



Daniel 5

Daniel Chapter 5

Now in the fifth chapter of the book of Daniel, we come to the end of the Babylonian kingdom. In the great image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, the head of gold was to be replaced by the chest and arms of silver, and that transition takes place here in chapter 5, the transition from the Babylonian Empire to the Medo-Persian Empire. In chapter 6, we come to the final historic account of the book of Daniel. It happens during the Persian Empire under Darius the king, who lived for just a couple of years after the Medo-Persians conquered the Babylonian Empire. So, at chapter 6 you actually come to the end of the historic portion of Daniel as far as dealing with the history as such. When you get into chapter 7 and 8, and the rest of the chapters, these are visions and prophecies that Daniel received, some of them during the reign of Belshazzar. In fact in the eighth chapter, we find that in the third year of Belshazzar's reign he was at the palace in USA, or as he says, Shushan, and it is probably one of the reasons why Belshazzar didn't really know Daniel. When Daniel came into the feast here, he says, "Are you that Daniel?" He knew of him, but he did not know him because Daniel was probably now serving the Babylonian government in the area of Susa rather than in the city of Babylon.

Now, we read here,

Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and he drank wine before the thousand.

Now this was a time when Babylon was being threatened by the Medo-Persian Empire. Actually, Belshazzar had lead the Babylonian troops against the Medes and was defeated in the fields. It would seem that the Medo-Persians had pretty much taken the territory of Babylon with the exception of the city of Babylon itself, which was a well fortified city. There was plenty of provisions in the city, enough to last for twenty years. There was the river Euphrates flowing through the midst of the city. So, they had plenty of water, plenty of food, and these gigantic walls and gates and so forth by which they could withstand a siege of many years. Thus they felt extremely secure within the city of Babylon though the rest of the territory was pretty much conquered by the Medo-Persian confederacy. So, he has this great celebration. It could have been on one of the special holidays commemorating one of the Babylonian gods, because we find them praising the gods of gold and silver and so forth on this special occasion.

Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine ,

or when he had come under the influence of the wine. Probably if he had thought of it more seriously, he may not have done this. And, yet it could be that Belshazzar is seeking, as did Nebuchadnezzar his grandfather on an earlier occasion, to defy the prophecy that the Babylonian Empire would fall to the Medo-Persian Empire. And though the Medo-Persian's had conquered much of the territory it may be that he was seeking to affirm that the gods of Babylon were greater than the God of Israel, because of that there is a deliberate challenge to the God of Israel in taking the gold and the silver vessels which his grandfather had taken from the temple in Jerusalem.

And notice here the word "father" is father in the sense that he is a descendent of Nebuchadnezzar. It was thought that his mother was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. The Jews always spoke of our father Abraham though they may have been many generations down the road, or they were called the son's of David though they were actually way down the line, as far as maybe five or six generations. So, Nebuchadnezzar is called his father when in reality he was his grandfather, but he descended from him thus the patriarchal type of father.

So these vessels of gold and silver that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, he ordered that they be brought in, that his wives and princes and concubines or prostitutes might drink from them.

Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone. In the same hour (As this drunken revelry was going on, this partying, this blaspheming against the true and the living God,) came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

It is interesting that the archaeologists have discovered the palace in Babylon, a rather large hall, about fifty-two feet wide and a hundred and fifty some feet long. It was a good sized hall, and the hall no doubt in which this party was taking place, upon which wall the finger appeared and the writing on the plaster on the wall.

Now, when the king saw this phenomena, this writing appearing on the wall, just the fingers and the writing on the wall, his countenance was changed from that of revelry and blasphemy, and his thoughts troubled him.

Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

A very interesting picturesque speech. You perhaps had that experience at one time, when your knees began to knock against one another during a period of great fright. It quite often happens in stage fright where you loose control and your knees begin to knock against each other. So, he was tremendously frightened at this omen that he was seeing.

The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Why the third ruler? Because his father was still king, however his father did not spend much time in Babylon. He spent a lot of time down in Tima of Arabia. And, it is thought that his father was probably not in Babylon at this particular time, but Belshazzar ruled under his father and he ruled in Babylon, but he was able to offer the third place in the kingdom to who ever would interpret this message.

Now, notice he called for the astrologers and the soothsayers and so forth. What we read here took place in 536 B.C., one hundred and fifty years approximately before this event, Isaiah the prophet is writing of the last days of Babylon. In Isaiah 47, we read,

Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground; there is no throne,

He is talking about the fact that the throne was going to be vacated.

