

05–09–2020 Daniel Bible Study

Read Daniel 5:1–16 in your favorite translation. I will print the NET–2 translation.

5:1 King Belshazzar prepared a great banquet for 1,000 of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in front of them all. 2 While under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar issued an order to bring in the gold and silver vessels—the ones that Nebuchadnezzar his father had confiscated from the temple in Jerusalem—so that the king and his nobles, together with his wives and his concubines, could drink from them. 3 So they brought the gold and silver vessels that had been confiscated from the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, together with his wives and concubines, drank from them. 4 As they drank wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

5 At that very moment the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the royal palace wall, opposite the lampstand. The king was watching the back of the hand that was writing. 6 Then all the color drained from the king’s face and he became alarmed. The joints of his hips gave way, and his knees began knocking together. 7 The king called out loudly to summon the astrologers, wise men, and diviners. The king proclaimed to the wise men of Babylon that anyone who could read this inscription and disclose its interpretation would be clothed in purple and have a golden collar placed on his neck and be third ruler in the kingdom.

8 So all the king’s wise men came in, but they were unable to read the writing or to make known its interpretation to the king. 9 Then King Belshazzar was very terrified, and he was visibly shaken. His nobles were completely dumbfounded.

10 Due to the noise caused by the king and his nobles, the queen mother then entered the banquet room. She said, “O king, live forever! Don’t be alarmed! Don’t be shaken! 11 There is a man in your kingdom who has within him a spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, he proved to have insight, discernment, and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father appointed him chief of the magicians, astrologers, wise men, and diviners. 12 Thus there was found in this man Daniel, whom the king renamed Beltshazzar, an extraordinary spirit, knowledge, and skill to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Now summon Daniel, and he will disclose the interpretation.”

13 So Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, “Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14 I have heard about you, how there is a spirit of the gods in you, and how you have insight, discernment, and extraordinary wisdom. 15 Now the wise men and astrologers were brought before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation. But they were unable to disclose the interpretation of the message. 16 However, I have heard that you are able to provide interpretations and to solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, you will wear purple and have a golden collar around your neck and be third ruler in the kingdom.”

COMMENTS:

The problem confronting Bible students of chapter 5 is the reference to Belshazzar as king. The successor to Nebuchadnezzar was his son, Nabonidus. He is the king on record when Cyrus defeated the Babylonians. Then the Medes and Persian kingdom took over.

From non-biblical records of Babylon we find out the Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus. Nabonidus ruled Babylon from an oasis named Tayma in what today is Saudi Arabia. History

tells us that Nabonidus engaged Cyrus and his army near the city of Opis, about 40 miles north of Babylonia.

It is possible that Belshazzar knew this already and that is why he is priming the leaders for a battle by the palace. His call to bring the vessels removed from the Temple in Jerusalem for them to use for drinking wine is unusual. Perhaps he is trying to stir his gods into action so they can win over Cyrus and his army.

It is also unusual that the wives and concubines of the officials were allowed to attend this banquet. The important note is in v. 4. As they drank from the holy vessels from the Temple they were praising their gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.

As they were mocking Yahweh, God began to write on the wall of the banquet hall. The account seems to indicate that only Belshazzar saw the hand as it wrote. He immediately was terror stricken. The joints in his hips gave way and his knees began knocking. Loudly he called for his astrologers, wise men, and diviners.

Despite the promise of fame and fortune, no one could tell him what it meant. Because of all the noise, the queen mother enters the hall. She tells the king not to be concerned, there is one in his kingdom who can tell him what is written on the wall.

Daniel is then brought to the king, and he is asked if he is indeed the one who had been brought from Judah. Belshazzar expresses confidence in Daniel and makes the same promise to him that had been made to the astrologers, wise men, and diviners.

He would have a purple robe (color of royalty), a gold collar around his neck and he would be the third ranking leader in all Babylon: 1. Nabonidus, 2. Belshazzar, and 3. Daniel. As you will read tomorrow Daniel has no interest in his reward.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Are you as disturbed as I am at some who seem to mock God today? Making fun of me is okay. Mocking my Savior is not. Do not worry! You can only get away with mocking God for a little while. If they do not repent and seek God's forgiveness, they will experience the fullness of his wrath. Remember, it is not just the mockers who will experience the wrath of God. It is any and every sinner who does not repent and seek God's grace. We have that great promise of God in John 3:17, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." God's grace is offered to all. Be sure to share that with everyone.