

**Daniel:** Chapter 5  
(God- the Avenger of His Honor)

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Chapter 5:1-30: Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall.

**Dan 5:1** Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

- Belshazzar- Pronounced *bale-shats-tsar'*. Son of Nabonidus (*reigned 556-539 BC*) but here called Nebuchadnezzar (*or Nebuchadrezzar-605-562 BC*) "his father". Terms such as "father" and "son" are often used to speak of "successors" rather than blood line. Nebuchadnezzar's son and successor was Evil-Merodach (*562-560 BC*). Nabonidus was an unpopular king so it would be better to connect Belshazzar with Nebuchadnezzar. Either way, Belshazzar was "co-regent" with his father (*5:7, 16, 29*) and he knew of the temple vessels that Nebuchadnezzar brought from Jerusalem.

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**Dan 5:2** Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein.

**Dan 5:3** 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.

**Dan 5:4** They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

- "*Booze and idolatry in the king's court*". Just as it was with Ahasuerus (*Esther*), alcohol and power don't mix. These drunks were "*praising and worshipping the creation rather than the Creator*" (*Rom 1:25*). The king here wants to show off just as Hezekiah did in 2 Kings 20:12-18.

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**Dan 5:5** In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

- The king was lucky that all he saw was the hand.

Exo 33:20 And He said, Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live.

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**Dan 5:6** 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.

- loins- Heb.2783-as the seat of strength. (*lower back and kidneys*) The king went weak over the sight of the hand.

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**Dan 5:7** The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, 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.

Once again the search for answers begins in the wrong places.

- third ruler- Again, Belshazzar was co-regent with his father Nabonidus (*who deposed/murdered Labashi-Marduk [556 BC] who succeeded Neriglissar [560-556 BC] who murdered Evil-Merodach [562-560 BC] who was the son of Nebuchadnezzar [605-562 BC]*).

In the entire shuffle, Daniel was somehow left in the background. It's about 23 years or so since he served under Nebuchadnezzar.

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**Dan 5:8** Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

**Dan 5:9** Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

- his lords were astonished- These phonies were just as astonished as the king was. Why did they keep these guys around?

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**Dan 5:10** Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:

- Because of the commotion the queen (*probably the queen "mother" since 5:2 says the king's wives and concubines were with him*) has some information.

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- O king, live forever- She was not part of the "co-regency" just as Esther was not in Esther 5:3.

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**Dan 5:11** There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers;

**Dan 5:12** 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, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

- Being older she recalls a similar situation where none could interpret but one called Daniel (*also named Belteshazzar by his, Belshazzar's, "father". Nabonidus may have married Nebuchadnezzar's widow to legitimize his claim to the throne, which he seized.*).

She had confidence in Daniel. Why is it that the person with the true answer is usually brought in only as a last resort? We are condemned to repeat past mistakes when we refuse to remember them!

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**Dan 5:13** Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake 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?*

**Dan 5:14** I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and *that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.*

**Dan 5:15** And now the wise *men*, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing:

- I have heard of thee- It's difficult to remember the reputation of a good man when one is reveling with those of ill repute. He does now remember that the wise men and astrologers were just impersonators.

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**Dan 5:16** And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the 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.

- The king is like the homeowner who hired cheap, inexperienced plumbers to fix his water leak (*to save a buck*) when he should have just made the investment and had the job done right on the onset. How pathetic. How could he bestow royalty in the form of scarlet on Daniel (*who was already of royal character*) when *"he himself lacked all the marks of royalty"*?

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- third ruler- Again, Belshazzar was co-regent. Like the kid who inherited his father's business with no personal investment involved. He was too eager to give away a portion of authority without consulting his other "business partner". Was it the booze or was he just altogether foolish (*or just plainer*)?

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**Dan 5:17** Then Daniel answered and said before the king, *Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.*

- Daniel would be out of character if we were to say he was just being rude. "Things" do not impress godly men. Daniel was bold to react this way but would reveal the mystery just as he did with respect to the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar.

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- be to thyself- In other words, keep your gifts, they are of no use to me. And besides, they will not be yours to give, shortly.

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**Dan 5:18** O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour:

**Dan 5:19** And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.

**Dan 5:20** 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:

**Dan 5:21** And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: 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 appointeth over it whomsoever He will.*

**Dan 5:22** And thou his sonu O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

- Having rehearsed Nebuchadnezzar's rise and humiliation, Daniel brings the point home. "To him that knoweth what not to do and doeth it" anyway... (Jam 4:17) Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way. God sets up and tears down. God made him great and the people feared him only because of God's will, not the king's. (Another "Pharaoh")

Exo 9:16 And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth.

And for whatever reason, God also rules "in the kingdom of men" (v. 21) to this very day. Who next is on His list to be humbled by his enemies?

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**Dan 5:23** But hast lifted up thyself against 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: and the God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

**Dan 5:24** Then was the part of the hand sent from Him; and this writing was written.

**Dan 5:25** And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

- see not, nor hear, nor know-

Rev 9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which **neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:** (Emp. added)

What things do we have today, that belong to God, that we praise and worship over God? (Exo 20:3; 1 Cor 8:4)

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**Dan 5:26** This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

- MENE- "your days are numbered".

**H4484** מנע' *men-ay'*

(Chaldee); passive participle of H4483; **numbered:** - Mene.

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**Dan 5:27** TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

- TEKEL- in God's balance Belshazzar came up short.

**H8625** תקל *tek-al'*

(Chaldee); corresponding to H8254; **to balance:** - Tekel, be weighed.

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**Dan 5:28** PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

- Or UPHARSIN- The kingdom would be torn apart by the Medes and the Persians.

**H6537** פֶּרַס *per-as'*

(Chaldee); corresponding to H6536; **to split up**: - divide, [U-] pharsin.

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**Dan 5:29** 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.

- The king gives Daniel "*a third of nothing*". Why else would Daniel have told Belshazzar to keep it (*v. 17*)? Remember, he did keep the gifts bestowed on him by Nebuchadnezzar (2:48).

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**Dan 5:30** In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

- (539 BC?) This act of ego/pride was probably not the only transgression committed by Belshazzar that got him into trouble with God, but it definitely was the icing on the cake. God did not "react" to Belshazzar's sin. He acted, knowing in eternity (*in advance of this iniquitous act*) that He would deal swiftly, in accordance with His will, with the king thus bringing in the inferior "silver" kingdom (2:39) of the Medes and Persians. (*Just as God knew Pharaoh would harden his heart. [2 Thes 2:10, 11...that they should believe the lie.] (Rom 9:14-23 ...hath not the potter power over the clay, **of the same lump**...[Emp. added])*)

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**Dan 5:31** And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

- God's judgment was quick because He knew beforehand that Belshazzar would desecrate the holy utensils.

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- Darius the Mede- At sixty-two years old he "acquired" (*by God's design*) the once mighty kingdom of Babylon, but not necessarily the same night Belshazzar was slain. Darius was the son of Ahasuerus (9:1). (*See also the first chapter of Esther.*) In 9:1 Darius is "*made king*" (here "*received the kingdom*") either by God (2:37) or from Cyrus the Great (6:28). He appears to be a subordinate king as per 9:1 "*over the realm of the Chaldeans*".