

BOOK OF DANIEL

Chapter 5

Let's Review

In less than 100 years the Babylonian empire

came into existence,

rose to dominance

fell

One way that God works through history is through **LEADERSHIP**, *strong* leadership, *weak, evil, incompetent* leadership. Most of these nations will decline from within **BEFORE** they are conquered from without.

And so often through the
Times of the Gentiles

Moral decline

Economic decline

Religious decline

Lesson from history, anything built by man can sink!

Be it a ship, or city, or empire or philosophy

it can and will sink.

ONLY WHAT IS DONE IN CHRIST LAST THROUGH ETERNITY

Remember from our lesson last week... Belshazzar has gathered his troops into the City of Babylon, shut all the entrances into the city and everyone felt safe inside these impregnable walls of Babylon, even though they have been defeated on the battlefield. Their confidence lies in the great city of Babylon.

And this is where Daniel 5 begins

- ◇ Nebuchadnezzar wanted to advance on the design of the city of Nineveh.
- ◇ the Medo-Persian Armies are encamped outside of the city of Babylon, out of arrow range, in tents.
- ◇ Babylon was built in a square, 13 miles to a side
- ◇ there were two walls around the city; the outer wall was 87 feet thick (some 28 yards) and 350 high –over 100 yards high.
- ◇ towers were built about every 250 yards. For the placement of archers; these towers were 100 feet higher than the walls.
- ◇ city had 100 bronze gates
- ◇ the river Euphrates ran through the center of the city for water supply
- ◇ inside the city were built inner walls with moats
- ◇ the most impregnable city ever built.

1 Fall of Babylon—by Herodotus and Xenophon

Introduction to the great Feast of Daniel 5:1

- ◆ The Great Generals: Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian –both mentioned in the bible joined forces outside the walls of Babylon and they designed a plan to overtake this impregnable city.

Fall of the Babylonian Empire

Reasons for the fall of the Babylonian Empire:

- 1a Anti God
- 1b Immorality-Idolatry-love of money
- 1c Weak immoral - dishonest Leadership
- 1d Arrogance

2 The Great city of Babylon is under siege by the Medo-Persian Empires, while inside the ruling king is throwing this great feast

3 The Babylonians loved to throw great feast. We are told that when Nabonidus was crowned king, he through a feast and 69,000 people came to his great feast.

4 read 5:1

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

Why did Belshazzar throw this great feast?

Belshazzar is so arrogant and so confident that no one can penetrate into the city that he is throwing this great party to celebrate how invincible they were

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.

Belshazzar - (not to be confused with Daniel's Babylonian name, Belteshaazzar)

Belshazzar – Bel protects the king

Belteshaazzar - Bel's prince, whom Bel protects

Nabonidus - named his son after the god Bel

Bel protect the king; (or prince of Bel)

Even though Nebuchadnezzar believed in Jesus Christ and wrote that great Salvation tract, Daniel 4, Nabonidus did not believe and continued to worship the idolatrous gods, like Bel and Sin, the moon god.

Belshazzar the king (we have documented how Nabonidus while the official last king of Babylon, ruling when it fell in 539 bc, his son Belshazzar was sitting on the throne.)

Held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles (we have seen that this feast was to celebrate how Cyrus nor Darius would be able to penetrate into the great city of Babylon. How secure they were! Yet outside their walls, this very night the Persian Army is getting ready to attack.)

The Babylonian top general **Gobryas** has joined with **Cyrus** against Babylon, leaving the Babylonian army leaderless, since Nabonidus is in Hiding; and Belshazzar, instead of taking care of the urgency of the situation, throws a wild feast of debauchery.

We know when this feast was held; it was 12 October 539 bc

Archeologists and historians have well documented that

Babylon fell 13 October 539 bc.

and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.

Neither is the thousand attending nor the wine an issue in themselves.

the problem here is twofold:

1st that with the enemy around the city, making plans to attack is no time for the King or leaders to be getting inebriated.

2nd it is a foreshadowing of the Babylonian Harlot of Revelation 17 where at the very time of her destruction they were drunk with wine:

Revelation 17:1-2 The Doom of Babylon

¹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth committed *acts of immorality*, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."

On the very night that the Persian army, led by Cyrus the Great was entering the great Babylon through the waters of the Euphrates which ran under the city, this Belshazzar was throwing a celebration feast. It was a time to be working out strategy and praying to the God of Nebuchadnezzar.

