**Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided**

**Daniel Chapter 5**

As we come back to the book of Daniel we have jumped from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar all the way to the co-regency of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. As we come to our text, the city is under siege. Belshazzar is no-doubt aware that the Babylonian army has fallen to the Medo-Persians under Cyrus the Great and that Nabonidus has been taken captive. All of this happened about 50 miles away from Babylon.

The Medo-Persian armies are at the gate.

***“1 ¶ King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.***

We know the date this is happening, if we shift to our modern calendar it is **October 11 or 12, 539BC**

**Vs 1** – Belshazzar has thrown a GREAT feast, for a thousand lords (and we can assume their wives).

This is a big, sinful, party that involves thousands of lords and the alcohol is flowing.

**Vs 2** - **When he tasted the wine –** the implication is that after getting intoxicated, Belshazzar decided to openly defy the God of Israel. In an open act of blasphemy, sacrilege, and wickedness, he orders the vessels of gold and silver that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem and be brought so that the guests might **“drink from them.”**

Nebuchadnezzar had taken the vessels in the first place to prove that his gods were superior to the Jewish God and now Belshazzar is flaunting that his gods are all powerful and the Jewish God is impotent.

**Vs 3-4 -** The servants bring the vessels and they drink wine from them and **“praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.”**

**Interesting point:** *The Philosopher W.F. Hegel once said “The only thing we learn from history is that we have learned nothing from history.”*

This is true of Belshazzar and this willful ignorance will prove to be very costly.

**Why would Belshazzar do this? Why would he even think to do this?** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***5 Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. 6 Then the king’s color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. 7 The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.***

**Vs 5** - Immediately, suddenly, right then – as they were drinking and partying.

Notice the exact location of where this occurred, it was in the banquet hall, opposite the lamp stand (literally candlestick), on the plaster of the wall.

**Here the lampstand is illuminating the wall and here the message is on open display!**

**If you are considering cause and effect.** Here it is! Belshazzar decides to mock the Jewish God, the Jewish God sends Belshazzar a message.

The archeologist Robert Koldeway who discovered Babylon and spent many years excavating the city described the palace they found that existed during Belshazzar’s reign. They found a large room (55 feet long 169 feet wide) that had plaster walls. He also said there was a niche in the middle of one wall where he believes the king would sit.

**Vs 6** ***Then the king’s color changed and his thoughts alarmed him,*** (the idea of the Aramaic) is that his thoughts **“frightened”** him

***His limbs gave way*** –Literally his hips gave way and his **knees knocked against each other.** Belshazzar is in a panic and rightly so.

This man was terrorized! **The enemy outside the gate did not affect him, but the visitor within the palace. He was shaken by him and rightly so!**

**Vs 7 - King called loudly…** Belshazzar has just went from intoxicated to sober in a second. He screams for the group that failed his father on multiple occasions.

Belshazzar was willing to give everything in his power to give. He was coregent with his father, and he had the power to choose who was directly under him. He was willing to offer this.

Please do not forget all this is occurring with Cyrus’ army right outside the wall.

**Vs 8-9** – The “brain trust” could not read the writing and this creates even more confusion and fear.

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**I want to leave the palace for a second and share with you what God had already declared about Babylon.**

*“1 ¶ Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no more be called tender and delicate. 2 Take the millstones and grind flour, put off your veil, strip off your robe, uncover your legs, pass through the rivers. 3 Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your disgrace shall be seen. I will take vengeance, and I will spare no one. 4 Our Redeemer —  the LORD of hosts is his name —  is the Holy One of Israel. 5 Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for you shall no more be called the mistress of kingdoms. 6 I was angry with my people; I profaned my heritage; I gave them into your hand; you showed them no mercy; on the aged you made your yoke exceedingly heavy. 7 ¶ You said, "I shall be mistress forever," so that you did not lay these things to heart or remember their end. 8 Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children": 9 These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments. 10 You felt secure in your wickedness, you said, "No one sees me"; your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me." 11 But evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone; and ruin shall come upon you suddenly, of which you know nothing.”* (Isa 47:1-11 ESV)

***10 ¶ The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, "O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father —  your father the king —  made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, 12 because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."***

**Four quick observations** about the queen:

1. First, although women were present at this debauchery and profane party of Belshazzar, the “**queen**” was not.
2. The queen not only knew a lot about the man who served Nebuchadnezzar and then slid off into obscurity, but she also knew him by his Hebrew name.
3. The queen also spoke very, VERY highly of him.
   1. In him is the spirit of the holy gods **(this should sound familiar)!**
   2. Light
   3. Understanding
   4. Wisdom
   5. Further in verse 12
4. More than likely this is the **queen mother**, this is probably not Belshazzar’s wife (the queen), but possibly Nabonidus’s wife (the queen mother) or even further back, Nebuchadnezzar’s wife (the queen mother).