O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind the meal; uncover the locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen...As for our redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms. I was wroth(angry) with my people, I polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand; thou dist shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever (that Babylon should stand forever,

the golden image that was all gold in the plains of Dura); *so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither did you remember the later end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly* (feeling secure, feeling that the walls of Babylon were impregnable), *that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children; But these two things shall come upon you in a moment in one day.*

So, the prophet is actually prophesying of this one day when Babylon was going to fall. And he goes on to say,

For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth; and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.

It will be a sudden surprise attack. So, notice here, this is very interesting,

Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast labored from thy youth, if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now, the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.

It is interesting that that is exactly who he called, and here is Isaiah telling you about it one hundred and fifty years before. Oh, how marvelous is the Word of God. You get into it and it is just so marvelous how God has just laid things out, and now the day of the fall of Babylon, one hundred and fifty years later, and here comes the writing on the plaster. And, who does he call for help and deliverance? The stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, the horoscopes, the astrologers, and the soothsayers to see what they said about him that day. And the king offered this reward to whomever could interpret for him, this cryptic message which was written on the wall. It was written in Aramaic, but it was cryptic, and thus it needed an interpretation.

Daniel 5:8,

Then came in all the king's wise men; but they could not read the writing, nor make known unto the king the interpretation thereof. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

Now, panic began to take over, the revelry of the party suddenly changed into a very sober and awesome fear and uncertainty. He thought that surely this was an omen of some great evil that was ready to befall them, and panic begins to seize them.

So now the queen, or the queen's mother perhaps, the former wife of Nebuchadnezzar, if so she was probably eighty-four to eighty-six years old at this time, came into the banquet house.

Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house;

Probably words were spreading around the palace grounds quickly of some awesome thing happening at the party, and so the queen comes in to see what is going on.

and the queen spake and said, O king, live forever; let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed; (Don't look so terrified) There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods;

Again, you remember Nebuchadnezzar spoke of the spirit of the holy God was in him, talking to Daniel. You see the pagans were not really holy. The pagan gods were very licentious. They were very lustful. They were far from holy. In fact, a holy God was rather a strange concept to people.

Now, today, the world looks at you as a Christian and often times sort of sneers because you believe in God. And, they believe that they have come to a state of education and sophistication where they no longer need that kind of a crutch. But, there is really a lot of deceit in the minds of the worldly person who is putting you down because of your belief in God and in Jesus Christ, because in reality he is also worshipping a god. Everybody worships something. What ever they worship is their god. The ancients were honest enough and real enough to recognize that, and so they named their gods, Baal, Molech, Ashtoreth, and they recognized that this is what they worshipped. This was the master passion of their life. And, so they named it as a god. They recognized this was the god in their life.

Now today, with our sophistication and all, people are not really in touch many times with themselves. You get around Hollywood and you have so many air heads, they do not know what reality is. They live in a completely unreal world, and they are not really in touch with themselves. "The whole world is a stage and we are all actors upon it," is what they think. So, they go out acting in this stage of the world, but they are not in touch with reality, or even in touch with themselves. A man who is in touch with himself is cognoscente of the fact that there is in his life a master passion that drives him, and whatever that may be that is his god, and he worships that god. With some it is a car, a fancy sports car that they park side ways across three parking spaces, so no one can open the door and ding their god. Isn't it sad to have a god that can get dinged? I actually see a lot of humor when Laban came pursuing Jacob because Rachel had taken some of the little idols. And, when he caught up with Jacob he said that he had not only taken my daughters and grandkids, but that he had stolen his gods. And, I find humor in that a person having a god that can be stolen, a god that can be dinged, but such is the case.

In the Old Testament if a person lived for pleasure, if that was his chief goal and aim in life, if he was always trying to be on the cutting edge of the latest kind of thrill device, a snowboard, or whatever that cutting edge is to bring that thrill and excitement, they would say he worships Molech. He heads off everytime it snows and takes his little god and he gets on the thing and comes down the mountain, but they would say he is worshipping Molech. He is worshipping pleasure, and that is indeed the case. Those that worshipped money, whose whole life was absorbed in gaining money, possessions, power, they would say they are worshipers of Mammon. Now, we say he is a work-a-holic, but we don't recognize that there is a worship of a principle. He is devoted to and actually controlled by this mad desire for pleasure or money or for sex. They were really closer to reality in the fact that they recognized that they were worshipping gods, though it wasn't the true and the living God.

And, so here he is worshipping the gods of gold made out of gold, the gods made out of silver, the gods made out of brass or iron or carved out of wood or chipped out of stone. And they were worshipping these gods while they were drinking their wine out of the cups of the true and the living God, but not glorifying Him.

