

DANIEL

Lesson 8: Daniel 5:1-31
Oops!

WHAT ARE YOU DEPENDING ON?

- **Basically two approaches to life** – Proverbs 18:10–12: *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe. A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his own imagination. Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, but humility goes before honor.*
- **What is your Babylon?**

INTRO TO DANIEL 5

- All kings are subject to God (as are all men). There are only two kinds of kings, those who know it and those who don't.
- Neb started out as a haughty one and ended as one humbled.
- Belshazzar is going "haughty all the way."

INTRO TO DANIEL 5

- Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC.
- Three kings succeeded him before Nabonidus took the throne in 556 BC.
- Nabonidus was Babylon's final king, serving until 539 BC, when Persia conquered Babylon.

INTRO TO DANIEL 5

- Belshazzar (5:1; 7:1; 8:1) served as co-regent in Babylon during his father's (Nabonidus) absence.
- Neb's last words (in Daniel) could have helped Belshazzar. Daniel 4:37: *"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."*

INTRO TO DANIEL 5

- The fall of Babylon was already baked in.
- First glimpsed in Dan 2, then in more depth in Dan 7 (545 BC / 6 years earlier). The exact timing was a point of speculation but **this day was known**.
- There were some other revelations: Jeremiah 27 = probably around 595BC.

- Jeremiah 27:5–7: *"I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight. Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him. All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant."*

INTRO TO DANIEL 5

- By now, readers will recognize certain continuing plot elements. Judah has been conquered by Babylon. (1) King has a vision that requires interpretation, (2) wise men cannot help him (3) so he appeals to Daniel who (4) explains what the vision means and (5) receives honor.

INTRO TO DANIEL 5

- Two Dan 4 Contrasts: (1) Belshazzar has no respect for God compared to Nebuchadnezzar who made incremental progress. (2) Daniel compares Belshazzar unfavorably to Nebuchadnezzar.
- Belshazzar boasts of familiarity with Daniel and his “Father’s” history. He did not take to heart Papa’s letter found in Daniel 4. Big Mistake!

INTRO TO DANIEL 5

- Dan 5 = Fit counterpoint to Dan 4: Neb = positive example; Belshazzar = negative.
- Daniel 5 does not explain how the city fell. It focuses on the why.
- The city of Babylon considers itself impregnable. Massive walls, defensive towers, gates. Plus 20 year food supply.

INTRO TO DANIEL 5

- One more thing: If Daniel was 16 when he came to Babylon, he would be 81 at the time of this incident.
- Psalm 92:14: *They [the righteous] will still yield fruit in old age; They shall be full of sap and very green.*
- Dan 1 show us a young man staying true to God, Dan 5-6 features an old man who has remained true to God.

I. PARTY IN A PICKLE – VSS. 1-4

- Lavish Banquet for 1,000 held in October, 539 BC.
- **Outside the wall:** Persia has taken Opis (50 miles north) then crossed the Euphrates where Sippar surrendered without a fight.
- We can assume that Belshazzar knew the army was bearing down on him.

I. PARTY IN A PICKLE – VSS. 1-4

- Was this party a distraction (let's party) or a taunt (we don't have any fear of you)? Both?
- Clearly, Belshazzar is making a religious point: The God of Israel is as ordinary as houseware / our confidence is in the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.
- This is most definitely a bad idea.

I. PARTY IN A PICKLE – VSS. 1-4

- Jeremiah 10:4–5: *“They decorate it [an idol] with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers so that it will not totter. Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, and they cannot speak; they must be carried, because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, **for they can do no harm, nor can they do any good.**”*

I. PARTY IN A PICKLE – VSS. 1-4

- If my attention, my affection, and my willingness to sacrifice is fixed on something in place of Jesus, that something is an idol.
- This is a real and present danger: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).
- I can be devoted to my wife (or kids) **because** I am devoted to Jesus but not **in place of** Jesus.

II. THE GAVEL STRIKES – VSS. 5-9

- The hall where this party was held is about 170 x 55 (about 10,000 ft²)
- Entrance from courtyards near Ishtar gate
- Blue enameled brick, some wall-plaster.
- “Lampstand” (unsure), prominent fixture?
- A hand writes a message. King totally freaks out!

II. THE GAVEL STRIKES – VSS. 5-9

- N S R H P L K T N M N M
- M N M N T K L P H R S N
- Wealth, power, human wisdom are completely inadequate - I Corinthians 2:14: *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*

II. THE GAVEL STRIKES – VSS. 5-9

- None of Belshazzar's team could make sense of the message.
- The king who had been partying hard is now having a stage-two panic attack.
- "God had turned the banquet hall into a courtroom and the king was about to be declared guilty." – Wiersbe, W.W.

III. MOMMY ALERT – VSS. 10-12

- Queen probably = wife of king Nabonidus and therefore mom of Belshazzar.
- Herodotus names her as Nitocris
- Nitocris calms little Bellie and has high praise for Daniel. She seems to hold him in high esteem.
- Since Daniel is 81, is he "retired?" Been shelved?

IV. WORKING IT – VSS. 13-16

- Belshazzar comes across as one who wants to do everything he can to get a favorable verdict (without admitting any wrong-doing).
- There is an irony here – if he thought so highly of Daniel, why is this their seemingly first encounter?
- Is his pot-sweetening a cover for terror?

V. THE COLD FACTS – VSS. 17-24

- Keep your gifts!
- You are well acquainted with your father's (grandfather's?) story as found in Daniel 4.
- Daniel 5:21: *"He [Nebuchadnezzar] recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes."*

V. THE COLD FACTS – VSS. 17-24

- Daniel 5:22: *"Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, **even though you knew all this.**"*
- Your grand-father didn't know, but you knew!
- You have treated the one true God with disdain and worshipped the work of man-hands.

- Daniel 5:22-23: *"Yet **you**, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled **your** heart, even though **you** knew all this, 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."*

VI. THE VERDICT – VSS. 25-28

- Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharson = numbered, weighed, divided. Why mene x 2?
- Genesis 41:32: *"Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about."*
- God has done a spiritual audit of you and your kingdom. Fatally flawed (literally)!

VII. EVERYONE SPLITS – VSS. 29-31

- Daniel is promoted to #3.
- #2 is slain that night! So Daniel is promoted to #2!
- “Divided!” Herodotus reports a siege of Babylon by the Persians that ended when they diverted the Euphrates and sent an advance team through the channel to invade the city.

VII. EVERYONE SPLITS – VSS. 29-31

- Belshazzar becomes a poster child for this verse – Proverbs 29:1: *A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.*
- Belshazzar had been given incredible advantages and opportunities, all of which he squandered.
- Reached point of no return. The clock does run out!

APPLICATION

- He trusted in what could not help him.
- Principle: Use a crisis to identify misplaced trust.
- I Timothy 6:17: *Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.*

APPLICATION

- He would not admit he is in over his head
- Principle: Use a crisis as a trigger to seek God's help.
- Psalm 56:3–4: *When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?*