

## DANIEL 5:1-6

Study by Glenn Palmer

### Daniel 5:1

#### 1. King Belshazzar

- a. Belshazzar means *Bel protect the King*
- b. Belshazzar's name does not exist in
  - 1.) Herodotus
  - 2.) Brosius
  - 3.) Josephus
  - 4.) Therefore: Daniel is wrong (the Bible is wrong) because he is not mentioned (1850)
- c. Belshazzar's name was found on several cuneiform tablets (1854)

2. In the tablets, Belshazzar was never referred to as king; always referred to as son of the king. Daniel says he was king. Is the Bible wrong?

3. Nabonidus (r. 556 - 539 B.C.) took power after Nebuchadnezzar died
  - a. He installed his son Belshazzar as king - co-regent "He [Nabonidus] freed his hand; he entrusted the kingship to him [Belshazzar]. Then he [Nabonidus] himself undertook a distant campaign." *A Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus*<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Nabonidus moved to Tema, Arabia/Edom

#### 4. Co-regency

- a. Oaths taken in Nabonidus' and Belshazzar's names. Note that oaths are only taken in the king's name.
- b. An astrological report mentions both names.
- c. Royal tribute report mentions both names.
- d. Nabonidus's prayer mentions both names
- e. Genesis 41:39-43: In what position does Pharaoh make Joseph? *2<sup>nd</sup> in command*



Map: Carl G. Ramusen, *NIV Atlas of the Bible*, 142.

f. Daniel 5:29: In what position does Belshazzar make Daniel? *3<sup>rd</sup> in command*

<sup>1</sup>. Young, 116.

- g. Nabonidus is king. Belshazzar is a subordinate co-king. Therefore, the highest place Daniel can achieve is 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

**5. One thousand nobles?<sup>2</sup>**

- a. Esther 1:4-5
- b. Athenaeus says Persian kings fed 15,000 men daily
- c. Alexander the Great's wedding feast was for 10,000 people

**6. Great banquet**

- a. Banquet: literally "bread"

**7. Wine**

**Practical application:** *What type of feast do we enjoy? A great banquet with unlimited wine and food with 1,000 nobles or the Lord's Supper with the bread and wine? One will celebrate for a night (if you can remember) or one looks forward to the great banquet with the Lamb of God.*

John Calvin: "Wonderful indeed was the stupidity which prepared a splendid banquet filled with delicacies, while the city was under siege. . . Since, then, the king was so keenly opposed, it is surprising to find him so careless as to celebrate a banquet."

**Practical application:** *Why was Belshazzar holding a feast when Cyrus was at the gates of Babylon? Over confidence? It is said that Babylon had stowed up food for ten years. It was considered invincible. Overconfidence and pride are dangerous characteristics.*

**Daniel 5:2**

- 8. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.**

Practical Application: *What is of the effects of drinking alcohol? Lose judgement*

John Calvin: "It is worth while to notice this, to induce us to be cautious concerning intemperance in drinking, because nothing is more common than the undertaking many things far too rashly when our senses are under the influence of wine. Hence we must use wine soberly, that it may invigorate not only the body but the mind and the senses, and may never weaken, or enervate [to reduce mental or moral vigor], or stupify our bodily or mental powers."

Practical Application: *Does Calvin allow the use of wine?*

*What is his concern?*

In the Anglican Church in Brussels, Belgium, after the service, they have fellowship time where beer and wine may be purchased.

In America, what is the position by Baptists on the use of alcohol?

In our home we don't have alcohol. Why?

One son, not only drinks beer, but makes it.

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<sup>2</sup> Young, 118.

- a. What are the two issues with the king drinking from the temple goblets?
  - 1.) *Desecrates religious items*
  - 2.) *My god is bigger than your God*
- b. Why did he choose the Jewish goblets and not from some other country? *Insult*

John Calvin: "Here king Belshazzar courts his own punishment, because he furiously stirred up God's wrath against himself."

