

Daniel

Chapter 5

Belshazzar's Feast

a [Belshazzar] Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus and grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. The inscriptions show that he was coregent while his father went to meet Cyrus in battle. This chapter follows Dan. 7--Dan. 8 in chronology, for the vision of Dan. 7 was seen in the first year and that of Dan. 8 in the third year of Belshazzar. The author no doubt put the message of this chapter here in order to keep the prophetic sections of Dan. 7:1--Dan. 12:13 together.

b [father Nebuchadnezzar] His grandfather. There is no word in Aramaic for grandfather. The word "father" is often used of ancestors (1Ki. 15:11-13 2Ki. 14:3; 2Chr. 34:1-2 Rom. 9:10). Jeremiah settles the controversy of this statement by saying, "all nations shall serve him (Nebuchadnezzar), and his son (Nabonidus), and his son's son (Belshazzar), until the very time of his land come" (Jer. 27:7).

5 Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. **2** While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his ^afather 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. **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.

-There is an excellent chance that the lampstand mentioned in 5:5. is the menorah used to illuminate the holy place in Exodus 25:31-40, 2 Chron. 4:7-8

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. **7** The king cried ^baloud 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." **8** Now all the king's wise *men* came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. **9** Then King Belshazzar

was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were **l**astonished.

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. **11** There is a man in your kingdom in whom *is* the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your **l**father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your **l**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 **l**explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.”

5:2–16 God’s response to Belshazzar’s irreverent use of God’s holy vessels is a warning that whatever God has sanctified is not to be profaned. According to 1 Sam. 24:10, “the LORD’s anointed” were not to be touched, that is, human vessels who are set apart to Him. Attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to the Devil is considered blasphemy, because the Spirit’s work is holy (Matt. 12:31, 32). Therefore, regarding holy things as common is always dangerous. Those guilty will be “weighed in the balances, and found wanting” (v. 27).

The Writing on the Wall Explained

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, “Are you that Daniel **l**who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my **l**father the king brought from Judah? **14** I have heard of you, that the **l**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. **16** And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and **l**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

-5:16, 17 Daniel had no interest in being third in a kingdom whose leader had set it against God.

. **18** O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your **l**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 **u**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 **u**lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of **u**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 **u**lfingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written. ²⁵ “And this is the inscription that was written: **u**MENE, MENE, **u**TEKEL, **u**UPHARSIN. 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; ²⁸ PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”^s 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.

Belshazzar’s Fall

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. ³¹ And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, *being* about sixty-two years old.

More Notes

[O Belshazzar] Daniel preached to Belshazzar giving him the exact cause of his ruin. His sin was the same as that of Nebuchadnezzar (cp. Dan. 4:25-36 with Dan. 5:22-30).

c [hast not humbled thine heart]

Six sins of Belshazzar:

1. Did not humble himself in his heart.
2. Did not profit by the dealings of God with his grandfather (Dan. 5:22)
3. Exalted himself against God (Dan. 5:23)
4. Desecrated the sanctified vessels of the house of God (Dan. 5:23)
5. Praised idol gods (Dan. 5:23)
6. Refused to glorify the true God who gives life to all (Dan. 5:23)

5:25–28 Daniel gives the inscription’s significance, which puzzles Belshazzar because it was like a merchant’s shout, “Reckoned at a mina, a shekel, and two halves!” The reason for Belshazzar’s downfall is that God evaluated him and found him deficient. Through presumptuous pride and brazen irreverence, he failed to acknowledge God’s ultimate lordship over the Earth and, therefore, over Babylon (v. 27).

a [And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN ...] The 8th prophecy in Daniel (Dan. 5:25-28, fulfilled). Next, Dan. 6:16.

b [the writing] The writing could not be understood until interpreted by Daniel.

Theory 1 (which is most popular)-To teach that the original writing was in Aramaic, Hebrew, Samaritan, or any known language of the Babylonian Empire is to propagate fallacy, for, if this had been the case, some of the lords from all over the empire could have interpreted it without the divine help through Daniel. There is no indication that he could read it by his own natural ability. As to the words being in Aramaic, they are translations of the original words in some unknown language.¹

Theory 2-(Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau (Journal Asiatique, “Mane, Thecal, Phares,” 1886) suggests that these words could be three weights with equivalents in Hebrew. The sum value of these weights, 2,520 is prophetically significant. Revelation 12:14, and see also Daniel 7:25, 12:7 speak of the rule of the Antichrist which is divided into “a time, and times, and half a time” which has been translated at 3.5 years. In Revelation 11:13 and 12:6 the ‘time times and dividing of time is 42 months or 1,260 days. Many scholars believe the tribulation will be in two parts, each having 1,260 days. If we add up the number of days in both parts the Tribulation is a seven-year period totaling 2,520 days which is the same number of the sum of the added weights in the inscription according to Theory 2. Concealed within the handwriting was a second cryptic meaning of the fact that the kingdoms of the world would be divided in the time of the end.