A time to be alert!

And here is the warning to Christians in the 21st century where Christianity is under siege as never before in American history.

Matthew 24:42

Therefore be on the alert for you do not

Know which day your Lord is coming

1 Corinthians 16:13

Be on the alert stand firm in the faith

Ephesians 6:18

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

Colossians 4:2

devote yourselves to prayer, keeping

alert

in it with an attitude of thanksgiving

1 Thessalonians 5:6

so then let us not sleep as others do,

but let

us be alert and sober

1 Peter 5:8

Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert.

Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Daniel 5:2

Wine Women and Blasphemy

When (*while*) Belshazzar tasted the wine,

the Aramaic word means to taste so as to judge

This is not the problem, the real problem arises in the next line:

he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which

Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which *was* in

Jerusalem;

These sacred implements of worship had been respected by Nebuchadnezzar and

stored away. Daniel 1:2 Nebuchadnezzar had them stored 'into the treasure house of his god'.

They had been dedicated to the worship of the God of Israel.

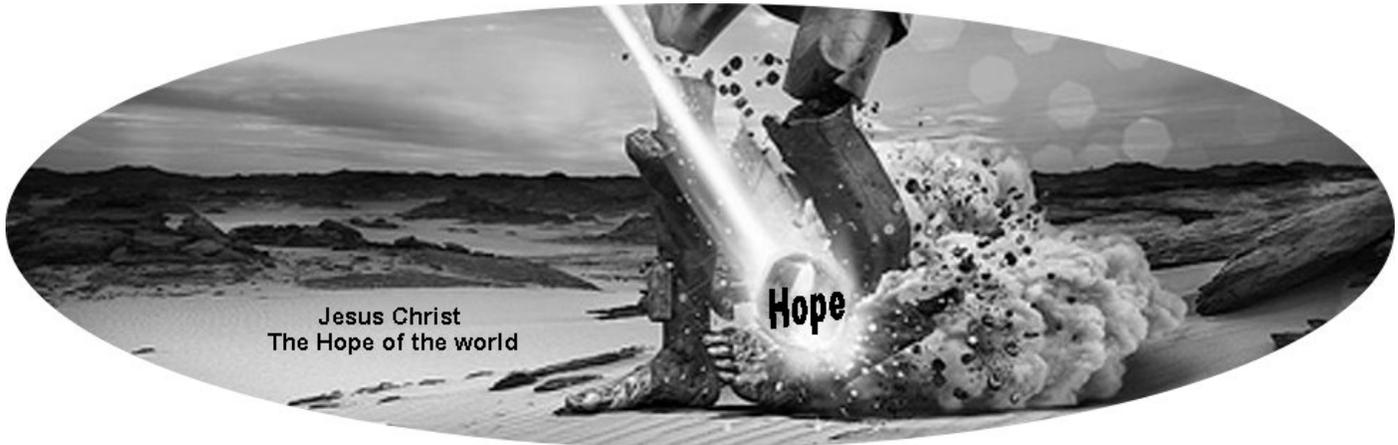
Belshazzar knew exactly what he was doing, not only does he not believe in the monotheistic God of Nebuchadnezzar or of the Jews, he seeks to make fun of them. we will note in 5:22-24 that Daniel explains why the handwriting on the wall...due to Belshazzar's arrogance and blasphemy.

PRINCIPLE: This is a strong demonstration of the moral and religious degeneration of this generation which preceded its fall. Chapter 4 showed that the entire empire had been given the LIGHT OF TRUTH, and now at the beginning of chapter 5... note how quickly it had gone in to darkness.

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

Homosexuality existed in the Babylonian empire but marriage between men or between women was forbidden. It is a sign of great immorality and decadence when a State recognizes same sex marriages. Not even Rome recognized same sex marriages. The U.S is taking immorality to a new low of abomination. **Oh, yes, but we are getting away with it!**

But the time of grace for people to respond to God's saving gospel always has an sudden end. And **THE STONE** of 2:34-35 comes crashing in to destroy the heathenistic, anti God nations, culminating in the final judgments at the end of the Tribulation.



Jimmy De Young { Dr Jimmy DeYoung has resided in Jerusalem for the last 18 years where he held full credentials as a journalist in the second most populated journalistic city in the world. } in his commentary on Daniel gives an excellent description of the taking and using of these sacred vessels.

