

Daniel 5:1-9 *Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. 2) While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. 3) Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been 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 and iron, wood and stone. 5) In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6) Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other. 7) The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." 8) Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. 9) Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished. (NKJV)*

*DO NOT BE DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED; FOR WHATEVER A MAN SOWS, THAT HE WILL ALSO REAP.
GALATIANS 6:7*

Is Belshazzar being presented here in direct contrast with Nebuchadnezzar of the previous chapter? Why is the king holding this feast? Who is just outside the gates of Babylon? What motivated the king to desecrate the vessels of the God of Israel? Did kings usually include their wives and concubines at such feasts? Could everyone see God's hand when it appeared? Why is the king so afraid? Did his conscience cause this fear and terror to come upon him?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

FEBRUARY 1: DANIEL 5:10-16 DANIEL IS PROMISED GREAT GIFTS TO READ THE WRITING OF GOD

FEBRUARY 8: DANIEL 5:17-31 A LEADER WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE OF GOD AND FOUND WANTING!

Nebuchadnezzar had repented after eating grass for seven years and he had written a letter to all the peoples of the world, to persuade them to do the same. The final words of his letter reveal the specific sin that had kept him from believing in the one true God, the God of Israel: *"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to abase*

” (Daniel 4:36).

King Belshazzar would have been a teenager when his father, Nebuchadnezzar, had died after ruling the first world empire for 43 years. So he would have been familiar with the letter, but he had no regard for Israel’s God and maybe he desires to begin persecuting them in opposition to the will (Dan. 4) and words of his father (Dan. 3:29). But he has thought up a plan to begin indirectly, without speaking against the God of Israel.

Significantly, just outside the gates of Babylon are the armies of the Medes and the Persians who have conquered most of the empire, and the Babylonians have just lost a battle, so they have fled into their mighty fortress with walls too high to scale and too thick for battering rams, if the enemy were somehow able to cross the moat around this formidable capital city.

PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION, AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE A FALL. PROVERBS 16:18

I. INSULTING GOD

DANIEL 5:1-4

Probably, because he has just lost the battle with the armies outside his gates, he wants to bolster the confidence of his leaders who are now under siege. He wants to convince them that they can still overcome their enemies. His step-father, King Nabonidus, had recently collected the gods from surrounding areas and brought them to Babylon in order to have extra favor there to subdue their enemies approaching the capital. So he spreads a feast for a thousand of his top leaders. Though kings of the East usually dined by themselves or with a small group of his highest in command, this banquet was designed for show. Thus, he *“drank wine in the presence of the thousand.”*

This display of confidence, while they are hemmed in by their enemies, would have reminded them that there was plenty of food stored away and they had a generous source of water with the river flowing through the city. They only had to wait until their enemies ran out of food or grew discouraged in their siege and left. Even more unusual was his including *“his wives, and his concubines.”* He was setting everyone up for a drunken orgy.

Worse, as this party began, he commanded for the *“vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple”* to be brought for their desecration. To add insult to injury, when these sacred golden vessels arrived, they drank wine from them, *“and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.”* This was designed to prove that their gods were superior to the God of Israel who had worked so miraculously in the past.

AND THEY ARE INSANE WITH THEIR IDOLS ... THEREFORE, HEAR THE COUNSEL OF THE LORD THAT HE HAS TAKEN AGAINST BABYLON ... THE LORD HAS RAISED UP THE SPIRIT OF THE KINGS OF THE MEDES. FOR HIS PLAN IS AGAINST BABYLON TO DESTROY IT, BECAUSE IT IS THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD, THE VENGEANCE OF HIS TEMPLE. JEREMIAH 50:38,45; 51:11

II. INSTANT GUILT

DANIEL 5:5

The moment that they all have committed this desecration and are drunk, suddenly King Belshazzar's attention is arrested by the miraculous appearance of a hand as the finger inscribes letters upon the wall where all can see it by the light of the lampstand! The King of Heaven has a message for Belshazzar and He has delivered it personally by inscribing it for all to see on the white wall of the king's palace. Belshazzar cannot read it, but he knows in his guilty conscience that it is for him.

"IN THEIR EXCITEMENT I WILL PREPARE THEIR FEASTS; I WILL MAKE THEM DRUNK, THAT THEY MAY REJOICE, AND SLEEP A PERPETUAL SLEEP AND NOT AWAKE," SAYS THE LORD. JEREMIAH 51:39

III. INTENSIVE GLOOM

DANIEL 5:6-9

Suddenly the king is sobered and his mirth is turned to terrified fear of what is going to happen to him. Immediately his knees are knocking so much that he cannot even stand up because of the intensity of his fright. He screams for his *"astrologers, the Chaldeans"* and his fortune tellers and offers them great gifts if they can read and interpret the writing. When they cannot, he becomes even more terrified and all his leaders with him.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- 1) How much risk do you take when you sin and rebel against God and His Word?
- 2) Does your sin scare you, realizing that someday God will hold you accountable to Himself?
- 3) Will you fear God enough to turn to Jesus Christ as your only way to forgiveness and peace with God?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIBLE STUDIES

- **Thursday @ 6:30 am** –Prayer Meeting – GAB 14th Floor Speaker's Conference Room
- **Thursday @ 7:00 am** –Bible Study – GAB 14th Floor Speaker's Conference Room