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Daniel 5

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Daniel 5.

Topics.

- A great feast for a thousand of the king's lords.
- Vessels of the temple of the LORD are used for wine cups.
- The gods and religion of Babylon.
- Fingers of a human hand appear.
- No wise man could read the writing on the wall.
- The Queen of Babylon tells Belshazzar about Daniel.
- Daniel is offered great riches to interpret the writing.
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar kingship greatness glory and majesty.
- The highest God rules the kingdom of mankind.
- The writing on the wall: Mene, Mene, Tekel and Parsin.
- Daniel was made the third ruler in the kingdom of Babylon.
- Darius the Mede conquers Babylon.

NOTE: for information of people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

DANIEL 5:1

A Great Feast for a Thousand of the Kings Lords.

- **Daniel 5:1:** King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand.

Belshazzar: means may Bel protect the king. Belshazzar is sometimes referred to as the Son of Nebuchadnezzar when in actual fact his father was Nabonidus the last true king of Babylon. Referring to Belshazzar as the son of Nebuchadnezzar is not an error of translation but is in conformity to general Semitic usage where one's descendant is frequently referred to as his son.

Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon died and was followed by:

- Amel-Marduk.
- The Evil-Merodach.
- Nergal-Shar-usar (Neriglissar).
- Labashi-Marduk (who reigned only a few months).
- Nabonidus (the last true king of Babylon).
- Belshazzar.

DANIEL 5:2

Vessels of the Temple of the LORD are used for Wine Cups.

- **Daniel 5:2:** Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.

A concubine: is a woman who lives with a man and has a sexual relationship with him, but is not married to him or a woman who is the lover of a wealthy married man, but with the social status of a subordinate form of wife, often kept in a separate home, especially in imperial China (in modern language she is an official mistress). When Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded Jerusalem and took its inhabitants captive for seventy years he also pillaged the temple of God and brought the vessels made of silver and gold back to Babylon, it is these vessels Belshazzar and his party group are drinking from and no doubt mocking the God of Israel.

DANIEL 5:3-4

Belshazzar's Wild Party continues.

- **Daniel 5:3-4:** Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. ⁴They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

Belshazzar's party group believe their gods of silver and gold have given them the victory over Israel, but we learn by reading the book of Ezekiel and Jeremiah that God used Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to judge Israel, not only this but while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar. Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His Shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) gave permission to Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved City Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again). This shines a spotlight on the truth that God the LORD God of Israel is the only God who is in total control of the events concerning Babylon, in fact this very night (October 29, 539 B.C) the armies of Cyrus king of Persia are going to invade Babylon, Belshazzar is about to be slain and Darius in the name of Cyrus, will take his place on the throne of Babylon (verse 30).

The gods and religion of Babylon: Bel was the Baal of the Babylonians, the Babylonian Hymn to Bel translated from the cuneiform script, reveals him as the supreme ruler, the life-giver, the god of justice, he who holds society together, controller of the elements, particularly fire. Babylon was the religious and cultural centre of the land and Bel the supreme god of the Babylonians (Isaiah 46). Bel is the Chaldaic form of Baal and is believed by some to be identical with that god. Like the equivalent Hebrew (*Baal*), the name Bel was used also in the sense of "lord" or "owner". Bel presided over the air. Each of the important deities had, in one or more of the Babylonian cities, a large temple in which he or she was worshipped as the divine civic ruler and protector.

The larger cities also contained many temples and chapels dedicated to one deity or another; Babylon, for example, possessed more than 50 temples in Chaldean times (8th to 6th century BC). Temple services were generally conducted in open courts containing fountains for ablution and altars for sacrifices. In the inner part of the temple, the statue of the deity stood on a pedestal in a special niche, it was the holy of holies, and only the high priest and other privileged members of the clergy and court were permitted to enter it. The clergy comprised of high priests, sacrifice priests, musicians, singers, magicians, soothsayers, diviners, dream interpreters,

astrologers, female devotees, and hierodules (temple courtesans). Sacrifices were offered daily, consisted of animal and vegetable foods, libations of water, wine, and beer, and the burning of incense. Numerous annual and monthly festivals were held, including a feast to celebrate the new moon.

DANIEL 5:5

Fingers of a Human Hand Appear.

- **Daniel 5:5:** Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote.

Imagine for a moment: Belshazzar's horror when he saw not just writing appear on a wall, but a human hand actually writing it (who says God does not have a sense of humour) remember these guys are partying, drinking from the temple cups, mocking Israel's God and praising the power of their gods, this wonder of God would have to be freaking them all out.

DANIEL 5:6-7

King Belshazzar Trembles.