**Vs 11b -**  she continues on, **King Nebuchadnezzar, your father —  your father the king —  made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers.**

Over the years Daniel had faded into the background. But God is not quite done with him!

**Vs 12a - An excellent spirit**, The Aramaic word for spirit is **Rooakh,** this is the same as the Hebrew word **Rooakh (wind) (breath).**

**knowledge,**

**understanding,**

**interpreting dreams,**

**explaining riddles, and**

**solving problem were found in this Daniel.**

**Vs 12b -** **Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.**

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***13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, "You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. 14 I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. 15 Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. 16 But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."***

Have you even noticed, Daniel always comes in alone. Although he had served as the captain of the magicians and wise men. He seemed to not travel with them.

**He was defiantly in that world, but he was not of that world.** Good lesson for us!

**Daniel was taken captive in 605BC, if he was 17 then, he is now around 84!**

**Vs 13-15 -** Daniel is rushed in and notice how the King questions him.

You are that Daniel, right?

One of the exiles of Judah.

One of the ones the king (my father) brought from Judah.

You are that Daniel correct?

It appears he had no idea about Daniel.

**Vs 16 -** Makes the same offer he made the wise men.

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***17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. 19 And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. 21 He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.***

**Vs 17** – Daniel says: **Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation.**

**Vs 18 -**  Daniel then begins to speak like a prophet.

1. **The Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him.**
2. But your father failed to acknowledge that all that he had came from the hands of a loving and merciful God. Instead, Vs 20 - **his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly. He was hardened in pride.**
3. This pride resulted in Yahweh **responding: He was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. 21 He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven.**
4. He stayed in this deposed,wild-man condition**,** until: **he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.**

While we are here, can I remind each of us that our God is sovereign! Our God rules in heaven above and in the earth beneath:

*“Whatever the LORD pleases He does, In heaven and in earth, In the seas and in all deep places.” (Ps 135:6 NKJV)*

*Ps 115:3 Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.*

**Belshazzar should have learned this lesson from Nebuchadnezzar.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Now it is time for the indictments, the accusations, the charges:**

***22 And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, 23 but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.***

You, Belshazzar have sinned against light. You are a fool!

*The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.” (Ps 14:1 ESV)*

Nebuchadnezzar had called God the **King of Heaven** in chapter 4, here the first time in the Bible, Daniel calls God, the **Lord of Heaven**. This is the only time this title is used of God in the Old Testament.

The next time we find **Lord of Heaven** in the Bible. Jesus upbraided several cities for the unbelief. He then says:

*Mt 11:25 ¶ At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father,* ***Lord of heaven*** *and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;*

**Vs 23a -** YOU have committed blasphemy against the Lord of Heaven!

**Vs 23b - But the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.** This is a heinous, high-handed crime, and you are guilty!

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***24 "Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. 25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; 27 TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; 28 PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."***

Vs 24 - That is when the fingers attached to the hand, **were sent from his presence**

**Vs 25 -** Literally: **numbered, numbered, weighed, divided.**

**Vs 26** – Here is the interpretation:

1. **Numbered**, numbered, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and **finished it!**
2. **God has weighed** and found light, not your kingdom, **BUT you**! There is a deficit. **You are lacking, you have come up short!**
3. **Peres,** it means divided. Your kingdom is divided and **given to the (Persians and the Medes).**

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***29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 ¶ That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.”***

**Vs 29 –** The Belshazzar does what he said he would do. Keeping your word does not close the gap with God. Repentance and faith are the only things that do that.

**Vs 30 –** That very night… Belshazzar the King, was slain. Although his city fell without a fight. **HE DIED as Daniel said, he had been weighed in the balances and came up short.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Key lessons from the text:**

1. **Pride**, here again we see runaway pride in Belshazzar.
2. **Confidence in human security.**

*“****6*** *¶ Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand.* ***7*** *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.* ***8*** *They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright.” (Ps 20:6-8 ESV)*

1. **Being in the world, but not off the world.**

*“****18*** *¶ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.* ***19*** *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (Joh 15:18-19 ESV)*

1. **Sinning against light.**

*“****47*** *And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.* ***48*** *But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.” (Lu 12:47-48 ESV)*

1. **Materialism and a love for wealth.**

***15*** *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ***16*** *For all that is in the world —  the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life —  is not from the Father but is from the world.” (1Jo 2:15-16 ESV)*