



Shining in Babylon
Study Guide
Daniel 5

Daniel 5 (ca. 538 BC), is the famous chapter of the handwriting on the wall. It's close to the end of the 70-year exile of the Jews. Daniel is in his 80's. Babylon is faltering under the pressure of the Medes and Persians. King Belshazzar (probably Nebuchadnezzar's grandson) turns to his idols for comfort: gold, alcohol and sex.

1. Read Daniel 5:1-4. Why do people, despite current threats, ignore the 'writing on the wall'? Discuss the concept that all societies and individuals suffer from the disease of idolatry and false worship and the idea that we are addicted to our way of thinking.

2. Read Daniel 5:5-9. What happened? How did Belshazzar react? How is our culture similar when it comes to dealing with crisis?

3. Read Daniel 5:10-16. Discuss the terms that distinguished Daniel from the others. What made him so influential in the greatest time of need? How can we be people of influence without being at 'the party'? Discuss.

4. In verses 17-21, Daniel reminds Belshazzar that his father struggled to submit to the Most High God. Now read v. 22-23. Discuss how humanity is guilty of these three things:

- a. You lied to yourself
- b. You blasphemed against God
- c. You worshipped idols

How can we be susceptible to these same pitfalls? Discuss.

5. Read Daniel 5:24-31. Notice that Belshazzar still did not repent after hearing the truth. Most people would rather die than to admit that they were wrong. How can we prevent ourselves from staying addicted to our way of thinking? Discuss.

Action Step:

Meditate on Psalm 51 each day for the next week.

Daniel 5

Softball Image

Shining in Babylon

Big Idea: The Way Forward is Back

God is Faithful

Jeremiah 25:11-12 (626BC)

"...these nations shall serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. Then I will punish ...that nation...for their iniquity..."

God is Sovereign

Isaiah 13:17-19 (ca. 720BC)

"Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them, ...¹⁹ And Babylon, ..., will be like Sodom and Gomorrah..."

I. The Great Feast: (v. 1-4)

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I. The Great Feast: (v. 1-4 *continued*)

King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. 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. ³ 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. ⁴ They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

Revelation 17:4-5

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. ⁵ And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."

I. The Great Feast: (v. 1-4 *continued*)

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II. The Finger of God (v. 5-9)

⁵Immediately 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. ⁶Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.⁷ The 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."

III. The Distinction of Daniel (v. 10-16)

¹⁰The 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 color 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."

IV. The Superiority of God (v. 17-21)

¹⁷Then 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. ¹⁸O 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. 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.²¹ He 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.

V. The Guilt of Humanity (v. 22-23)

²² And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³ but 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 honored.

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1. You lied to yourself
2. You blasphemed against God
3. You worshipped idols

VI. The Writing is on The Wall (v. 24-31)

²⁴ "Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. ²⁵ And this is the writing that was inscribed: Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin. ²⁶ This is the interpretation of the matter: Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; ²⁷ Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; ²⁸ Peres, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

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.

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

Big Idea: The Way Forward is Back