c [MEME, MEME] MENE, MENE, meaning numbered, numbered, i.e. repeated for the sake of emphasis. God has numbered your kingdom, and it is finished (Dan. 5:25-26).²

It is possible that MENE is mentioned twice to represent the scales and balances as well as representing the two groups joined together which were the Medes and Persians.³

¹ Dake Bible Notes, Bible Gateway

² Ibid

³ Perry Stone Hebraic Prophetic Study Bible, P1339

d [TEKEL] TEKEL, meaning weighed. You are weighed in the balances, and are found lacking (Dan. 5:25,27).⁴

e [UPHARSIN] UPHARSIN or PHARSIN is the plural of PERES meaning division. Your kingdom is split up and given to the Medes and Persians (Dan. 5:25,28).

Isaiah 13:17-22 predicts this overthrow of Babylon 150-180 years before it occurred.

Jeremiah 51:11 also speaks of the overthrow of Babylon 65 years before the event took place.

Daniel himself interpreted the dream given to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2:32, 39 in the famous statue dream. The Medes and Persians were represented in the silver shoulders, chest and arms.

Daniel also had a vision of a bear with three ribs in its mouth (the kingdoms M/P would overthrow-Babylon, Egypt, Lydia) and raised on one side (that the empire would extend in one main direction which was east) or (referring to Persia being greater than Media).⁵

Remember, this chapter follows Dan. 7--Dan. 8 in chronology, for the vision of Dan. 7 was seen in the first year and that of Dan. 8 in the third year of Belshazzar. The author no doubt put the message of this chapter here in order to keep the prophetic sections of Dan. 7:1--Dan. 12:13 together.

Notes For Verse 29

a [commanded Belshazzar] Belshazzar rewarded him according to his word, but Daniel did not exercise third rulership over Babylon due to the fact that the Medes and Persians took over the kingdom that very night (Dan. 5:30). Thus ended the kingdom of Babylon after holding Israel in captivity for 70 years (Jer. 25; Dan. 9:2).

Darius Theory 1-5:31 The Persian king Cyrus, who captured the Medes in 549 B.C., took Babylon in 539 B.C. Darius the Mede is either his temporary vassal-king or an alternate title for Cyrus. He is not to be confused with Darius I (Ezra 4:5).

Medes and Persians Overview

A further prophetic picture of the empire of the Medes and the Persians is given in Daniel 8 where the ram with two horns which is destroyed by the goat is an obvious reference to the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. The two horns represent the Medes and the Persians. Daniel's description of it in Daniel 8:3,

⁴ Dake Bible Notes, Bible Gateway

⁵ Perry Stone HPSB, P1339

4 is characteristic of the two centuries of the rule of the Medes and the Persians,

“Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great”.

The lower horn apparently refers to the kingdom of the Medes and the higher horn that came up later to the kingdom of Persia, which dominated Media. The fourth verse describes their conquests westward, northward, and southward which characterize the history of this empire as there was no considerable progress eastward. All of this prediction is precisely fulfilled in later history. Only by divine revelation could Daniel know in advance that the conquests of the Medes and Persians would be to the north, south and west, but not to the east—in contrast to the Macedonian conquests which were mainly to the east, as indicated in subsequent verses in the activities of the he goat.

Israel’s Restoration Under Medes And Persians

While the prophetic record concerning the Medes and the Persians is clear and its fulfillment is confirmed by history, its principal importance is historical rather than prophetic. In contrast to the Babylonian Empire which is significant for its destruction of Jerusalem, the city of God, beginning Gentile dominion over Israel which will not culminate until Christ comes in His second advent, the rise of the Medes and the Persians is important as forming the background of Israel’s partial restoration.

Three of the historical books, namely, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther and three of the minor prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi have their context in the reign of the Medo-Persian Empire. During this period the captives of Judah were permitted to go back to Jerusalem and restore their ancient city and its temple. The key to the Babylonian Empire is Gentile dominion over Jerusalem. The key to the Empire of the Medes and the Persians is restoration of Jerusalem.

Daniel gives a whole chapter to the account of his being cast into the lions’ den. This important episode in the life of Daniel, while affording many spiritual lessons of God’s care over His prophet as well as foreshadowing God’s protection over the people of Israel as a whole, illustrates the beneficent attitude of the Medes and the Persians to the people whom they had conquered. Their deference to individual religious faith is manifested in the attitude of Darius to Daniel and his earnest desire that Daniel might be delivered from the lions.

