

Daniel

"Numbered, Weighed and Rejected"

(Daniel 5:1-31)

The Date/Setting: King Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC. After three other men had ruled in Babylon and passed from the scene, Nabonidus, who had married Nebuchadnezzar's daughter (or widow), became king in 556 BC. In 555 BC, Nabonidus marched his army westward to conquer rebels who had revolted against Babylonian rule since the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Before he left Babylon, Nabonidus entrusted his eldest son Belshazzar with the throne. Over time, Nabonidus built another palace in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula and settled there. While Nabonidus retained the title of King in Arabia, Belshazzar exercised kingship in Babylon. Thus, a co-regency situation existed, and Daniel was correct in referring to Belshazzar as the King. This will become important when we consider Belshazzar's offered reward to anyone who could interpret the handwriting on the wall. These events occur in 539 BC when Daniel was in his early eighties.

The Outline:

- A. Belshazzar's Feast (5:1-4)
- B. The Handwriting on the Wall (5:5-9)
- C. The Queen Mother's Suggestion (5:10-12)
- D. Daniel's Appearance Before the King (5:13-16)
- E. Daniel's Admonition to the King (5:17-24)
- F. Daniel's Interpretation of the Writing (5:25-28)
- G. Belshazzar's Response & the End of Babylon (5:29-31)

The Key Players:

- God (Most-High)
- Belshazzar
- The King's lords
- The King's women
- The King's wisemen
- The Queen
- Daniel
- Darius

Belshazzar's Feast

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| 1 | King Belshazzar had a feast for many notable guests (1). |
| 2 | Drunk, the King ordered that the Jewish sacred vessels be brought (2). |
| 3 | The King and his guests all drank from the sacred vessels (3). |
| 4 | As the King and his guests drank, they praised the gods of Babylon (4). |

The Handwriting on the Wall

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| 5 | A human hand appeared and wrote on the wall near the lampstand (5). |
| 6 | The King saw the hand and was alarmed (5-6). |
| 7 | The King called loudly for his wisemen to come (7). |
| 8 | The King offered a reward/promotion for an interpretation (7). |
| 9 | The wisemen arrived but could not interpret the writing (8). |
| 10 | The King was further alarmed (9). |

The Queen Mother's Suggestion

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| 11 | The Queen offered her son counsel and encouragement (10). |
| 12 | The Queen told the King about Daniel (11) |
| 13 | The Queen suggested that Daniel be called (12). |

Daniel's Appearance Before the King

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| 14 | Daniel was brought in before the King and they spoke (13-14). |
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15	The King told Daniel the wisemen could not interpret the writing (15).
16	The King offered reward/promotion to Daniel for an interpretation (16).
<u>Daniel's Admonition to the King</u>	
17	Daniel told the King to keep the rewards, but he would interpret (17).
18	Daniel gave Belshazzar a history lesson (18).
The history lesson:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God blessed Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (18). • Because of this the whole world respected Nebuchadnezzar (19). • Nebuchadnezzar ruled as he desired (19). • Because of pride, God judged him, and his glory was taken from him (20). • He went insane and lived like an animal until he acknowledged God (21). 	
19	Daniel accused Belshazzar of having the pride of Nebuchadnezzar (22).
20	Daniel told the King that he had disrespected God by his actions (23).
21	Daniel told the King that the writing was from the hand of God (24).
<u>Daniel's Interpretation of the Writing</u>	
22	Daniel interpreted the writing (25-28).
The interpretation of the writing:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN (25). • MENE: God has numbered the days of your kingdom and ended it (26). • TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting (27). • PERES: Your Kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians (28). 	
23	Belshazzar rewarded/promoted Daniel (29).
24	Belshazzar was killed that night (30).
25	Darius the Mede received the Kingdom (31).
<u>Why did Belshazzar bring out the Sacred Vessels?</u> Belshazzar likely knew of the prophecy by the God of Israel concerning the conquering of Babylon by another kingdom. Secondly, ancient sources reveal that the Medo-Persian troops, under the leadership of King Cyrus, had conquered the areas surrounding the city and was encamped immediately outside the city walls. Belshazzar likely knew this as well, and that Nebuchadnezzar had made Babylon the most fortified city in the world. He was confident in the city's design (Built over the Euphrates River), and its defenses and believed that he could sustain life for a long time. It seems that Belshazzar brought out these vessels to show his utter contempt for the God of his conquered peoples and his prophecy concerning the fall of Babylon.	
<u>Belshazzar's ignorance of Daniel:</u> It seems incredible that Belshazzar did not know about Daniel. He had been an important and high-ranking official in his grandfather's kingdom, and yet he seems to be completely unaware of who Daniel was and what he had done for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel states in v22 that Belshazzar knew about the previous events between Nebuchadnezzar and God but he paid them no mind.	
<u>How did the Medo-Persians Conquer the City of Babylon?</u> King Cyrus of Medo-Persia knew that the defenses of Babylon would not permit the entrance of his troops into the city through conventional means of warfare. According to more than one historian, their strategy was to divert the water of the Euphrates River that normally flowed under the walls of the city. When they did so, they were able to walk into the city without detection.	
<u>Who is Darius the Mede?</u> Darius is not a name but a title. Scholars believe that this is referring to Cyrus, or his underling, Gubaru, who Cyrus appointed as Governor of Babylon.	
Next Week: "Liars, Laws and Lions (Daniel 6:1-28)"	