed no sign of \_\_\_\_\_ for his arrogance, his sensualities, his revelry, his idolatry, or his blasphemies.

Daniel's promised promotion was short-lived.

It was like getting a promotion to vice-president one day before your company goes bankrupt.

His new position lasted for only a few \_\_\_\_\_.

However, as we're going to see in the next chapter, King Darius will very wisely recognize Daniel and \_\_\_\_\_ him to a key position within his kingdom (6:2-3).

Now, according to the Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon, the Medes and Persians did not attempt to attack the impregnable Babylonian walls, which were at least forty feet high and twenty-five feet thick.

→→ So, how did they do it then?

### QUOTE:

*"They diverted water from the Euphrates River (which ran under the walls of Babylon) into a marsh. With the level of the water lowered, the soldiers were able to wade the river under the walls and enter the city. Xenophon added that the city was invaded while the Babylonians were feasting in a time of drunken revelry.... As a matter of fact, Xenophon cited the festival as the reason the Persians chose to attack Babylon on that particular night" (Miller).*

And that fits perfectly with what Daniel said happened.



***Daniel 5:31***

***31*** So ***Darius the Mede*** received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

In that one simple sentence, we read of the fall of the Babylonian empire, the head of \_\_\_\_\_, and the beginning of the empire of the Medes and Persians, the breast and arms of silver (Daniel 2).

All of this took place on \_\_\_\_\_, 539 BC.

No details of the military conquest are given, because once again, Daniel was not writing a detailed history of Babylon, but rather a book to encourage his people.

Don't forget what we saw in chapter two, with Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

\_\_\_\_\_ kingdoms of man will rise and then fall prior to the coming of God's future, forever kingdom.

Daniel had lived to see the end of the first—the Babylonian kingdom—and the emergence of the second kingdom—the Medes and Persians.

## Life Lessons

### Life Lesson #1—God will eventually judge all scoffers.

#### QUOTE:

*“The only thing more certain for us than death and taxes is the final judgment” (Boice).*

Belshazzar had challenged and \_\_\_\_\_ the Most High God, but lost.

That young king had been confronted and challenged by Daniel, one of the most godly prophets found anywhere in Scripture; and yet Belshazzar showed no sign of repentance. So God brought a swift end to him and his kingdom.



#### **Proverbs 1:22-26**

**22** *“How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded?  
And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing  
And fools hate knowledge?”*

**23** *“Turn to my reproof,  
Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you;  
I will make my words known to you.*

**24** *“Because I called and you refused,  
I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;*

**25** *And you neglected all my counsel  
And did not want my reproof;*

**26** *I will also laugh at your calamity;  
I will mock when your dread comes....”*



#### **Proverbs 29:1**

**1** *A man who hardens his neck after much reproof  
will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.*

### Life Lesson #2—God hates all idolatry.

The guests at Belshazzar’s feast *“praised the gods of gold, silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone”* (Dan. 5:4b).

Idolatry can be defined as *“the \_\_\_\_\_ of other things in the place of the one true God”* (Rhodes).

God hates idolatry of every kind.

Anytime someone places anyone or anything above or even on par with the Most High God, they are \_\_\_\_\_ God of His rightful glory, honor, and worship, AND are breaking the very first and foremost of God's commandments.

**Matthew 22:37b**

*37 ... "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."*

The New Testament consistently warns against all forms of \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Cor. 6:16; Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 3:5; 1 John 5:21).

**Life Lesson #3—Idolatry is sheer vanity.**

God not only hates all forms of idolatry, but He continually tells us that it is utter \_\_\_\_\_.

In Daniel 5:23, Daniel told the king that all the false gods of Babylon *"do not see, hear or understand."*

The prophet Jeremiah said something similar in chapter 10, when he declared that *"like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, and they cannot speak; they must be carried, because they cannot walk!"* (v.5a).

Then in chapter 51, he goes on to say that *"every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his molten images are **deceitful**, and there is no breath in them"* (v. 17b).

No wonder the Apostle Paul told the Corinthian church that *"an idol is **nothing** at all"* (1 Cor. 8:4b).

**Life Lesson #4—Learn to fear God.**

The Bible teaches that *"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge"* (Prov. 1:7).

Belshazzar was \_\_\_\_\_ when a celestial hand appeared at his feast and wrote four words on the palace wall—and rightly so.

BUT he did not \_\_\_\_\_ the living God Who gave him his life, his kingdom, and everything else that he had.

For those who do not know God, there is a real terror that awaits them.

**Hebrews 10:31**

*31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Only those who know the living God, have had their sins forgiven, and have been adopted into God's family don't need to live in terror of the living God.

But having said that, the Bible does teach that we are still called to live in \_\_\_\_\_ fear of Him (1 Sam. 12:14, 24; 2 Chron. 19:9; Acts 10:35; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:17).

### Life Lesson #5—Do not be enticed by worldly rewards.

The first thing out of Daniel's mouth when King Belshazzar offered him his kingly treasures was essentially, "No thanks, keep your stuff!" Daniel couldn't have cared less about the worldly rewards that the king was willing to pay for his services.

We should all follow Daniel's good example, and not be \_\_\_\_\_ away by what this world has to offer.



**1 John 2:15-17**

**15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

**16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**

**17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.**

Not only is this a warning, but it is also one of the Apostle John's inspired tests for testing ourselves to make sure that we are truly in the \_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 5:13).

### Life Lesson #6—God is faithful to His faithful ones.

That night, the world came to a shrieking halt for many in Babylon. As \_\_\_\_\_ had predicted, women became widows, and women became childless that night (Isa. 47:8-9).

The sensible queen mother lost her \_\_\_\_\_, the king. His wives and concubines were now widows. Probably the vast majority of the nobles trapped in the palace were killed.

In one night, one regime was put down, and a new one was set in its place.

But in all the chaos, God protected an old Jewish man who had witnessed this scene before—only then it had been a \_\_\_\_\_ palace overrun by Babylonian soldiers.

And that time he had been one of the many young nobles taken \_\_\_\_\_. But God had protected Daniel then, and He protected Daniel now.

When the next chapter opens, we find Daniel **still serving** the new king on the throne under the new regime; and even more importantly, we find Daniel **still standing strong** for his God before that king. Brothers and sisters, as our world powers jockey for position, and as our own lawmakers slap down legislature after legislature that directly affects our lives, our job is to \_\_\_\_\_ for our God in the midst of all the chaos.

### For He will always prove Himself faithful!