Darius Theory 2-Darius himself, described in Daniel 5:31 as “Darius the Median,” is properly identified as Gobryas or Gubaru, a governor of Babylon appointed by Cyrus the supreme monarch of the empire of the Medes and the

Persians. (Cyrus II or Cyrus the Great reigned from 559 b.c. until he was killed in battle in 530 b.c.) Darius the Mede is mentioned a number of times in Daniel (6:1, 6, 9, 25, 28; 9:1; 11:1). Darius seems to have reigned under Cyrus in governing the southern portion of the kingdom known as the Fertile Crescent. The statement that “Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (Daniel 6:28) must therefore be interpreted as the reign of Darius under the contemporary reign of Cyrus.

It was in the first year of the reign of Cyrus that permission was given to the children of Israel to return to reconstruct their temple in Jerusalem (II Chronicles 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1-4). More than a century before the remarkable prophecy of Isaiah about Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28) had anticipated the Israelites return. The generous permission and encouragement of Cyrus for Israel to restore their ancient worship was in line with the official policy to allow captive people freedom of religion. The temple, however, was not finally completed until the reign of Cambyses II (530-522 b.c.) who succeeded his father Cyrus and is referred to in Ezra 4 as Artaxerxes.

Artaxerxes was a common name ascribed to many kings. Others given this title include Artaxerxes of Ezra 7:1, known as Artaxerxes I Longimanus who reigned 465-425 b.c., and Ahasuerus or Xerxes of Esther 1:1 who reigned 486-465 b.c. The appeal to Darius the king mentioned in Ezra 6:1 is a reference to Darius I, known as Darius the Great who reigned 522-486 b.c., and should not be confused with the Darius the Mede of Daniel’s prophecy.

The more important kings of the Medo-Persian Empire are again the subject of prophecy in Daniel 11:2 where Daniel is told: “Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.” The first of the three kings which were to follow Darius the Mede (Daniel 11:1) can be identified as Cambyses II. He was followed by Smerdis, a usurper who reigned for eight months. (Some think he is the ruler mentioned in Ezra 4:7-24 instead of Cambyses.) After the murder of Smerdis a Darius the Great (522-486 b.c.) appeared. He is referred to in Ezra 4:24. It was under Darius that the authority to complete the temple was received.

The king designated as “the fourth” in Daniel 11:2, who used his great riches to attack the realm of Grecia, was undoubtedly Xerxes (486-465 b.c.) referred to as Ahasuerus in Esther 1:1. His celebrated attempt to conquer Greece ended in miserable failure. This attack can be placed chronologically between the first and the second chapter of Esther. In fact, the great feast of Esther 1 was a part of the preparation for the organization of the campaign against Greece which occurred in the third year of Xerxes’ reign. Esther 2, recording his marriage to Esther, did not occur until four years later after his return and the crushing defeat and loss of his great army and naval force. From a prophetic standpoint, Xerxes was important as incurring the undying hatred of the Grecian people

which forms the background of the conquest of Alexander the Great more than a century later.

The importance of Ezra, with its record of events which occurred under Persian rule, is that the temple was restored as the center of Israel's religious life. The record of Daniel 8 and 11 is also significant as forming the prophetic bridge from Babylon to Alexander and giving the background of Israel's history in this period. In Ezra 7:1 a successor to Xerxes is mentioned, namely, Artaxerxes I Longimanus, but he does not figure in Daniel's prophecy because he was not important to Daniel's revelation. The same is true of other rulers who followed in the Medo-Persian Empire prior to its downfall.

Rebuilding Of Jerusalem

Nehemiah adds the important final chapter in Israel's reconstruction. Under Nehemiah's leadership during the reign of Artaxerxes I Longimanus the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt with the encouragement and supply of materials from the king, and subsequently the debris of the city was cleared out and houses were built, thus repopulating the city of God. The two important steps of rebuilding the temple and rebuilding the city during the reign of the Persians mark this period as the time of Israel's partial restoration in preparation for the coming of their Messiah. The spiritual revivals under Ezra and Nehemiah are a corresponding spiritual restoration which the people thoroughly needed. The prophetic writings of Haggai and Zechariah also fit into this period and are related to the prophetic encouragement of the people during the reconstruction of the temple of Ezra 5. Malachi gives the concluding chapter of the Old Testament before Israel was plunged into the so-called four hundred silent years before Christ came. The history of the Medes and the Persians, constituting as it does accurate and meticulous fulfillment of God's prophetic Word, is another important evidence supporting the hope that prophecies yet unfulfilled will have their day of fulfillment in the consummation of the age. The Medes and the Persians, however, belong to fulfilled prophecy and do not figure largely in events of the end time although Persia is mentioned in passing in Ezekiel 38:5.⁶

⁶ <https://bible.org/seriespage/6-medes-and-persians>