

# DEEPER

## Daily Bible Study

Podcast, Study Notes, and Teacher Helps

### From Arrogance to Destruction

2020, Quarter 1, Lesson 6

#### Sabbath (February 1): From Arrogance to Destruction

Daniel 5 continues the dramatic stories contained in the narrative section of the book of Daniel. A comparison of Daniel 5 and the book of Revelation reveals numerous parallels that are instructive and beneficial in our understanding of prophecy. Some of these parallels include:

- Babylon as a place where God's people are held captive (Daniel 1:3,4 and Revelation 18:4).
- Pride as a defining characteristic of both Belshazzar and spiritual Babylon (Daniel 5:1,2 and Revelation 18:7).
- Babylon's denial and ignorance of impending destruction (Daniel 5:1 and Revelation 18:7).
- Cyrus and his freeing of the Jews as a type of Christ conquering Babylon and freeing the saints from its persecution (Daniel 6:30,31 and Revelation 19:11-21).
- The Euphrates river drying up as a prequel to its destruction (Isaiah 44:27 and Revelation 16:12).
- Babylon's blasphemous abuse of sacred objects (Daniel 5:2,3 and Revelation 17:3-6).
- Idolatry a central aspect of Babylonian worship (Revelation 5:4 and Revelation 13:14,15).
- Daniel and the saints at the end of time are delivered (Daniel 6:1-3 and Revelation 15:2).

#### Discussion Questions:

- Read 1 Corinthians 10:11 and Romans 15:4. For what reasons do you think God has revealed so many parallels between historical events and events yet to happen in the future? God wants people to be prepared for the tests and trials that lie ahead of them. He wants them to recognize the importance of developing the faith that is necessary to stand at the end of time.) In what ways has studying prophecy and typological events helped you in your life? (Answers will vary.)

#### Sunday (February 2): Belshazzar's Feast

The record of Belshazzar's feast the night Babylon fell remains for us today as a warning of the danger of human pride. It also contains striking parallels with Revelation's final events—parallels that we cannot ignore if we want to be among the "wise" people that Daniel speaks of in Daniel 12:3. Let's take a closer look at this king's final feast.

#### Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 5:1,3. While under the influence of alcohol, what bad decision does Belshazzar make? (He commanded that the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem be brought to him.) What point might the king have been trying to make by doing this? (He was trying to prove that he and his gods were more powerful than the Hebrew's God. He was also making a direct attack against the sanctity of the things that God had blessed.)

- Read Genesis 2:2,3. What else has God blessed that Bible prophecy says will be attacked at the end of time? (The seventh-day Sabbath has been specially blessed by God and, according to Revelation 13 and 14, will be a central object of Satan's attack at the end of time through the implementation of the mark of the beast.)
- Read Daniel 5:4. What else characterized Belshazzar's "worship" at his feast? (He "praised the gods" of nature and worshipped created things.) How might this be a parallel with the condition of our world today? (Modern society's focus on materialism also tends to make people worship created things more than the Creator. More specifically, the emerging neo-pagan earth worship and its influence on the more radical fringes of the environmental movement also lead people to "worship" the earth rather than the One that created it.)
- Read Isaiah 29:18-21. Rather than participate in Babylon's blasphemy, what should we be focusing on in our lives? (Knowing and understanding God and experiencing His righteousness.)
- Read Hebrews 11:6. How might the passage in Isaiah 29:18-21 help us understand better what it means to please God? (Answers will vary.)

### **Monday (February 3): An Uninvited Guest**

God's interruption of Belshazzar's feast with the writing on the wall startled the king into a tardy recognition of God's sovereignty. The reality of God's judgment occurred too late for Belshazzar—by the time he fully understood what was happening, his doom was already sealed. In the same way, many people in this world will have their self-focused lives interrupted by Christ's return. Too late they will recognize that there is a God in heaven, and that He is also the judge of all humanity.

#### Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 5:5-8. Why might God have chosen to interrupt Belshazzar's feast with a hand writing on the wall? (God's hand wrote the Ten Commandments. Belshazzar's blatant disregard for God's commandments was about to be visited with judgment. Also, Christ wrote the sins of some people in the dust, indicating that they could be forgiven. Belshazzar's "sins," in comparison, remained written on the wall, perhaps indicating that he had passed the point of his own personal probation.)
- Read Revelation 14:7. The realization of God's current judgment must have been a shock to Nebuchadnezzar. Is the reality of God's judgment a welcome one in our world today? (No more than it was for Belshazzar.) Why not? (Answers will vary. A divine judgment requires the existence of a divine Judge and a divine law that defines absolute truth and unmovable standards of right and wrong. All of these ideas run directly counter to the postmodern mindset of today's world, in which truth and reality are subjective.)
- Read Matthew 24:37-42. In what ways might Christ's warning in this passage have applied to the inhabitants of Belshazzar's Babylon? How do they apply to us? (Babylon's destruction, and Christ's second coming, will be a surprise to those who are not looking for this to happen. Just as Belshazzar's feast projected a sense of "normalcy" to the Babylonians on that fateful night, the amusements and business of this world will lull many into spiritual sleep even as Jesus Christ approaches with the angels of heaven.)

