

## NOVEMBER 28

### Daniel 5

One of the reasons that God has put the stories of so many people in the Bible is for us to learn from them. In a way that only God would dare, He shows us their faith and their failures. At times, like with David, He shows us things in great detail. God does this expecting us to learn from them. Put another way, God really, really expects us to learn and be warned by what He shows us from those who lived before us.

Nebuchadnezzar's life became an open book to the world, that Yahweh and His people were to be respected. It's time to see who learned and who didn't.

After Neb, the Babylonian Empire declined through murders and weak rulers. Finally, Nabonidus became king and reigned for the last 17 years of the empire. He actually left the city of Babylon to rule from another city further north. He appointed his son, Belshazzar, to rule in Babylon as a co-regent. So Babylon had two rulers.

We will see from the coming chapters, that Daniel lost his position in the palace when Nebuchadnezzar died. Two of the later chapters mention Daniel during the years of Belshazzar, and in one of those chapters, Daniel seems to be in the Persian capital of Susa, apparently working as a diplomat. If that was the case, God perfectly designed this "demotion" of Daniel. As a result, Daniel most likely knew both Cyrus and Darius, the coming rulers of the Persian Empire.

As Babylon was falling apart, the Persian Empire was going through its own growing pains. The young Cyrus wanted to expand Persia, but was held back by his grandfather who ruled in Assyria. A member of the royal family of the Medes, a general named Darius, sided with Cyrus and together they launched a civil war. Darius was an older man and was apparently highly respected. It seems that Cyrus and Darius agreed to co-rule Persia. Well, the civil war went so well that they decided to go against Babylon. Nabonidus was an absentee ruler and Belshazzar was really not a ruler at all. Persia began devouring Babylon. All of the diplomatic ties were cut and the city of Babylon began to become a small, lonely island.

The night of this chapter is the last night of the Babylonian Empire. Darius was working to take the city, having already captured Nabonidus. Belshazzar didn't know that yet. The city had massive walls and enough supplies to endure a 20-year siege. Now we'll look at what Belshazzar, this military genius and leader of the people, decided to do to stop the Persian attack on the city of Babylon.

Vs. 1-4 Belshazzar *drank wine in front of them and tasted the wine*. In other words, he got roaring drunk. At some point, probably recounting the victories of Babylon, he ordered those cups and vessels to be brought out that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from *the temple in Jerusalem*. We read about Neb taking these in chapter 1. Then they praised the gods represented by the precious metals.

Vs. 5-6 This was a visible hand and finger, and the writing was inscribed into the plaster of the wall. The king's reaction might hint that he knew what he had done and that it wasn't smart.

Vs. 7-9 Now we see another crisis and another failed attempt by *the wise men of Babylon*. The king's offer of being *the third ruler in the kingdom* was right, except that he didn't know that Nabonidus had already been dethroned and captured.

Vs. 10-12 The actual genealogy of Belshazzar is hard to understand. It appears that he might not have had a clear blood tie to Nebuchadnezzar, but Neb is referred to as his father meaning he was his successor. I've read elsewhere that Belshazzar was a grandson and that the queen mother was one of Nebuchadnezzar's wives, probably his queen. If this woman was Neb's queen, she

was Persian. We just don't have enough records to know. But this woman knew about Daniel. According to her, Daniel had to have been indwelt by *the spirit of the holy gods*. How else could he know what he knew? The *excellent spirit* describes Daniel's attitude and heart. Not everyone who is an exile and a slave and demoted, etc., has an excellent spirit as a result of the Spirit. Daniel was a disciple.

Vs. 13-16 Notice that Daniel is still referred to as a Jewish exile. Since you know that the exile of the Jews lasted 70 years, and now with the Persians coming, you can imagine that Cyrus will soon be sending the Jews back to Jerusalem as God foretold, you can add up some years. If Daniel was taken when he was 16, that would make him about 86 now. Sometimes when you wake up old people they get grumpy. As Daniel walked in, having served all the years of Nebuchadnezzar, I'm sure he was disgusted to see what was happening. The empire had crumbled and this night was the cherry on top. Also, Daniel recognized the vessels of gold from the temple in Jerusalem.

Vs. 17-23 This is a very strong section of Scripture. Notice that while Daniel is respectful in turning down the riches and the offer to rule, there is a tone of acknowledging the foolishness of this evening.

What do you think is the key verse in this section? God expected Belshazzar to have learned from all He had done to Nebuchadnezzar. I would choose v. 22.

Vs. 24-28 Measured, measured, weighed and wanting, *your kingdom is divided among the Medes and the Persians*. Notice the *writing was inscribed*. It was not invisible/disappearing ink. It was written into the ballroom wall. That little observation might have a big impact.

V. 29 This is a very interesting and sad verse. In every chapter since chapter 2, we have had a pagan king worshiping God. I know this isn't worship, but it sure feels like Belshazzar is saying that Daniel and God are right, and that he was a fool. Ordering Daniel to be given these things was his humble admission of guilt. Belshazzar was tested on what God had done with Nebuchadnezzar, and got an "F-." He was measured and found wanting.

Understand what has just happened here: Daniel, the 86-year-old Jewish exile, has been made a ruler of the Babylonian Empire. A proclamation was made in the still uncaptured city.