Remember, **in II** Chronicles 36 is a record of the third wave of Nebuchadnezzar going into Jerusalem. In 605 b.c., he went in the first time and took Daniel and his three Hebrew buddies out into the Babylonian captivity. In 597 b.c., he went back again and took Ezekiel and about 10,000 other Jews over to a place in the Babylonian Empire called Tel Aviv. It wasn't the Tel Aviv that we know today, in Israel on the Mediterranean coast; this one was on the Chebar River, which is a tributary off the Euphrates River. There, Ezekiel and these 10,000 other Jews were placed captive in the Babylonian captivity.

Nebuchadnezzar then made another trip back in with his mighty military, the Babylonian army, in 586 B.C. He arrived in Jerusalem on Tisha B'Av, which is the 9th day of the Jewish month of Av, and he destroyed the Temple. So, the destruction of the first Temple was on Tisha B'Av in 586 B.C. Now, Jewish tradition has it that on Tisha B'Av, in 70 A.D., the second Temple was destroyed.

There are some interesting connections and, in fact, the Jewish people will mourn during the time of Tisha B'Av; it's one of those days of fasting that the Jewish people have. But Nebuchadnezzar destroys the Temple, and let's just look a bit at the record of what happened.

II CHRONICLES 36:7

Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.

So, he took all of these implements, and one that I am sure is being used at Belshazzar's party is the mizrak. The mizrak is a pitcher-shaped item made out of pure gold and pure silver.

It doesn't have a base on it, but instead the bottom is pointed so you cannot set it down. The mizrak is what the sacrificial blood was put in. It was used by the priests when they would take it out and pour it on the altar and by the high priest when he, on Yom Kippur, would go into the Holy of Holies and pour the blood on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. So, I am just almost convinced that that's what Belshazzar and his pals would have used to drink their wine during this rowdy, drunken party.

Look again at what happens when Nebuchadnezzar destroys the Temple. This is key for understanding what I will teach you about Daniels.

II CHRONICLES 36:18-20

And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all [these] he brought back to Babylon.

And they burnt the house of God, and break down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed

all the goodly vessels thereof And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:

When you look at a passage of Scripture that is a record of events that happened-and this is actually a record of Bible prophecy being fulfilled-what I want you to notice is that they are doing this for a certain purpose, because God has a plan. But also notice that they went beyond what the Lord told them to do-burning down all the palaces, burning down the Temple, burning down the houses, and taking all the implements with them back into the captivity. Notice, in verse 20, that those who escaped death (*tithe sword*) were carried away.

You might remember in Ezekiel 5, where Ezekiel cut his hair off his head and his beard and put it in three piles. He then stabbed one pile, burned one pile, and threw one pile in the air, and that was a prophecy of what was going to happen.

When Nebuchadnezzar came in this time, he burned the Temple down and he burned the city down. As prophesied by Ezekiel, a third of all the Jewish people in Jerusalem were burned to death. Another third, who escaped the burning of their homes and their Temple, were killed with a sword. And those who *"escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon"*; the final third were taken into the Babylonian captivity.

Now, I give you this information not because I want to teach the book of Ezekiel, but to show you the connection with all of the prophetic books. Remember the principle I shared with you from II Peter 1:207 -"No prophecy of private interpretation. " Prophecies cannot contradict one another; they have to interlock.

II CHRONICLES 36:21

To fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: [for} as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.

²¹ to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath ^[d]until seventy years were complete.

This is the record of the prophecy of Jeremiah, where he said that the land of Jerusalem would be desolate for a 70-year period of time (Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10). The reason for that can be found in Leviticus 25. Starting in verse 23, the Lord says, "This land is my land. I am giving you Jews custodial responsibility of it and I want you to rest the land every seven years. Give it a sabbatical; a Sabbath. For six years I will give you enough to eat in the seventh year and into the eighth year, when you can have your crops raised again; but give the land a Sabbath." Well, the Jewish people didn't do that. In fact, they did not do it for 490 years. I know it was that long, because the land was desolate for 70 years to take care of the Sabbaths-70 times 7 equals 490. When you are not obedient to the Lord, then the Lord is going to take charge and He will make sure that you do what He tells you to do; and that's the result of not being obedient to the Lord.

I give you that background, but let's get back to Belshazzar's party.

