

DANIEL

Following out earlier lessons' story of King Nebuchadnezzar, we jump ahead many years in Daniel's continued service to the kings of Babylon, to the reign of Belshazzar. Our study in this lesson will take us to the end of that reign, and we will see Daniel transition to supporting the new King Darius the Mede, as God continues to empower Daniel in his service to kings.

Belshazzar's story in this lesson, found in Daniel Chapter 5, may be familiar to you, as it concerns "the handwriting on the wall" — from which the popular phrase in English vernacular comes from.

Read Daniel Chapter 5, then answer the following:

1. For background, research what you can find out regarding the defenses of the city of Babylon against attack from its enemies. In those days, warfare consisted of prolonged attacks on the walls of the city, i.e., "siege warfare". These long, drawn-out battles lasted as long as two years, during which the attacking force would cut off the city's supplies of food and water before actually attacking the city's defenses. See if you can find out what some of those defenses were. Also see if you can determine why Belshazzar, like so many kings of Babylon before him, was confident that he was protected and immune from these attacks.
 - a. ANSWER 1: To counter frontal attacks, Babylon incorporated the natural barrier provided by the Euphrates River into its defenses. In addition to providing an almost impossible-to-overcome defensive barrier, it also served as a source of water into the city.
 - b. ANSWER 2: The city's defenses also incorporated extremely-thick walls, which were difficult to penetrate. In fact, these walls were wide enough for chariots to run in both directions side-by-side at the same time — passing width, if you will. This enabled rapid communications and resupply of weapons and food.
 - c. ANSWER 3: Furthermore, the city had a twenty-year supply of food stored within its wall, specifically for use during sieges, along with the constant water supply from the Euphrates, which not only fronted the city, but ran through it as well.
2. In Daniel 5:1-4, we see that Belshazzar threw a very large party. Approximately how many people were in attendance? How big of a banquet hall would be needed for a party of that size?
 - a. ANSWER: We can assume that it was well over 1,000 people, since in addition to the 1,000 nobles, the king also had all of his wives and concubines in attendance. This would require a very large hall, giving testimony once again to the size of the palace at Babylon. Excavators have discovered a hall that measured 55 feet wide and 165 feet long, more than sufficient for a party of that size.
3. What vessels were all of these people drinking from, and who were they praising as they drank in this wild party?
 - a. ANSWER: They were using the gold goblets King Nebuchadnezzar took from the Temple in Jerusalem and using them to toast pagan gods — gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.
4. Was Belshazzar aware of what happened to King Nebuchadnezzar? Did he know how God humbled the king by driving him into the wilderness like an animal because Nebuchadnezzar's pride lifted his self-importance above God? (see Dan. 5:22)
 - a. ANSWER: He was completely cognizant of this fact, as Daniel attests in Daniel 5:22, and yet Belshazzar behaved this way in spite of it.
5. In Daniel Chapter 4, it was described that Nebuchadnezzar's dream was so terrifying that it viscerally frightened Nebuchadnezzar. What happened to Belshazzar that made his knees knock and made him tremble, as described in Daniel 5:5?
 - a. ANSWER: He saw a hand actually writing a message on the wall of the banquet hall.

6. Why did Belshazzar say that he would make the person who could interpret the dream the "third-highest" person in the kingdom?
 - a. ANSWER: Because Belshazzar was not the king of the entire empire; he was actually only the second highest official. Therefore he could only promise third-highest to the wise men of the kingdom. Nabonidus was the real king, and Belshazzar was his son. Nabonidus was busy expanding the kingdom and for ten of his seventeen years was absent from Babylon while he conquered and restored other parts of the empire. It is reasonable to assume that Belshazzar was the de facto king in his father's absence.
7. What is the significance of the purple robe that Belshazzar promised as a part of the reward?
 - a. ANSWER: It denoted royalty and authority.
8. What happened as a result of the wise men's inability to interpret the handwriting on the wall?
 - a. ANSWER: The king became even more terrified; and the nobles didn't know what to do, or what to make of the entire event. This uproar and confusion raised enough commotion that it got the attention of the queen.
9. Why was the queen not already in the hall participating with the King, since all of his wives and concubines were there?
 - a. ANSWER: The queen is either his mother or grandmother, probably grandmother, given how much she knew about both Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar.
10. What was Daniel's response to the promise of reward for interpreting the handwriting?
 - a. ANSWER: He did not want it. He was there as God's servant and not because he was seeking a reward.
11. What is the reason Daniel tells Belshazzar that God sent a hand to write on the wall?
 - a. ANSWER: Because Belshazzar failed to acknowledge that God held Belshazzar's life in his hands, God sent a hand to write the inscription on the wall.
12. Define what the meaning of each of the following words is below:
 - a. Mene:
 - i. ANSWER: To number something
 - b. Tekel:
 - i. ANSWER: To weigh something
 - c. Parsin:
 - i. ANSWER: To divide something
13. Daniel told Belshazzar that his kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. Did this happen?
 - a. ANSWER: Yes. First, the Medes and Persians were in an alliance to overthrow the Babylonians. Eventually, the Medes and Persians would have a falling out, and the Persian empire would take over, followed by the Greeks defeating the Persians, and finally the Romans defeating the Greeks.
14. What happens to Daniel when Darius the Mede takes the throne? (See Daniel 6:1-3)
 - a. ANSWER: Daniel once again distinguishes himself and Darius wants to make him ruler over the whole kingdom.

In this lesson, God demonstrates to us through the example of Daniel that all that we have, and all that we are, comes from God and not from our own efforts. Our Sovereign God provides for all our needs, all our victories, and all of our blessings. Let's make sure that we take the time to acknowledge this to Him and praise him for all He does in our lives.

In the next lesson, we will examine the well-known story of Daniel in the lions' den. Once again, Daniel will display his great faith in God; and once again, God will prove faithful. Thanks for studying with us!

Yours in Christ,

Wes