

"God...Hast Thou Not Glorified"

Daniel 5:1-31

There is much written about this chapter as to who all the characters are, and how accurate the historical account is of this episode in the life of Daniel.

This chapter marks the end of the nation of Babylon – not so much the history of it, but the reason for its demise, and that being the lack of regard for the God of heaven, and for the desecration of the vessels that were taken out of the Temple in Jerusalem when it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

20-25 years had passed between chapter 4 and the events of this chapter, and Daniel was an old man by now.

I. THE FEAST – VS. 1-4

A. Vs. 1 records for us that "Belshazzar the king made a great feast."

1. Much has been made as to who Belshazzar was – considering the record in the book of Daniel as Nebuchadnezzar being his "father" (in the culture of the times, father could be grandfather, or great-grandfather, as well), this Belshazzar was co-regent with his father, Nabonidus, who had actually been taken captive by the Medes and Persians at this point, and the surrounding areas of the Babylonian empire had already fallen, and all that remained was the city of Babylon itself, specifically, that which was inside the gates.

2. The great feast was made by Belshazzar in an attempt to show to the people that the walls of Babylon were impregnable and there was nothing to worry about – they were soon to find out that was wrong.
3. History records that the Median army had rerouted the great Euphrates river in a series of canals around the city, and the army came in under the gates that went down into the river itself – all this was happening while the city partied – a party that, according to history, lasted for a year and a half.

B. Vs. 2 records for us the egregious act that was the final straw, so to speak, for Belshazzar – he violated the vessels from the Jewish Temple that Nebuchadnezzar had taken when he destroyed Jerusalem.

1. "Whiles he tasted the wine" – this is a phrase indicating he was drunk.
2. The vessels had apparently been put in a secure place to not be used – even Nebuchadnezzar had enough respect for them to not use them in a profane way, as Belshazzar was about to do.

C. Vs. 4 shows that, while they were drinking out of the vessels that had been dedicated to the Lord for use in the Temple worship, Belshazzar and all those there at the head of the feast "praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, or wood, and of stone" – this was pure blasphemy, something God would not let go unpunished.

Isaiah 42:8

⁸ I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

II. THE "FINGERS" – VS. 5-16

A. Vs. 5 – "In the same hour" – before they were done blaspheming God with the vessels of the Temple.

B. "Came forth fingers of a man's hand"

1. Not the whole hand, just the fingers
2. Doesn't say whose hand it was, but that it came from God there can be no doubt.

C. Vs. 6 points out that the "king's countenance was changed" – he got sober in a hurry, so to speak – he changed from a jovial, happy mood, to one of deadly paleness, of extreme dread and fear.

D. It also points out that "the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another" – he became so afraid that he literally was so weak that he could not stand.

Adam Clarke describes it like this:

Here is a very natural description of fear and terror.

The face grows pale; the mind becomes greatly agitated; pains seize on the lower part of the back and kidneys; a universal

tremor takes place, so that the knees smite against each other; and lastly...the cry of distress is uttered – vs. 7.

E. Vs. 7-9 gives us the same scenario that we saw played out in Nebuchadnezzar's life twice, as recorded in Daniel – Belshazzar called for "the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers" to tell him what the saying was and what it meant but they couldn't do it.

F. Vs. 10-12 shows that the queen (probably Belshazzar's mother, not his wife) heard of what had happened and came in and reminded Belshazzar about Daniel (he was probably not in the first group that was called because he would have been somewhat retired, and off the scene at this stage in his life).

G. Vs. 13-16 gives us the record of the interaction between Belshazzar and Daniel – much of the same things said here of Daniel have already been said by Nebuchadnezzar.

III. THE FAILURE – VS. 17-29

A. Vs. 17 – although Belshazzar offered to give great gifts and prestige and power to the one who interpreted the hand writing for him, Daniel said he could keep his gifts, but he would tell him what it meant anyways because Daniel knew it was condemnation against Babylon (he knew the prophecies from Isaiah and Jeremiah).

B. Vs. 18-22 finds Daniel rehearsing in the king's presence the history of what happened to his "father" (grandfather) – King Nebuchadnezzar. This was a sermon, of sorts, emphasizing what happens when pride gets in the way – a sermon Belshazzar apparently had heard before, and disregarded.

C. Vs. 23 gives the reason for Belshazzar's demise and subsequent death – his pride and arrogance in defying the God of heaven in defiling the vessels from the Temple.

Exodus 10:3

³ And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.

2 Chronicles 33:23

²³ And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.

Isaiah 26:10

¹⁰ Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.

Matthew 21:32

³² For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

1 Peter 5:5-6

⁵ Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

D. Vs. 23 ends with this phrase – "and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, has thou not glorified" – this shows the sovereignty of God over all of mankind, and that nothing happens by chance with God.

Job 12:9–10

⁹ Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?

¹⁰ In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.

Isaiah 42:5

⁵ Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

Acts 17:24–25

²⁴ God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

²⁵ Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

Acts 17:28–29

²⁸ For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

²⁹ Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

E. Vs. 24-25 give us what was written and vs. 26-29 gives us the meaning of it.

1. "MENE, MENE"

a) This word means numbered

b) The interpretation – vs. 26 – God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it – the prophecy of this is found in Isaiah 13:1-14:32; 21:1-10; 47:1-15; Jer. 50:1-51:64.

Jeremiah 25:11-12

¹¹ And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

¹² And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

c) It is in keeping with the idea that man's days are numbered, and the repetition of the word twice is probably for emphasis.

Job 14:14

¹⁴ If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

Psalms 90:10

¹⁰ The days of our years are threescore

years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Acts 15:18

¹⁸ Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

2. TEKEL

- a) The word means "weighed"
- b) The interpretation is in vs. 27, where it states that "thou" – Belshazzar specifically – "art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" – found coming short of the true weight, which is the holiness, and righteousness of God.

3. PERES

- a) The word means "divided"
- b) The interpretation is in vs. 28 – "Thy kingdom" (Babylon) "is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" – it had already been defeated – the only thing left was the city itself.

Isaiah 13:17

¹⁷ Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.

F. There is a spiritual application in all this for the saved and lost alike. If we don't follow the Lord and His Word, and we think we can get away with defying Him and His Word then we will be weighed in the balances and be found wanting when

we are numbered with the world, and we will be destroyed (or chastened, in the case of a believer).

IV. THE FALL – VS. 30-31

A. Vs. 29 shows, that although Daniel didn't want the stuff the king was going to give the one who interpreted the handwriting, the king gave it anyways.

B. Vs. 30 shows the immediacy of the fulfillment of the condemnation of the handwriting – "in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."

Luke 12:16-20

¹⁶ And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

¹⁸ And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

²⁰ But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

C. Vs. 31 mentions "Darius the Median" – outside of the Bible, there is no mention in the annals of history of a ruler of the Medes named "Darius," so most scholars

say that this is an error in the Bible, and it should be stricken. However, just the mere absence of the name of a ruler in other historical writings doesn't make the ruler not exist. The same was said of King David until the Dead Sea Scrolls were unearthed.

Conclusion: The point of this story in the Book of Daniel was to show that God keeps His word, and that every prophecy that is given in the Bible will come to pass. God is a gracious, merciful, and loving God (seen in Nebuchadnezzar's life); but He is also a holy and just God, seen in the life, and death, of Belshazzar. The difference is that Nebuchadnezzar had a propensity to recognize the God of heaven as the God of gods, while Belshazzar did not.