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.

(What is so important and why repeated is that the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem was a place to worship the true God. It was the place where the Jews were to go and learn of their God. The articles taken from the Temple, the gold and silver vessels were to teach of the way of Salvation and of the true characteristics of the coming Messiah,

especially the gold which is mentioned in both verses 2 and 3. This gold vessel was as it were the bible for multitudes to learn about Jesus Christ and now in Babylon, Belshazzar is blaspheming the true God and encouraging everyone at the feast to join him in this blasphemy. It is interesting to contrast people in history and how God deals with them. Pharaoh of Exodus generation in Egypt and now Belshazzar harden their hearts in rejection of the true God, while Nebuchadnezzar who did not believe in Jesus Christ did not harden his heart.)

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

The movement from verses 3 to 4 is natural, once you reject the true God, the only God you turn to man-made gods – (**Romans 1**)

There were a multitude of Gods in the Babylonian pantheon.

Marduk –chief god of the pantheon; known as Bel, the sun god.

Daniel, God is judge’ was given a name recognizing this god:

Belteshazzar –Bel prince.

Hananiah ‘the Lord is gracious’ name was changed to Shadrach –
“illuminated by the sun god’

Nebo or Nabu—for whom Nebuchadnezzar was named; “Nebo chief protector’ Nebo the original fire. Azariah –“the Lord is my help’ name was changed to Abed-nego-‘servant or slave of Nebo” Sin, Ishtar (Easter) was the moon god, later known as Allah. Mishael’s name was changed to Meshach “who and what is Ishtar

HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

You will recall in verse 30 of chapter 4 it was while the King boasted in his arrogance that a voice came from heaven to chop down the tree.

Well, here while there is Wine Women and Blasphemy that God writes on the wall God’s has multitude of ways to wake us up to Eternal issues.

We study that we are to live our lives in light of eternity, and when we fail to live this way, God can bring disasters in our lives to wake us up.

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.

Note the careful wording and details given in the Word of God in describing this event. Archeologists have unearthed this room. It was 173 feet long (57 yds) and 56 feet wide (some 18 yards). It was part of the famous hanging gardens. In the rear wall of this banquet hall has been discovered a white plastered wall—pieces of this plastered wall have been discovered. People, there is so much in the Bible that authenticates it as from God.

Many approach the Bible with the idea that it contains errors or that the Bible is the inerrant Word from God.

WHEN GOD FINALLY ACTS IN HISTORY, MAN GOES INTO FEAR

1 Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together. This is enough to sober up everyone—at once—*suddenly* This king is absolutely terrified.

We have all seen pictures of writings on walls of the ancient world inscribing the conquest of the kings. Well, GOD IS NOW DOING HIS OWN WRITING ON THE WALLS opposite the lampstand where it could be read by the thousand.

Note the progression of the sobering of the king:

1st he saw back of the hand of Jesus Christ, doing the writing on the wall; then his face grew pale because of a decrease in supply blood, here, due to shock, and fear.

This kind of paleness affects the entire body but is most easily seen on the face. You will recall that Nebuchadnezzar's face was altered by his intense anger at Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; 3:19; here Nebuchadnezzar's whole body is altered by fear!

Then his thoughts alarmed him (the Aramaic word refers to the thought process as well as what is being thought...that is he is in such fear and turmoil that it affects his thought process--and his thoughts disturbed him what is going on?)

How is this happening?
What does this mean?
Whose hand is that?
What is the writing saying?

Fear is an interesting phenomenon – we can experience fear while sitting in a nice air controlled theater or the cause of the fear can be real. There is so much about fear throughout the bible. Various words for fear are used some 400 times in the bible.

Fear

is a sure sign that we are
Not TRUSTING HIM!

Here are but a few of the multitude of passages that encourage a believer when faced with circumstances that may cause fear.

Psalm 27:1, 3

¹ The LORD is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the defense of my life;
Whom shall I dread?

³ Though a host encamp against me,
My heart will not fear;
Though war arise against me,
In *spite of this* I shall be confident.

Psalm 49:5

⁵ Why should I fear in days of adversity,
When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me,

Psalm 56:4;

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?

Isaiah 41:10;

¹⁰ 'Do not fear, for I am with you;
Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,
Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right
hand.'

2 Timothy 1:7;

⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of
power and love and discipline.