**Tuesday (February 4): Enter the Queen**

When Belshazzar's wise men could not interpret the writing on the wall, the queen, probably Belshazzar's mother, reminded him about Daniel, and suggested that the frightened king call in this aged statesman and servant of God (Daniel 5:9-12). Let's take a closer look at the reason why no one but Daniel could read the writing on the wall.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Romans 1:18-32. What made the sins of Belshazzar, and those described in Romans 1, so bad? (They knew who God was, and presumably, they also knew about God's law, at least in a basic, fundamental way. Yet, they chose to forget both.) What warnings can we learn from these passages about the danger of ignoring truth, and not acting on it? (Answers will vary.)
- Read the passage below and discuss why the devil's plan to make man forget God has been so successful, and how we can resist his temptations:

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will. {5T 738.1}

It was by falsifying the character of God and exciting distrust of Him that Satan tempted Eve to transgress. By sin the minds of our first parents were darkened, their natures were degraded, and their conceptions of God were molded by their own narrowness and selfishness. And as men became bolder in sin, the knowledge and the love of God faded from their minds and hearts. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God," they "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." {5T 738.2}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. {5T 738.4}

**Wednesday (February 5): Weighed and Found Wanting**

When Daniel reads the writing on the wall, it does not take him long to understand its meaning. Although it was no doubt difficult to tell Belshazzar the truth, Daniel did not hesitate to reveal the message of doom to the terror-stricken king. In today's lesson we will take a close look at what those mysterious words on the wall meant.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 5:18-23. For what reasons might Daniel have first explained to Belshazzar his sins, before explaining the judgment pronounced against him? (Probably so that he would realize the justness of God's judgment.)
- Read Daniel 5:24-28. These were Aramaic words, written in a language that the king and his wise men knew well. Why, then, couldn't they interpret the meaning? (First, they were all probably under the influence of alcohol. Secondly, this was a spiritual message and it

required a certain amount of spiritual discernment and perception to understand the meaning. Compare 1 Corinthians 2:14 and John 8:47.)

- How might we apply God's words of warning to Belshazzar, to our lives today?
  - MENE means "numbered, or counted." In what way do we all live in a "numbered" or "counted" period of time? (This life is a probationary time in which we are to prepare for heaven.)

There will be no future probation in which to prepare for eternity. It is in this life that we are to put on the robe of Christ's righteousness. This is our only opportunity to form characters for the home which Christ has made ready for those who obey His commandments. {COL 319.1}

- TEKEL means "weighed." If Belshazzar's sins were being weighed in figurative scale of God's judgment, what might be the "counterweight" in the opposing scale? (The righteousness of Christ.)

God is love. He has shown that love in the gift of Christ. When "He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," He withheld nothing from His purchased possession. (John 3:16.) He gave all heaven, from which we may draw strength and efficiency, that we be not repulsed or overcome by our great adversary. But the love of God does not lead Him to excuse sin. He did not excuse it in Satan; He did not excuse it in Adam or in Cain; nor will He excuse it in any other of the children of men. He will not connive at our sins or overlook our defects of character. He expects us to overcome in His name. {COL 316.3}

Those who reject the gift of Christ's righteousness are rejecting the attributes of character which would constitute them the sons and daughters of God. They are rejecting that which alone could give them a fitness for a place at the marriage feast. {COL 316.4}

- PERES means "divided." Belshazzar was literally divided from his kingdom through death. What do we need to be divided from so that we can successfully stand in the judgment? (We must be divided from sin.)

If you cling to self, refusing to yield your will to God, you are choosing death. To sin, wherever found, God is a consuming fire. If you choose sin, and refuse to separate from it, the presence of God, which consumes sin, must consume you. {MB 62.1}

It will require a sacrifice to give yourself to God; but it is a sacrifice of the lower for the higher, the earthly for the spiritual, the perishable for the eternal. God does not design that our will should be destroyed, for it is only through its exercise that we can accomplish what He would have us do. Our will is to be yielded to Him, that we may receive it again, purified and refined, and so linked in sympathy with the Divine that He can pour through us the tides of His love and power. However bitter and painful this surrender may appear to the willful, wayward heart, yet "it is profitable for thee." {MB 62.2}

## Thursday (February 6): The Fall of Babylon

At least three important theological points can be derived from the Bible's story of the fall of Babylon (taken from *The Book of Daniel* by Elias Brasil de Souza, p. 59):

1. The Holy Spirit empowered Daniel's life and ministry in Babylon, and, in some sense, this was attested to by the queen of Babylon (Daniel 5:11).
2. God wants us to learn from the past experiences of others (1 Corinthians 10:11).

