

Lesson 5 – Daniel 5

NOTES:

Daniel 1: The Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the historical context of Daniel's deportation to Babylon following Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem in 605 BC. Daniel was among the royal Jewish captives first extradited to Babylon.

Upon Daniel's arrival, he and three companions were confronted with a difficult choice between defiling themselves with the king's appointed ration of choice food and wine or risking their lives by abstaining from the food for the sake of remaining undefiled in the sight of God. God rewards Daniel's righteous decision to abstain by granting him favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials. God also endows Daniel and his three companions with exceptional knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence that results in the honor of entering into the king's personal service.

Daniel 2: Daniel's Interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's First Dream

Chapter 2 explains God's supernatural equipping of Daniel to reveal Nebuchadnezzar's first dream and its interpretation, demonstrating God's covenant attentiveness to His exiles. The dream reveals four successive Gentile dominions preceding the establishment of God's messianic kingdom that will never be destroyed. After Daniel reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation, Daniel is promoted as ruler over Babylon and chief prefect over all its wise men.

Daniel 3: Nebuchadnezzar's Command and the Courageous Response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego

Nebuchadnezzar erects a great image of gold, commanding peoples, nations and men of every language to fall down and worship the golden image when hearing musical instruments. The king's decree includes the penalty of being immediately cast into a furnace of blazing fire for anyone refusing to worship the image.

After the Chaldeans report the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to worship the image, Nebuchadnezzar gives urgent orders for them to be cast into a furnace of blazing fire. The three men are tied up and cast into the furnace. When Nebuchadnezzar and his high officials look into the furnace, they are astounded to see four men walking unharmed in the midst of the fire. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego exit the fire unsinged. Nebuchadnezzar then issues a decree forbidding an offensive word to be spoken against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, whom the king causes to prosper.

Daniel 4: Daniel's Interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream Predicting the King's Insanity

Chapter 4 provides Nebuchadnezzar's narrative of his second dream and Daniel's interpretation of the dream as a prediction of the king's temporary insanity. The dream is of a great spreading tree that a messenger from heaven commands to be cut down. Daniel interprets the tree as Nebuchadnezzar himself, predicting that Nebuchadnezzar would dwell among the beasts of the field for a seven-year period before finally ascribing glory to God. Afterwards, his mental health and kingdom are restored.

Daniel 5: Daniel's Interpretation of the Miraculous Writing on the Wall

Chapter 5 records Daniel's interpretation of a mysterious inscription on the palace wall of Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, coregent with Nabonidus (556–538 BC), and son of Nebuchadnezzar. During a great feast on the eve of the Persian conquest of Babylon (538 BC), Belshazzar was drinking out of the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem when a hand emerged and began writing on the palace wall. Seeing the hand, Belshazzar becomes alarmed and calls for the wise men.

After the wise men fail to interpret the inscription, Daniel is brought to Belshazzar, at the queen's request. Daniel interprets the message to read, "'MENE' – God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. 'TEKEL' – you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. 'PERES' – your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians" (Dan 5:26-28). Belshazzar is slain that same night and Darius the Mede receives the kingdom, fulfilling the words spoken by Daniel.

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BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 5 (NASB)

Dan. 5:1 Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.² When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which *was* in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.³ Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which *was* in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.⁴ They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

Dan. 5:5 Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.⁶ Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.⁷ The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and *have* a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as *third ruler* in the kingdom."⁸ Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.⁹ Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew *even* paler, and his nobles were perplexed.

Dan. 5:10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale."¹¹ "There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans *and* diviners."¹² "*This was* because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."

Dan. 5:13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?"¹⁴ "Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you."¹⁵ "Just now the wise men *and* the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message."¹⁶ "But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and *wear* a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the *third ruler* in the kingdom."

Dan. 5:17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him."¹⁸ "O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father."¹⁹ "Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled."²⁰ "But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and *his* glory was taken away from him."²¹ "He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like *that of* beasts, and his dwelling place *was* with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and *that* He sets over it whomever He wishes."²² "Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this,²³ but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified."²⁴ "Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out."

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Dan. 5:25 “Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.’²⁶ “This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENE’ — God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.²⁷ “‘TEKEL’ — you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.²⁸ “‘PERES’ — your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”

Dan. 5:29 Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and *put* a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he *now* had authority as the third *ruler* in the kingdom.

Dan. 5:30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.³¹ So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Who holds a great feast? For whom does he hold the feast and drink wine in their presence? (5:1)
2. What does Belshazzar give orders to bring out so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines could drink from them? Whom did they praise as they drank the wine? (5:2-4)
3. (C) What additional information do the following verses provide concerning the vessels?
1Kings 10:21
2Kings 24:11-13
2Kings 25:13-15
Ezra 1:7-11
4. As Belshazzar with his nobles, wives, and concubines drink from the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, what suddenly emerges? What does the king see? Describe the reaction of the king to what he sees. (5:5-9)
5. How does the queen advise the king? List nine qualities of Daniel used by the queen. (5:10-12)
(A) Which of these characteristics would you ask the Lord to develop in you?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
 - 7.
 - 8.
 - 9.
6. What has the king heard about Daniel? What does Belshazzar offer to give to Daniel if he is able to read and interpret the inscription? What does Daniel tell the king to do with his gifts? (5:13-17)

(O) Why do you think that Daniel refused the offer of the king’s gifts?
7. What does Daniel tell Belshazzar that the Most High God had granted to Nebuchadnezzar? What was the result of God’s granting of grandeur to Nebuchadnezzar? (5:18-19)
8. Why is Nebuchadnezzar deposed from his royal throne and his glory taken away from him? What are the consequences of Nebuchadnezzar’s pride? What does Nebuchadnezzar recognize about the Most High God when his sanity is restored? (5:20-21)

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9. (PR) Write a brief principle regarding pride from the following verses:
Prov 8:13
Prov 11:2
Prov 16:18-19
Prov 29:23
Mark 7:20-23
1Pet 5:5
1John 2:16
10. (PR) Write a brief principle regarding humility from the following verses:
Prov 18:12
Prov 22:4
Matt 11:29
Matt 18:4
Eph 4:1-3
Phil 2:3
Col 3:2
11. What does Daniel say that Belshazzar has not done even though he knows what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar? Against whom has Belshazzar exalted himself? What specific ways has Belshazzar sinned against God? Who does Daniel say Belshazzar has not glorified? (5:22-24)
12. (A) Why is it important to gain wisdom from previous failures and their consequences? How could you humble your heart and glorify God today?
13. From Whom is the hand sent? What is the inscription that was written out? (5:24-25)
14. What is the 3-part interpretation of the message? (5:26-28)
'MENE'
'TEKEL'
'PERES'
15. What is the outcome of Daniel's reading and interpretation of the inscription? (5:29)
16. What happens the same night as the appearing of the hand to Belshazzar at the great feast? Who receives the kingdom? How old is he? (5:30-31)
17. What do you learn about God in Daniel 5?
18. How could you apply what you have learned about God this week?

Write a prayer response to Daniel 5.