

DANIEL FIVE



The fifth chapter of Daniel shows us the end of the mighty Babylonian empire. Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 revealed coming kingdoms. It takes place here.

- This chapter gives us the expressions: "handwriting on the wall," "weighed in the balances," and, "days are numbered."

The Background

1. About 25-30 years have passed between chapters 4 and 5
Daniel is likely in his 70's to 80's
Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C.
Babylon was captured by Cyrus in 539 B.C.

- for centuries there was no evidence of Belshazzar
- this gave reason for skeptics to deny that Daniel authored this book. Some suggested it was written centuries after the events, and some thought "Beshazzar" was fictitious

Babylonian Rulers

- Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.)
- Evil-Marduk (562-560): son
- Neriglissar (560-556): brother-in-law
- Labashi Marduk (556): son of Neriglissar
- Nabonidus (556-539): son of Labashi, married to Nebuchadnezzar's daughter
- Belshazzar (549-539): son of Nabonidus and grandson of Nebuchadnezzar



- the discovery of the Nabonidus Cylinder proved that Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus
- Nabonidus, the king was still alive and the king. He had a palace at Teima and was off fighting battles for more than a decade. He left his son, Belshazzar to run Babylon.

- multiple times Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as Belshazzar's father (2, 11, 13, 18). Most likely in the same way David is referred to as the father of those generations later.

The Story

1. **Belshazzar throws a massive party.** One thousand officials are there. Wine flows. It's a feast.
 - while this is going on the Persians are surrounding the city
 - Belshazzar's father has been defeated
2. **The vessels from the house of God were brought in** and used in the banquet. Two blasphemous and insulting things take place
 - concubines and pagans were drinking freely from the vessels
 - they were toasting the gods of Babylon with the cups of God

3. **Suddenly a hand appears and three words are written on the plaster wall.** This is a miraculous and divine message from God. It was not uncommon for nations to cut off the hand of warriors they had conquered. Here, the God of Judah is not defeated

- unlike Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, which were private, this message is before all
- the wise men cannot interpret the meaning

- The words are in Aramaic.
- Each word is a short sentence
- These are financial terms

Mene: 50 shekels—means to count or number

Tekel: 1 shekel—means to weigh

Upharsin: 1/2 shekel—to divide.
Numbered...weighed...divided

- For the third time, Daniel interprets
- Daniel's tone is tense, serious and stern
- He retells how Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself

Key verse: "Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all of this" (5:22).

Why would there be a banquet while the city is about to be attacked?

- Annual festival
- They disbelieved that Babylon could be overtaken
- They were appealing to their gods who had brought victory over Judah

Belshazzar's offer to promote the person to third in the kingdom if an interpretation is given shows that his father was still number one. Belshazzar was number two.

4. **That same night (30) Belshazzar was slain.** The Medes/Persians changed the course of the Tigris river which flowed through the city. They were able to march in under the walls and take the city. (Rev 18:1-3)

God expects us to learn from the mistakes of others (1 Cor 10:11-12)