V. 30 Later that evening, Darius entered the city practically without resistance. He captured and killed Belshazzar. At that moment, Daniel was the sole ruler of the Babylonian Empire. In a moment of time, God took Daniel from a place of forgotten obscurity, to being the wisest and sole ruler of the Babylonian Empire. It might look like this is dubbing someone the captain of a sinking ship, but God was on the move at the right time, to rescue His people and to show them grace. God was still bending the nations to His will. In Daniel's years of obscurity after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, God was strategically positioning Daniel to save His people and begin their journey back to Jerusalem. What an amazing God and Savior.

Here are some thoughts for tomorrow. Why is it important that Darius was 62 years old. So what? Why didn't Darius kill Daniel? You always killed the top rulers of a nation when you took it over. Do you think Darius was told what had happened that night? Was there any proof other than Daniel's new clothes and royal necklace? Keep all of this in mind when you begin reading chapter 6. There are reasons why the following events and a new crisis situation will develop.

## **2 Peter 2**

Vs. 1-3 Peter and the Spirit are not holding back talking about the *false teachers* that are rising up in the church. Harry Ironside is credited with the saying, "Where there's light, there's bugs." It sounds funny, but when it comes to teachers who create dissension in the church, there is nothing funny. It is terrible to see very good and godly people get drawn into bitterness or into something false. This is why elders have to know the Lord, know the Word and be committed

disciple makers, passing on a passion for the Word. If you understand Ephesians 4:12-16, you see that disciple-making not only brings maturity in Christ, but is a protection against false teachers and deception.

Peter mentions four things in this section that result in the rise of false teachers. Take a minute to identify these. The bottom line is that the work of a church in the harvest is lost and Jesus is held up to ridicule.

Vs. 4-10 To get what Peter is saying here, notice the “if – then” structure. There are lots of “ifs,” but the “then” doesn’t come until v. 9. Highlight *if*, and when you get to the *then*, notice that it has two parts, a positive and a negative.

V. 4 This is the first *if*, and a very interesting verse. If you look at Genesis 6:1-5, you will find that *the sons of God* saw the *daughters of man* and mated with them. These sons of God are fallen angels. I don’t understand it, but it wasn’t good. That we know of, no other demons are bound. These are a special group. It would be nice if they all were bound, but this particular group violated something that God had forbidden. I’m not sure how it worked, but it increased evil in the world and it deepened the rebellion against God, and God stopped it. If you think of what demons said to Jesus, you can see that they were still afraid of being judged as God had judged those angels back in Genesis 6.

Notice that all of these “ifs” are chronological. So what you see in Genesis 6 is correct. This action by these angels preceded the flood.

Vs. 10-16 Peter and the Spirit are on a roll.

It is hard to boil down all of these descriptions, but look to see what themes you find in this section. A couple of things stand out to me.

First, these teachers have no real spiritual understanding, but play with spiritual things, like a drunk juggling knives. They get hurt and don’t really understand the powers they are dealing with. Remember that Jesus said it would be possible to use His name and to perform signs and still to be lost. *Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’* (Matt. 7:21-23) Never means never. Jesus never knew them. They didn’t lose their salvation. They never had it from the beginning.

Second, they are in the company of believers. They are at the feasts. They are accursed children. Worst of all, they are like Balaam, who for the sake of money gave spiritual insight to the enemy, to the king of Moab, showing him how to bring God’s wrath on Israel. Paul told Timothy (2 Tim. 3:5) and the Romans (Rom. 16:20) to avoid these kind of people. They were to be disciplined and put out of the fellowship, but not to be argued with.

Vs. 17-22 These people promise freedom, but are themselves slaves. Worse than that, it appears that some of them might be saved; but they have twisted the truth so much, that they’ve shipwrecked their faith and warped their understanding. They will be permanently damaged on earth, only to be saved as through fire.

And in the meantime, they cause unbelievers to scoff and they *deceive the hearts of the simple-minded.* (Rom. 16:18 RSV)

Romans 16:17-18, - *I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

Again, this is why you are in the Word, so that as you follow the Lord in the harvest, those you bring to Christ, and those who become disciples, will be firmly rooted in the Word and in following Christ in the harvest.

### **Psalm 119:113-128**

As you see how David depended on the Word, find in each verse a concern on David's mind. For example, in v. 113 David was concerned with those who were shaky in their loyalties, or in their promise to help him. But rather than worry about them, he found the faithfulness and firmness he needed in God and His law. That's a good lesson for all of us. David was a very distressed individual. What would he have done without God and His Word?

Vs. 113-120 *The double-minded* are the problem here. This is very interesting since we are reading something like this in 2 Peter regarding the false teachers. They were kind of following God, but not following God. Notice v. 115. That sounds a lot like Matthew 7:23. The judgment that David feared in v. 120 would be that same judgment of fire and the revealing of the heart. This judgment would reveal those who truly loved God and His Word and those who were merely there to enjoy the benefits, using godliness as a means of gain.

Vs. 121-128 The first two verses define David's concern in this section. He had powerful, hypocritical, religious-sounding enemies. Yet David was true to God, following the Word. To honor God and honor the Word, David had spared Saul's life twice. Still, David had moments he feared for his life, or feared that he himself would be put to shame for having such trust in God and His Word.

David longed for everything he had read about in God's Word. God's promises cannot fail and His steadfast love never ends. You might want to listen to "Your Love Never Fails," by Chris Quilala / Jesus Culture.

### **Proverbs 28:19-20**

V. 19 It is interesting to read this. I like the "p's" at the end and the play on the word *plenty*. Actually, I was just reading the parable of the man who built the barns in Luke 12:21. God says it is worthless to lay up treasure for yourself and not be rich toward Him.

V. 20 Why the punishment? *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.* (1 Tim. 6:9) They punish themselves.