

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Daniel 5

- Last week we started our speed study in Daniel. Daniel was taken as a young man (teenager) into Babylonian exile in 605BC. Daniel and his 3 friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego) quickly rose to prominent positions within the King's court. This is more a statement of God's will or God's plan than the superior intellect of these 4 young men. They were in fact pretty smart men, but they were part of God's plan to restore children of Israel to their promised land which would later happen under the Persian King Cyrus, whom Daniel served as he did the previous kings of Babylon.
- In the 2nd year of his exile, Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue. Not only did he interpret the dream, he was able to tell the king what the dream was without being told beforehand signifying God's hand on Daniel. In verse 23 of chapter 2, Daniel thanked and praised God for making the dream known to him.
- Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and proclaimed that Daniel's God was the God of gods and promoted Daniel to the chief over all the wise men of Babylon.
- Now Nebuchadnezzar was a wishy-washy king. He could recognize that the Heavenly Father was above all and then he would build a monument to himself and declare anyone not worshiping his idol would be executed. This is how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego wound up in the fiery furnace. And again after God delivers the 3 from the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar praises God and declares anyone speaking against their God would be killed.
- In chapter 4 Daniel interprets the king's 2nd dream which foretells Nebuchadnezzar going insane for a period of time. I have been around people who were clearly not in their right mind and are classified as legally insane, but this was extreme. It appears that Nebuchadnezzar was out grazing with the livestock, and being kept with the animals. Nebuchadnezzar said in verse 34 of chapter 4 that his understanding returned to him and afterwards we see more than just a praising of God from him here. He acknowledges God as omnipotent, eternal, and sovereign over all the universe.
- Let's look at chapter 5. Approximately 60-70 years have passed from the events in chapter 1 to these events recorded in chapter 5. Here Nebuchadnezzar is no longer on the scene. According to Berosus, a Chaldean priest who lived around 260BC, Nebuchadnezzar died in 562BC. In verse 1, Daniel calls Belshazzar king. This part of history is a bit confusing and has caused much difficulty to commentators. The Babylonian empire was about to be defeated and Babylon would be under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire. Daniel records that Belshazzar was slain this very night and Darius the Mede received the kingdom.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

- Lets look briefly at Belshazzar's identity as king. Nebuchadnezzar's son Evil-Merodach followed his father to the throne. He reigned for 2 years and was assassinated by Neriglissar who assumed the throne. He died 4 years later and his son(Laborosoarchod) a child at the time was enthroned and then assassinated 9 months later and Nabonidus was installed as king. Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus. Nabonidus reigned 17 years before being defeated by Cyrus the Persian king. Also Nabonidus fled Babylon and never returned which would have left his son Belshazzar in a position of co-regency or a co-king in his father's absence. Regardless, Daniel recognizes Belshazzar as King here.
- There is also the possibility that Belshazzar was the stepson of Nabonidus. Nabonidus may have married one of Nebuchadnezzar's wives or daughters making Belshazzar Nebuchadnezzar's son or grandson. In verse 11 the queen calls Nebuchadnezzar his father, and Daniel does as well in verse 18. There is no word in the Hebrew or Chaldean language for grandfather or grandson, they were referred to simply as sons or fathers, so Belshazzar could have been either son or grandson to Nebuchadnezzar.
- Be aware also that chapters 5-8 are not in chronological order, we see that Belshazzar was assassinated at the end of 5, but the events of 7 & 8 occurred during the 1st and 3rd year of his reign, which would have been about 12-15 years before the events of chapter 5.
- Chapter 5 opens with Belshazzar hosting a great feast for 1,000 of his nobles. The timing of this feast was a bit odd. The surrounding territories and provinces of Babylon had already been conquered by the Medes and the Persians and only the city of Babylon with its major walls and fortifications remained intact.
- In verse 2, Belshazzar gives a command for the servants to bring the gold and silver vessels that had been plundered from the temple in Jerusalem. Then the king and guests drank wine from the vessels. Look in verse 4, Daniel reports that they drank from these holy vessels and praised the Babylonian gods.
- John Walvoord suggests that this may have been to bolster their courage and reassert their faith in the Babylonian gods to deliver them from the advancing armies of the Medes and Persians. It is probable that the city was already under siege at this time.
- However, the Lord had a different plan. During the feast, with the drinking and shouting of praises of the Babylonian gods, a hand appeared and wrote on the wall and Belshazzar saw the hand as it was writing. In verse 6 the king's countenance changed, that is to say his mental composure changed. Verse 6 goes on to say that his hip joints loosened and his knees knocked together. Belshazzar's courage in his gods bolstered by wine was gone and he was very frightened.
- The king was terrified and called immediately for the wise men and offered anyone who could read the message the position of the 3rd ruler in the

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

- kingdom. Belshazzar under Nabonidus was considered the 2nd ruler so this was the highest position that he could offer.
- Verse 10 tells us that the queen entered the banquet hall and told the king of Daniel. The queen is identified by most commentators as the queen mother. This is logical that she wouldn't have been at the feast, because she would have been an elderly widow and probably not interested in partying with the young folks. She tells him that Daniel demonstrated great wisdom while serving Nebuchadnezzar. She said in Daniel was wisdom beyond human understanding, like wisdom of the gods.
 - So Daniel was brought before Belshazzar who promised 1/3 of the kingdom if he could read the inscription. Daniel tells the king to save the rewards for himself (Daniel elderly, why he wasn't present with the other wise men, doesn't care about rewards). Daniel intends no disrespect, but is saying he will give an unprejudiced interpretation without seeking favor from the king. And Daniel had been rewarded many times over by Nebuchadnezzar and been as high as you could be in the kingdom without being the king himself.
 - Daniel tells the king he would indeed read the writing but 1st, he explained why it was written. Daniel reminds Belshazzar what happened to his father Nebuchadnezzar. Read 18-24. The Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom, the greatest kingdom ever known, gave him glory and honor, gave great power over all people, but his heart was filled with arrogant pride. God humbled him and took his kingdom and his sanity until he acknowledged the Most High God as ruler of all.
 - But you, Belshazzar, knew all this and have fallen into the same hole your father fell into. You have lifted yourself up against Lord of Heaven. You have defiled the holy vessels from the Lord's house while praising the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone, and none of these see or hear or know. You have lifted yourself up against the God who holds your breath in His hand.
 - Now let me tell you what is written. The 1st word "Mene", means numbered, God has numbered your kingdom and finished it. Babylon is finished, over, done. The kingdom is gone. This is the fulfillment of the 1st dream that Daniel interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar. That another kingdom would rise up after Babylon. This was being fulfilled at that very moment, as the Persians were already infiltrating the city.
 - The 2nd word "Tekel", means weighed. Daniel tells Belshazzar you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Meaning you have been weighed in the balances of divine justice and have come up woefully short.
 - The 3rd Word "Upharsin" means divided. The great Babylonian empire would be divided between the Medes and the Persians. Look in verse 30, that very night, the accuracy of Daniel's interpretation was confirmed and Belshazzar was assassinated and the kingdom was solidly under the control of the Medes and Persians.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

- Kingdoms come and kingdoms go, but the Lord God is forever. He is eternal, omnipotent, and sovereign over all nations, peoples, and the entire universe. He governs in the affairs of mankind.