

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

SESSION 6

Book of Daniel: Daniel Chapter 5 - **LEADERS GUIDE**

WELCOME

After 4 chapters in Daniel, King Neb is gone. He reigned for 43 years and then died in 562 BC. We won't go into it here – but after Neb died there was a succession of rulers – and within a period of 20-25 years all that Neb had achieved as king of Babylon is gone.

So, as we move into **chapter 5** we need to know two things:

1. **Number 1** is that the Babylonian army has been defeated by the **Persians**. As a result, the Persians have marched on Babylon and are actually fully encamped around the walls of Babylon.
2. **Number 2**, the current king of Babylon is Nabonidus...and Nabonidus had a problem. His problem is that he serves the Egyptian gods – specifically the moon god “Sin” - and that doesn't really go over well with the Babylonians – who worship the god Marduk. So, Nabonidus remains king but is moved out of Babylon to Arabia [*500 miles from Babylon*] – he's a king in **exile**.

His son is Belshazzar. He acts as the king's Regent in Babylon – which means he rules in his dad's place while in Babylon. He's number 2! [*Verses 7, 16 & 29 will make more sense if we realize this. It is why Belshazzar mentions that he would give away “3rd place” in the kingdom. He was 2nd and his father – Nabonidus – is first.*] And, now you know why - as we begin **Daniel 5** – that Belshazzar is on the throne.

And guys let me tell you - this chapter is a hard lesson to teach. The primary reason – is that this chapter deals with God's **judgment**. And teaching God's judgment and hearing about God's judgment is very difficult for us. In this chapter, we will see the judgment of God – and Belshazzar will see the judgment of God. We will also see again the truth of **Daniel 4:25**, “*that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms, and he gives them to anyone he wants.*” And this is where we begin **chapter 5**.

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Daniel 5:1-4**

Remember, when **chapter 5** starts, Babylon is under siege by the Medio-Persian army. The Persians had completely encircled the city. While their enemies were invading, Belshazzar seemed oblivious, with little care for the goings on outside the city walls. So, he throws this big **party** - he has this feast to show that he can. He invites his wives [plural] and his concubines [again, plural] to this party. And Belshazzar not only throws a party but he's going to double down and bring in the Temple vessels King Neb confiscated from Jerusalem. Not only is he going to use them BUT he is also going to idol worship WITH the confiscated vessels taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. He is spitting in the eye of God when using them AND then toasting the false gods of Babylon. This dude is CRAZY – he has a need to feel significant. So, the servants bring in the vessels, and “*they drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.*”

QUESTIONS

What kind of feast do you think this was?

- What was going on outside the Babylonian walls at the time of this feast? [*The Persians were laying siege to Babylon.*]

What attitude can you see from Belshazzar in these verses?

Why do you think Belshazzar viewed himself as indestructible or untouchable?

- Are there times when we view ourselves as indestructible or untouchable?

Why do you think he specifically brought out the vessels from the Jewish temple to desecrate?

- How do Belshazzar's actions mock God and His glory?
- What are some ways we mock God's glory?

How and why does sin make us foolish?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Daniel 5:5-9**

As we start **verse 5**, we read that God writes on the wall – not on a piece of paper or a scroll – but on the wall. And the hand writes on the wall. And it doesn't write, "look how cool y'all are!" Nope, it writes to reveal who Belshazzar really is.

And when the finger appears – Belshazzar changes color and sobers up fast. [verse 6] "Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together." When it mentions that his limbs gave away and his knees knocked together – it means that the joints of his hips were loosened. Which in the original language refers to the fact that Belshazzar soiled himself. He lost complete control of his bowels and his bladder. This man was **scared**.

And as we will discover, in our next section, being scared doesn't make him **smart** AND being helpless does not make him **humble**.

QUESTIONS

When the message is written, Belshazzar can't read the message and he is overtaken with so much fear that "his limbs give way." Even though he can't read what's on the wall, why do you think that his first reaction is one of fear and dread?

What kinds of things does God use to wake us up to our foolishness or our sin?