- c. Esther 1:10-12: Why did Vashti refuse to go before the king? *They were drunk*
- d. What is a toxic mixture? Hint: What is the Naval Academy scandal. *Football players accused of rape, but she was so intoxicated, that she can not remember it or if she consented*
- e. Did Nebuchadnezzar ever drink from the temple's vessels? *No*

### 9. Nebuchadnezzar his father

- a. Fact: Belshazzar was NOT the son of Nebuchadnezzar; Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus.
- b. Is the Bible wrong?
- c. We need to interpret the Bible with Oriental minds, NOT Western minds. Possible solutions
  - 1.) Father can mean grandfather or even ancestor.
    - a.) Bible:
      - Case 1:
        - (1.) Luke 3:35-36:
          - (a.) Who is Shelah's father? *Cainan*
          - (b.) Who is Shelah's grandfather? *Arphaxad*
        - (2.) Genesis 11:12 Who is the father of Shelah? *Arphaxad*
      - Case 2:
        - (3.) II Kings 9:2:
          - (a.) Who is Jehu's father? *Jehoshapat*
          - (b.) Who is Jehu's grandfather? *Nimshi*
        - (4.) II Kings 9:20: What is the relationship between Jehu and Nimshi? *Jehu is called the son of Nimshi, even though he is technically Jehu's grandfather. Note this is in the same chapter. Would the writer have forgotten so quickly? Of course not.*
    - b.) After Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562, there were three kings in the next six years. Then, Nabonidus seizes power. He may have married one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters to legitimize his rule.
    - c.) Conclusion: Thus, Nebuchadnezzar would have been Belshazzar blood line (grand)father.
  - 2.) Father can mean predecessor in office.<sup>3</sup>
    - a.) Prince Khephren addresses King Cheops: "I relate to thy Majesty a wonder that came to pass in the time of thy father, King Neb-Ka."  
Note that King Neb-Ka reigned 100 years earlier than King Cheops and was of a completely different dynasty.

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<sup>3</sup>. Archer, 383.

- b.) Shalmaneser III's obelisk refers to King Jehu as "the son of Omri."
    - (1.) I Kings 16:29: Who is the son of Omri? *Ahab*
    - (2.) II Kings 3:1: Who is the son of Ahab? *Joram (Jehoram)*
    - (3.) II Kings 9:14 & 20: Who is the son of Nimshi? *Jehu (actually grandson)*
    - (4.) II Kings 9:24: Who kills Joram who is the son of Ahab the son of Omri? *Jehu*
    - (5.) Shalmaneser III refers to Jehu as the son of Omri because he succeeded him.
  - c.) Conclusion: Belshazzar's father could be Nebuchadnezzar because Belshazzar succeeded Nebuchadnezzar.
- 3.) Father can mean leader.
- a.) II Kings 13:4.
    - (1.) Whom does Jehoash call father? *Elisha*
    - (2.) Was he his father - literally or figuratively? *He was a figurative leader*
  - b.) George Washington is the *Father* of our country.
  - c.) Conclusion: Father can mean leader.

#### Daniel 5:3-4

- 10. Whom do they praise? *The gods of gold, silver, of bronze and iron, wood and stone.*
- 11. Note the numerous materials that made up the idols.
- 12. Cf. Rev. 9:20-21. *Idolatry and sexual immorality*

#### Daniel 5:5

- 13. **Plaster** - lit. chalk. Imagine the lampstand illuminating the hand on the white plaster near the king
- 14. How is this verse used in common speech today? *I see the handwriting on the wall.*
- 15. This passage is so well known that we need to reread it for its full impact. Imagine now sitting at the feast, intoxicated, and then suddenly a hand appears on the white plaster wall by the lamps. You can see it clearly because of the lampstand. The hand casts a shadow on the wall. The hand then begins writing. You are no longer intoxicated because this is weird. What was in that drink. You rub your eyes and then jump up from your table and move closer. Your sight has not betrayed you. There it is. A hand that has begun to write words on the wall. Just a hand - no arm, no body, but just a hand. You are fully awake - no drunken stupor.

#### Daniel 5:6

- 16. What is the king's physical reaction?
  - a. *Pale*
  - b. *Knees knocked together*
  - c. *legs gave way*
- 17. What is the king's spiritual reaction? *None*  
Is there any indication of repentance? *None*  
Is there any indication of confessing his sins? *None*