- **Daniel 5:6-7:** Then the king's colour changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. ⁷The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

King Belshazzar is in absolute fear, in terror he shouts and yells for Babylon's enchanters, astrologers and wise men and promises them great riches if they can interpret the writing.

Enchanters: (Hebrew `anan) from Strong's Concordance means to cover; to cloud over; figuratively it means to act covertly, i.e. practise magic, an observer of times, soothsayer or sorcerer. The Bible Dictionary says enchantment applies to any form of magic, including divination and the English Dictionary says it means to charm, delight, or captivate somebody or put a person under spell. Originally the word magic meant the science of art of the Magi, the Persian priestly caste, who, like the Levites, were devoted to the practice of religion. With the wide extension of the term "magus," the word magic, too acquired broader significance. It came to mean all occult rituals or processes deigned to influence or control the course of nature, to dominate men or circumstances by the alliance, aid, or use of supernatural powers, and generally to tap and to employ the forces of an unseen world. Divination, the art of forecasting the future with a view to avoiding the perils and pitfalls, might be included under the same classification. Its methods were frequently "magic."

Astrology: (astrologers) astrology in this context does not refer to a scientist who simply studies the wonder and splendour of God's creation in the heavens. When the world astrology is spoken of as being an offence to God it refers to those who study the stars to foretell the future. Astrology refers to the art practiced by astrologers it means conjurer, necromancer, enchanter, soothsayer, divider or determiner of fate. The astrologers, (star-gazers) are those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars to distinguish the signs of zodiac. It is difficult to distinguish the various sorts of practisers of magical arts. Seeking information from the stars was widely practiced from earliest times, but with all other forms of superstition was forbidden to God's people who were to seek their God directly and hear and obey the word of His prophets.

No Wise Man Could Read the Writing.

- **Daniel 5:8-9:** Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. ⁹Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.

This is a frightening experience for Belshazzar and his lords their fear and distress is increasing because no-one in the entire kingdom of Babylon could interpret the writing.

DANIEL 5:10-12

The Queen of Babylon tells Belshazzar about Daniel.

- **Daniel 5:10-12:** The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, "O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your colour change. ¹¹There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king— made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, ¹²because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

The Queen tells Belshazzar to get Daniel who Nebuchadnezzar made chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, because he was able to interpret the king's dreams when no-one else could.

The Queen: is referring to Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's first and second vision.

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1. The metal image shaped like a man (Daniel 2:31-34).
2. Daniel's interpretation of the tree and its stump (Daniel 4:20-26).

NOTICE: even though Daniel remained faithful to God and gave the LORD the credit for his gift of interpreting dreams and visions, the Queen credits his ability to interpret dreams and visions to the spirit and wisdom of the holy gods in him. They recognised the power of Daniel's God, but simply added the LORD to the multitude of their many gods.

DANIEL 5:13-16

Daniel is offered Great Riches to Interpret the Writing.

- **Daniel 5:13-16:** Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, "You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. ¹⁴I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. ¹⁵Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. ¹⁶But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Daniel, with Ezekiel were with the people of influence that Nebuchadnezzar took from Jerusalem and brought into Babylon to be held captive for seventy years while the prophet Jeremiah remained at Jerusalem proclaiming God's word to those who were left in the city. King Belshazzar is so fearful he tells Daniel he will make him the third ruler of Babylon if he can interpret the writing.

Daniel's Reply to King Belshazzar.

- **Daniel 5:17:** Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation."

Daniel refuses Belshazzar gifts, but tells the king he will interpret the writing.

DANIEL 5:18-19

God gave Nebuchadnezzar Kingship Greatness Glory and Majesty.

- **Daniel 5:18-19:** O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. ¹⁹And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled.

God gave Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (a worshipper of pagan gods) victory over Israel and the surrounding nations. This shines a spotlight on the following two truths:

1. The LORD is not limited to using only those who honour Him to bring about His plans and purposes
2. God's blessings are not limited to His people, we know this because Daniel says it was God who gave the king of Babylon greatness, glory and majesty.

DANIEL 5:20-21

The Most High God Rules the Kingdom of Mankind.

- **Daniel 5:20-21:** But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. ²¹He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. ²⁰But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. ²¹He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.

Daniel tells Belshazzar that because Nebuchadnezzar became so puffed up in pride that he lost his sanity and his glory and the throne was taken from him, until he knew that it was God who gave him his glory and victory and rules the nations setting up their leaders and tearing them down.