- Do we listen?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Daniel 5:10-12**

Basically – even the queen looks at Belshazzar with disgust. To give the cliffs notes of her speech, the queen says, "You are not Neb you aren't even close...In fact, you are several steps down from Neb." So, just do what King Neb did and call on Daniel. Through God, Daniel "**will show the interpretation.**"

QUESTIONS

Why do you think in **verse 12 that the queen mentioned Daniel's Babylonian name and then his Hebrew name?**

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Daniel 5:13-28**

Daniel obviously doesn't have much respect for Belshazzar. He too realizes that Belshazzar is no King Neb. He tells him to keep his promotion – and he interprets the writing. And in **verses 22-23**, we see Daniel's interpretation and we see 14 uses of “you” or “your.” It's a rapid fire attack on Belshazzar's blasphemy against God.

Now remember, Daniel is in the midst of a drunken party – and he doesn't mention the drunken party. He mentions the blasphemy against God. And Daniel interprets the writing IN FRONT of everyone.

The writing was Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin - which means:

- Mene - **Numbered**
- Mene - **Numbered**
- Tekel - **Weighed**
- Parsin - **Divided**

Belshazzar's sin has been laid bare and “God is closing the books on Belshazzar's kingdom...God's measuring standard proves the king to be a lightweight, a loser. He challenged the Most High God and **lost.**” *[Danny Akin, Daniel. Page 63]*

QUOTE

The reason we feel as if divine wrath can easily be overstated is that we do not feel the true weight of sin. You will never make yourself feel that you are a sinner, because there is a mechanism in you as a result of sin that will always be defending you against every accusation. We are all on very good terms with ourselves, and we can always put up a good case for ourselves. Even if we try to make ourselves feel that we are sinners, we will never do it. There is only one way to know that we are sinners, and that is to have some dim, glimmering conception of God.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

That dim, glimmering conception of God is that He is the Ruler of the universe – the Judge of all. He is the One who hands down all final judgments.

And because of who God is – in His Holiness – He has to **judge**. And this means He does not have to always show mercy...He doesn't always have to save *[like we saw last week with King Neb]*. In this judgment on Belshazzar we see a clear picture of the consequence for all unholiness has to be **judgment**.

QUESTIONS

What is God's judgment on Belshazzar?

- What does this mean for Belshazzar and his kingdom?
- Is it final?
 - How do we know this?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Daniel 5:29-31**

Belshazzar doesn't learn and he doesn't honor God, instead...he honors Daniel – and dresses him up like MR. T. He even gives him the corner penthouse office in a kingdom that - Daniel just said - was going to be destroyed in like 4 minutes – because Assyria is still camped around the walls!

We see a picture of Belshazzar's disillusionment. He does heed God's judgment through Daniel's words. He doesn't feel conviction and he doesn't **repent**. Belshazzar doesn't feel judged. But in reality, HE IS JUDGED! And that night, he receives the judgment of God and dies.

And we see, that God doesn't wring His hands trying to figure out who is going to take the throne. He already had the successor ready to go – Darius the Mede.

QUESTIONS

What does the end of chapter 5 teach us about God and man?

God again demonstrates His control over kings and kingdoms and that His plan will not be thwarted. How does this encourage you?

- How does this challenge you?

How does Daniel 5 inspire you to understand and respond to the sovereignty of God in your life?

CONCLUSION

Daniel really writes each chapter as an encapsulated moment in history. He's not trying to give us the history of Babylon, OR even the history of Israel while in captivity. He is giving us the fulfillment of God's plans, and purposes, and promises FOR His people **AND** through His people. He is also revealing God's judgment against those who blaspheme His name. This is what we saw today – the Babylonian Empire is no more as we end **chapter 5**. This chapter serves as a reminder of the consequences of pride, arrogance, and disrespect toward God, as well as the certainty of divine judgment upon those who defy His authority.

This is also a reminder for all of us. As we study the book of Daniel, we need to pay attention to everything that is written in Daniel so that we may know, believe and dwell in the heart of God!

Outline for how we will study Daniel:

- **April 28th: Daniel 6: Daniel in the Lion's Den**