There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods (the other gods were licentious. They were fleshly); and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him;
This man was marvelous. He had light. He had wisdom. He had understanding.

whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers(no one was his equal); Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel,

What a reputation he had developed, an excellent spirit. And truly as you study the character of Daniel, what an excellent spirit was in Daniel. From his youth, he was committed to God. He was determined not to defile himself.

whom the king named Belteshazzar; now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

Now, it could be that Daniel was brought to Babylon as the Medo-Persians were conquering the country and that all the rulers of the various cities and provinces were brought into Babylon for safety purposes. So, though Daniel was not really used by Belshazzar, nor personally acquainted with him, yet Belshazzar did know about Daniel. And, the queen mother is here reminding him of this man who would be able to give him the interpretation of the cryptic message.

Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spoke and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? I have even heard of thee, (He was familiar with him) that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make unto me the interpretation thereof; but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing; and I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts; now if thou canst read writing and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

He is offering the same reward that he offered his own wise men and astrologers if they could interpret the cryptic message on the wall.

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another;

I like this. The servant of God is not for sale. The gifts of God are not for sale. Beware of those who place such a big emphasis on your giving in order to receive some gift from God, that borders on blasphemy. So, often there is that subtle suggestion that someone was praying for a loved one for many years and they sent this donation to a program and their friend was saved, and do you have a friend that needs salvation, just write their name down and send in your gift, as if you could buy the working of God. That is blasphemy. Jesus said, "freely you have received, and freely give." And, the gifts of God are not for sale, nor are they to be used for personal profit or gain. So Daniel, with all of the integrity in the world said keep your gifts and give your rewards to someone else.

yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

In the New Testament, we had Simon trying to buy from Peter that gift that who ever he would lay his hands on they would receive the Holy Spirit. And Peter said, "Your money perish with you, thinking that the gifts of God can be bought."

So, Daniel is a man of real integrity. I like Daniel. He is an old man at this point, probably close to ninety, but he is a gutsy old man. Of course, I think the older you get the braver you get, because you think you do not have much to lose, because you are not going to be around much longer any how. So, Daniel says he will tell the interpretation, but not without preaching a sermon first.

O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor; (It was given to him by God) And for the majesty he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him; (He was an absolute solemn ruler) whom he would he slew; whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his

mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him;

They being those watchers, those heavenly beings that drove him from society and made him like an animal.

And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkey; they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointedeth over it whomsoever he will.

Our God reigns! And, that is the only comfort that I have in the present situation here in the United States.

And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

He knew what happened to his grandfather. He was probably fourteen years old at the time. He knew what he went through and yet he did not humble his heart before the Lord. He was then in a position of blaspheming God, profaning the things of God.

Sins of ignorance are bad, but sins against what you know are even worse. That becomes a transgression. It is a deliberate willful transgression that you know better to sin against your own conscience things that you know.

But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; (In his proclamation, Nebuchadnezzar called him the King of heaven, and now Daniel speaks of Him as the Lord of heaven.) and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know;

In Psalm 115 and in 135, the psalmist speaks about the gods of the heathen; how they carve them out of wood or stone; how they have eyes but they see not, ears they have but they hear not, feet they have but they walk not, neither breath they through their mouths; how that men make gods, and worship these gods that they have made, man made gods. Then the psalmist goes on to say, "They that have made them have become like the gods that they have made."

Now first of all when man makes a god he makes him like himself. He puts eyes on him, ears and feet, because he has eyes, nose, ears and feet. You make it like yourself, but in reality you make it less than yourself, because though you carve the eyes on the little idol, the eyes can not see. Though you carve ears, they can not hear. So, the prophets are constantly pointing out to the people that the gods that they are worshipping are actually insensate gods. They can not hear. They can not speak. They can not talk. Neither can they help you when you are in need.

You remember when Elijah was having a contest with the prophets of Baal, and they had prayed all morning for the god of Baal to send the fire upon altar, and Elijah began to chive them and tease them a bit. He said, "I bet your god is asleep. You better cry louder and wake him up." But in reality Baal could not hear. He could not see. He could not respond.

I am glad that I serve a God that does hear, a God that can respond, a God that can help me when I am in trouble, a god that can give me wisdom and guidance, a God that I can have a personal relationship with, who knows, who understands, who counsels.

and the God in whose hand thy breath is,

The God upon whom you depend for your very life, He sustains your life. You owe your life to God. If it were not for God you would not be here. He is the sustainer of life. You have praised all these other gods, but you have not praised or glorified the God on whom you depend for your very life.

and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. And this writing was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God has numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

It is over. You have come to the end of the kingdom. It is over for you. It is as Jesus said in the New testament concerning that rich man who boasted in his riches and said to himself, "Take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." And God said, "You fool, tonight your soul will be required of you." And, basically, that is what the Lord is saying to Belshazzar, "This is it. It is over tonight. Your soul is to be required of you."

TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting,

The balances are always used as a symbol of justice. They are in the Supreme Court building. You see Lady Justice standing with the balances. And, the idea is the balancing of a man's life, the good with the evil. But in this case in a Biblical sense, all of your good works can not counter balance the sin that is in your life, thus by the works of righteousness or by the works of the law no man can be justified before God. There is not a good work you can do to be justified before God. And, so the only hope that you have is in Jesus Christ, who through His death for you and for your sins brought you forgiveness and justification from whatever sin you may have ever committed. And, the beautiful word justification is more than just forgiveness. That is glorious, but justification goes a step further and it is God treating you as though you never did it. You might forgive someone for what they did, but you don't forget it. With justification, it is the forgetting of it. It is just as though you never did it. God looks at you as though you are completely innocent, have never transgressed. Jesus justifies us, and pushes off the sin that was weighing down the scale against you. The sins are not only wiped away, but Jesus stands on the scales with you and you stand before God in His righteousness. Paul said in Ephesians 1, that you are accepted in the beloved. God accepts you in Christ Jesus in the beloved.

So, here is Belshazzar. He is being weighed in the balances and he is found wanting, just as every man apart from Jesus Christ is found wanting. No man apart from Jesus Christ has any hope of the eternal kingdom of God. You are found wanting.

PERES which is the same as UPHARSIN, which is the plural form, and there is sort of again Persian which comes from this, but the word means divided. So, there is a play on words. It is a cryptic message.

PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

Now from the historic accounts there are stories that are contradictory, but that is history., and notice that Daniel really does not give us any historic accounts he just lists the facts. You see the Bible does not contradict itself, but historians often contradicted themselves according to the sources that they had in writing their records. And there are some historic records that declare that there was a conspiracy of the priest of Marduk. They were angry because Belshazzar was more favorable towards the worship of the sun god and the moon god and thus they opened the gates to one of the generals of the Persian army and they came in and took the city with out a battle. Another historian speaks of Cyrus, the Persian general, who diverted the flow of the Euphrates river up stream and the soldiers came under the bars of the gate over the river Euphrates and came in underneath when the waters receded and came on up into the city. But, Daniel does not tell us which story is correct, he just tells us that that night Belshazzar was slain.

Now, again turning to the prophet Isaiah, who we read earlier, who told us about the last night calling for the magicians and the astrologers, Isaiah has tremendous insight from the spirit and if you go back now to Isaiah 45, beginning with Isaiah 44:28 the subject is introduced,

That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all of my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid.

In other words, Cyrus will be the instrument that God will use to send the people back from their captivity in Babylon. Now chapter 45,

Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him;

Cyrus was one of the leading generals of the Persian army. he became king after Darius died. Darius only survived about three years after the capture of Babylon and died and at that point Cyrus became king over the Medo-Persian Empire. It reads on,

and I will loose the loins of kings,

Remember what happened to Belshazzar when the writing came on the wall, his loins were loose and his knees began to knock, and here is Isaiah telling you about it one hundred and fifty years before it happened. How marvelous is the Word of God! And then he said,

I will open before him the two leaved gates;

Now historians do agree that the gates were opened. That they did not have to break down the gates to come into the city. The one historian says that the guards were so drunk, they did not lock the gate that night, that they came from the river into the city into the area of the palace. And the other story says that the gates were opened actually. Here it says two leaved gates, so it would seem to indicate that the gates from the river on into the city.

You see the river Euphrates flowed through the middle of the city. The city was on both sides, and when you come to the river they had ferries and they would ferry you across, but there were walls seen along the banks of the river and there was one bridge that went over in the middle, but there were walls and brass gates that kept people from coming into the city. But, according to the story the guards were so drunk they did not lock the gates. And, here God is saying,

I will leave open for you the two leaved gates; and the gates will not be shut; and I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass,

And, of course the gates in Babylon were made out of brass. It continues,

and I will cut asunder the bars of iron: And I will give you, that you mayest know that I, the Lord, which called you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called you by your name, and I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

The story is that when Cyrus came to Babylon that Daniel the Prophet took this prophecy of Isaiah and said, "Hey man, your name is in our book." And that it was seeing his name, that he was convinced and for that reason gave the decree for the Jews to return from the captivity and to be able to go home.

But again, oh the marvelous Word of God, how we need to pay attention to it. When God speaks with such detail, calling people by name years before they are born, surely God's Word is confirmed to be just that, and as God said, "That you may know that I am God."

Daniel 5:30,

In that night was Belshazzar the of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

So he just gives us briefly and very concisely the history of the last night of Babylon and now we begin with the Medo-Persian Empire that was prophesied to supplant the Babylonian Empire. We get into chapter 6 where we have that fascinating story of Daniel in the Lion's Den.