Philippians 4:5-6

⁵ Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The
Lord is near. ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in
everything by prayer and supplication with
thanksgiving let your requests be made known to
God.

God has now gotten Belshazzar's attention!

He is no longer inebriated – he is in shock...it is not the wine that is causing change in his body, it's **THE HAND OF GOD**. The body is affected by the terror of the mind. This is true in heart attacks even cancer etc.

and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together
NIV he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way

KJ so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

The great Medo-Persian army outside his walls getting ready to attack this very night do not have Believer's attention, **BUT GOD DOES!**

the wine he is drinking from the cup of the Lord, does not control his body **BUT GOD DOES!!**

What happened to Judah has now happened to these Babylonians:

Hosea 4:6a My people are destroyed for lack of Knowledge and
11: Harlotry, wine and new wine take away the understanding.

Frantic Search for Understanding

First they were on a frantic search for happiness but that turned into disaster and now they are in a frantic search for understanding. Coming up in verse 22, Daniel will tell Belshazzar that he has had the divine solution, divine truth all along but has rejected it. And again, when you reject divine truth you turn to man for wisdom, for solutions.

7 The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers,(intelligence department) the Chaldeans (the priestly caste) and the diviners. (Those who would tell of the future) 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.”

As is the way of man (unbeliever’s or even believer’s) when they refuse to listen to the Word of God, and catastrophe hits, they go into a frantic search for answers, from the world, from the wisdom of man, which God laughs. Belshazzar learned nothing from Nebuchadnezzar who ran to the same source for understanding.

As believer’s in Jesus Christ, this is one of the first lessons we should learn, in fact the middle verse of the bible teaches us this very important PRINCIPLE.

Psa. 118: 9

It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

Wisdom: How do we take refuge in the Lord?

How do we go to Him for wisdom?

Simple:

Walk by Faith in the Holy Spirit Who will in turn lead you to the Truth of His Word... Counsel of the Lord.

A careful study of 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 reveals that it is by the Holy Spirit that we are able to understand the things from God, or Divine Wisdom.

Jeremiah 17:7 *blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the Lord.* (This blessing is related to the soul, peace – inner peace even when outside of him all is falling apart, inner strength, courage in life.)

This reminds us of our lesson on the wisdom of Daniel in picking your friends. This king of the great empire on earth had not one friend to whom he could turn. Daniel was rich, he had three friends who were like-minded about God and the Word of God. a friend who knows not God may be fun to party with, but is no help when faced with eternity!

If you have one or two friends with whom you can party and pray, then you are rich. If you have friends with whom you can pray, you are rich, but if you have friends with whom you can only party, you are poor and in trouble.

WISDOM: BE WISE IN WHOM YOU PICK AS FRIENDS.
DO THEY KNOW THE WORD OF GOD?
DO THEY LOVE THE LORD IN THE POWER OF HOLY SPIRIT,
NOT IN THE POWER OF THE FLESH.
DO THEY KNOW HOW TO PRAY WITH YOU IN THE SPIRIT?

1 Corinthians 2:14

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.

Let's note another point from Belshazzar.

Daniel 5:7

“Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple (purple is worn by royalty) and *have* a necklace of gold around his neck, (badge of high rank, some men today like to wear gold around their necks, not for beauty as a woman does but for show of power and achievement) and have authority as third *ruler* in the kingdom.”

First, he desires to reward those who can give him explanation.

- 1 You cannot buy the truth of the Word of God
- 2 But Paul does encourage the believer to reward materially those who teach them spiritual truth. Galatians 6

We have noted that Belshazzar knows that even though Nabonidus was in hiding, he was still alive. So first Nabonidus, then Belshazzar and now who ever interpreted the WRITING ON THE WALL, that is whoever interpreted the Word of God would be # 3 in rule.

When wise men fail

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.

It is no surprise that wise men of the world cannot understand the Word of God. It is made known by the Spirit of God.

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

Greatly alarmed we know from verse 6 that this occurred in his head, his thoughts became even more alarmed –fear, uncertainty. To the point that now his body is even more affected so that the blood is shocked from flowing adequately to his body...the king is getting close to shock and his fear is contagious to all who are present at this great feast.

they were perplexed (astonished – they have praised this man, just as many here today praise our President, but when God acts, the world will again be astonished, perplexed.)

It will be a wise believing woman who will come with wisdom.
