Daniel Chapter 5:1-31

Source: Chuck Smith NKJV Study Bible

THE FALL OF BABYLON

There is a gap of perhaps 20-23 years between the preceding chapter and this one. King Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. and was replaced by a succession of men who were removed by their enemies. Until Nabonidus took the throne (556-539 B.C.)

Fact: Beginning in A.D.1914, 37 separate archival texts have been discovered documenting the existence of Belshazzar as crown prince.
Meaning : a male heir apparent to a throne

The Writing on the Wall

5:1
1.Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand.

Explanation V.1 His great feast was probably meant to bolster morale after Nabonidus had experienced a crushing defeat at the hands of the Persians.

Fact: The Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon confirm that Babylon fell while a great feast was in progress. Excavations have uncovered a throne room that could accommodate a thousand nobles.

5:2-4
2.While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3.Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4.They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

Explanation 1. V.2-4 Belshazzar defiled the consecrated vessels his father, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. He used the vessels as wine goblets.
Reference verse: Isaiah 39:6-7

Explanation 2. V.2-4 By drinking libations to Babylonian gods with the **vessels… taken from the temple** devoted to the true God of Israel, Belshazzar was acting in an unusually aggressive way and blasphemous way. **Nebuchadnezzar** is called Belshazzar's father. Most likely, Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus, married Nebuchadnezzar's daughter to establish his own claim to the throne of Babylon, making Nebuchadnezzar the grandfather of Belshazzar. The Aramaic word "father" is flexible, capable of referring to a grandfather, ancestor, or even a predecessor to a king without any lineal tie.

5:5-6
5.In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6.Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.

Explanation V.5-6 The appearance of **a man's hand** beginning to write was not a vision seen by Belshazzar alone, but a miracle seen by everyone present. Afterward, the wise men called to interpret could still see the words written on the **plaster** wall.
Key words in **V.6** His face turned pale, so frightened, his legs became weak and his knees were knocking. Who does this remind us of, yes the
King Nebuchadnezzar.

Fact: According to the archaeologist who excavated it, the throne room from V.1 had walls covered with white gypsum.

5:7
7.The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Explanation V.7 The king offered great honor to anyone who could interpret the words on the wall. He even offered to give the successful wise man the **third** in rank after Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

5:8

8.Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation.

Explanation V.8 None of the **wise men** of Babylon were able to interpret the inscription on the wall, showing the **futility** of their pagan religion.

Meaning: Futility - the quality of being futile: ineffectiveness; Uselessness.

9.Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.'

5:10

10.The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change.

Explanation V.10 The **queen** was the queen mother, not the wife of King Belshazzar since all his wives were already present.

5:11-12

11.There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And 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, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. 12.Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."

Explanation V.11-12 Daniel was approximately 80 years old at this point and was either retired or forgotten. The queen mother, being the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, remembered Daniel's **Spirit** and capabilities during her father's reign.

5:13-15
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 captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14.I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. 15.Now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing.

Explanation V.13-15 When Daniel was brought before the king, he did not demonstrate the same level of respect that he had consistently shown Nebuchadnezzar. Instead, he rebuked Belshazzar for his brazen attitude and failure to learn from Nebuchadnezzar.

5:16-17
16.And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. 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." 17.Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

Explanation V.16-17 Daniel refused to accept any **rewards** not because he was rude or arrogant but because he was indignant at the king's disregard for Nebuchadnezzar's experiences with God and the blasphemous use of the temple vessels.

5:18-24
18.O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. 19. And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. 20.But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. 21.Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. 22.But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. 23.And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven.

They have brought the vessels of His house 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, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. 24.Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.

Explanation V.18-24 Writers of historical narrative frequently communicate the essential message of a text through dialogue. In this case, Daniel's words served as a rebuke of Belshazzar for his failure to learn from the experience of Nebuchadnezzar (as described in Dan.4)

Daniel reprimanded Belshazzar because he had not **humbled** his **heart**, even though he knew what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar. According to ancient Babylonian texts, Belshazzar had served in the government of King Neriglissar in 560 B.C. This indicates that he had been old enough to be aware of the events at the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life.

Instead of learning to submit to the Almighty, he **lifted** himself **up** against God by using the temple vessels to blaspheme God. The specific sins Daniel cited were pride, blasphemy, idolatry, and failure to glorify the true God.

5:25

"And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

Funny (EENIE MEANIE CHILI BEANIE)

Explanation V.25 The three Aramaic words on the wall were: **MENE** (numbered), **TEKEL** (weighed), and **UPHARSIN** (and divided).

5:26-27

26.This is the interpretation of each word. MENE : God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; 27.TEKEL : You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting;

5:28

PERES : Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

Explanation V.28 Although the third word was written in the plural form (parson), Daniel explained its meaning by using the singular form (**PERES**). The prediction that Belshazzar's **kingdom as been divided** does not indicate that the Babylonian Empire would be divided equally by two kingdoms (**Medes and Persians**) but rather that Babylon would be destroyed or dissolved and taken over by the Medo-Persian Empire. The third word on the wall (parson) has the same letters as the Aramaic word for "Persian."It was a play on words, indicating that the kingdom would fall to the Persian army.

5:29-30
29.Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. 30.That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.

Explanation V.30 Having lost a brief skirmish outside the walls of Babylon, Belshazzar retreated to the city and made light of the coming Persian siege. The Babylonians had 20 years of provisions, and the city was a seemingly impregnable fortress. Nevertheless, Darius diverted the waters of the Euphrates river so his forces could enter through the channel, passing below the water gates. He took the city **that very night** without a battle and killed Belshazzar, who was engaged in the drunken feast. The Kingdom of Babylon fell just as foretold by Daniel. The colossus head of gold (Babylon) had fallen. It was replaced by the chest and arms of silver, representing Medo-Persia
(See 2:32)
32.This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,

Reference verse: Dan. 2-39
39.But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

This was also prophesied so 200 years earlier in: Isaiah 45:1
1.Thus says the Lord to His anointed, To **Cyrus**, whose right hand I have held— To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut:

5:31
And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Explanation V.31 The identity of **Darius the Mede** is uncertain. Some believe he was Subaru, the governor of Babylon, called Darius, an honorific title meaning "royal one." Others maintain that it was an alternate royal title for the Persian emperor Cyrus the great.

(Comment from Through The Word) https://throughtheword.org
Imagine if you knew the exact number of days you had to live, would it change the way you live this day? What if you were told your number was up? Would you be content with the place God finds you?

My closing comment: I know a friend once shared with me the statement, How would you want Jesus to find you if he came for his church right now? At that time I was a drunken fool , high on weed and still trying to follow the LORD. Well thats when I made my decision, no more weed, drugs or alcohol. Now I can rest in the fact that when the LORD does return I know exactly how he will find me.

Praise Jesus Christ and God Bless.