3. God's sovereignty is one of the most important theological emphases of the entire book of Daniel. In both the narrative and prophetic sections of the book, this point is continually brought out (Daniel 2:21; 4:37; 5:23; 5:26,27; 7:26,27).

**Discussion Questions:**

- Read Daniel 5:29-31. What warnings can we take from Belshazzar's life, and death, that can help prevent us from sharing his fate? (Answers will vary.)

Belshazzar had been given many opportunities for knowing and doing the will of God. He had seen his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar banished from the society of men. He had seen the intellect in which the proud monarch gloried taken away by the One who gave it. He had seen the king driven from his kingdom, and made the companion of the beasts of the field. But Belshazzar's love of amusement and self-glorification effaced the lessons he should never have forgotten; and he committed sins similar to those that brought signal judgments on Nebuchadnezzar. He wasted the opportunities graciously granted him, neglecting to use the opportunities within his reach for becoming acquainted with truth. "What must I do to be saved?" was a question that the great but foolish king passed by indifferently. {BEcho April 25, 1898, par. 10}

- Babylon fell quickly, in a single night. How might this apply typologically to the destruction of spiritual Babylon at the end of time? (Spiritual Babylon will fall quickly and, for those not expecting its demise, unexpectedly.) What does this imply about the importance of "keeping watch" and being ready for Christ's second coming? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Genesis 11:1-9. What significance do you see in the fact that a confusion of language played an important role in both the collapse of the Babel kingdom, and later in the destruction of Babylon? Might a similar "confusion of language" play a role in the final destruction of spiritual Babylon at the end of time? If so, how? (Answers will vary.)

**Friday (February 7): The Fall of Babylon and Present Truth**

Daniel made it clear to Belshazzar that the great sin leading to his destruction was his failure to remember the lessons that Nebuchadnezzar had finally learned. After recounting Nebuchadnezzar's experiences with the God of Israel, Daniel said to Belshazzar, "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this" (Daniel 5:22). In other words, Belshazzar had been given an opportunity to understand and act on the truth, but he chose not to. 2 Peter 1:12 says, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." In today's lesson, we will take a deeper look at the Biblical concept of "present truth," and why it is so important to act on what God reveals to us.

At key points in salvation history, God has consistently brought a "present truth" message for people to act on. These key moments in salvation history have also consistently shared several important elements, as outlined below and summarized in the table that follows:

- "Present truth" combines a message explaining necessary action for survival or salvation (James 1:22). A message alone does not save people; it must be acted upon.
- Survival or salvation depends on obedience to the present truth message (Acts 2:37,38). The action that God calls people to through the present truth message is always obedience to His Word.

- “Present truth” builds on “previous truth” (2 Peter 1:20,21). God never ignores or contradicts His previous messages (Matthew 5:17-19), but He does bring new light, understanding, and tests to His people (1 John 2:8).
- The tests and decisions involved in present truth are often unique to time and place (Hebrews 3:12-19).
- Tests of present truth frequently occur in a time of judgment at the end of a time prophecy (see chart below).
- There is frequently a prophet raised up to announce the end of the prophetic time period, the judgment that is coming at the end of that time period, and the present truth that, if acted upon, will result in salvation (see chart below).

<b>Examples of Present Truth Messages in Salvation History</b>			
<b>Prophetic Time Period</b>	<b>Judgment</b>	<b>Prophet Sharing the Present Truth Message</b>	<b>Present Truth Message</b>
120 years	Destruction of the world by water	Noah	Build and get in the ark
400 years	Judgments on Egypt	Moses	Smear the Passover lamb's blood on the doorpost
70 years	Fall of Babylon	Zechariah/Haggai	Return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple
69 week (483 years)		John the Baptist	Accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah
69 ½ weeks (midst of final 7 years)	Judgment of this world (John 12:31)	Jesus Christ	Accept Christ's death and resurrection
70 weeks (490 years)	Judgment on the Jewish nation	Stephen	Accept Christ's role as Mediator and Judge in heaven
2300 years	Pre-advent judgment begins	Ellen White	Necessity of experiencing righteousness by faith/preparation for translation

### Discussion Questions:

- Read 2 Peter 1:12. What was “present truth” for Belshazzar and the inhabitants of Babylon the night of his last feast? (The 70 years of Babylonian captivity were ended, Babylon was falling, and God still had a prophet in Babylon in the person of Daniel.)
- What examples of “present truth” can you think of in the Bible? (Answers may include: Noah preaching about the flood and the call to get into the ark, Moses instructing the Israelites to smear blood on their doorposts on Passover night, and the opportunity given to the Jews by King Cyrus to return to Jerusalem.)
- What is present truth for us today? (Answers will vary.)