Pride: Proverbs 21:14 says the name of a prideful, arrogant and haughty person is summed up in the words scoffer and mocker, this is exactly what Belshazzar and his lords were doing at his flamboyant and extravagant party, nevertheless not all pride is necessarily bad it can be put into two different categories healthy and destructive.

Belshazzar was full of the destructive kind of pride.

1. **Destructive pride:** destructive pride is manifested in a haughty attitude shown by somebody who believes, often unjustifiably, that he or she is better than others. A person who has this kind of pride will often not mix with those they consider their social inferiors. This pride is arrogant it exalts oneself above others and even God, and will treat those it looks down to and believes are inferior to them with disdain and at its peak with cruelty and destruction. It causes quarrels, strife, arguments, fights and even wars. Wisdom regarding pride is having the knowledge of knowing that this self-exalting pride can only lead to strife and destruction so the person with wisdom chooses to be humble rather than arrogant and prideful.
2. **Healthy pride:** is the happy satisfied feeling somebody experiences when having or achieved something special that other people admire (i.e., a person taking great pride in their work). It is having the correct level of respect for the importance and value of your personal character, life, efforts, or achievements as opposed to having no confidence and no sense of worth. It embraces personal satisfaction such as an achievement or a possession that somebody feels especially pleased and satisfied with (i.e., their grandchildren were their pride and joy) and to be proud of something personal such as something accomplished or a quality possessed that has been achieved through effort and work.

What we can learn for today: those who did not believe in God would simply have seen the wars of Babylon through natural human understanding, to them Nebuchadnezzar would have appeared simply as the more powerful king who through the might of his own armies conquered nations and by his own wisdom became the majestic king of his age, if we as believers did not have the Bible to show us that the LORD was using Nebuchadnezzar as His servant to bring about God's purposes on earth we would have the same mindset. We may not always understand what the leaders of the nations are doing, and even worse it may appear to be totally against what we might think they should be doing, nevertheless regardless of our understanding we can rest in the comforting words, "the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will," and from this statement know that God does not need Christian men in power to achieve His eternal purposes on earth. From the stories of the Bible we learn that the LORD is totally capable of using wise leaders, foolish leaders and even godless leaders to achieve His eternal plans for planet earth.

DANIEL 5:22-23

Daniel's Reply to King Belshazzar continued.

- **Daniel 5:22-23:** And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honoured.

Daniel rebukes Belshazzar because like Nebuchadnezzar he also is puffed up in pride and even worse, he is mocking God by drinking out of the sacred vessels of the LORD'S temple and praising gods that cannot see, hear or have any knowledge.

The following words of Daniel are fabulous: The God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honoured. In this simple and brief statement of Daniel's the majestic power of God and His influence on earth is revealed. It covers every generation and encompasses not only Belshazzar, but also a great majority of the world's population throughout history and even today. We often get little insights into the enormity of God and His power that works through mankind for

an eternal purpose. Daniel says, God is not only able to work through the nations using wise and foolish kings to achieve His plans and purposes, but He also holds in His hands every breath we breathe (Daniel 5:23).

DANIEL 5:24-28

The Writing on the Wall: Mene, Mene, Tekel and Parsin.

- **Daniel 5:24-28:** "Then from his (the LORD'S) presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. ²⁵And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. ²⁶This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; ²⁷TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; ²⁸PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

This was not a vision, but a real event that everyone at Belshazzar's party could see, we know this because the hand appeared from the LORD'S presence.

Daniel was brought before Belshazzar and interpreted the writing in the following way:

MENE: God has numbered the days of Belshazzar's kingdom and brought it to an end.

TEKEL: Belshazzar has been weighted in the balances and found wanting.

PERES: Belshazzar's kingdom is divided and given to the Media and Persians.

DANIEL 5:29

Daniel was made the Third Ruler in the Kingdom of Babylon.

- **Daniel 5:29:** Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

DANIEL 5:30-31

Darius the Mede Conquers Babylon.

- **Daniel 5:30-31:** That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. ³¹And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Darius the Mede: was a common name for Medo-Persian rulers, Darius the Mede was an officer in the army of Cyrus, he was not heir to the throne, but nevertheless he was made king and appears to have exercised authority at the same time with Cyrus.

Cyrus: in (539 BC) defeated Babylon, but he did not pillage the city instead he acted respectfully towards the shrines and deities of the land, enslaved populations were liberated, including the Hebrews that had been held captive for seventy years. Cyrus now king of Babylon set about building up his vast Persian Empire.

Darius 1: Darius 1 Continued what Cyrus had done (521-485 BC), he continued the political tendencies begun by Cyrus, but in later years the centre of influence moved from Babylon to Persepolis and Ecbabana.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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