

## **DANIEL: THRIVING IN A GODLESS CULTURE**

### **VI: God's Enforcing His Sovereignty Over Nebuchadnezzar's Successors**

**(Daniel 5:1-31)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. As believers living in a spiritually decaying, godless culture, we need to live affirmatively in victory over sin.
- B. Daniel as a young man was taken captive by godless Babylonians, and he lived through Persia's conquest of Babylon, righteously and wisely serving the Lord in a godless culture as a great example for us.
- C. We view Daniel 5:1-31 on God's enforcing His sovereignty over Nebuchadnezzar's successors for our insight:

#### **II. God's Enforcing His Sovereignty Over Nebuchadnezzar's Successors, Daniel 5:1-31.**

- A. We learned in our last lesson in Daniel 4:1-37 that God worked in Nebuchadnezzar to make him a believer.
- B. However, Nebuchadnezzar's successors did not share his faith, and Daniel and his fellow Hebrews in Babylon were left facing several ungodly successors of Nebuchadnezzar (as follows):
  1. When Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B. C. and Daniel was around 60 years of age, Nebuchadnezzar's son Amel-marduk succeeded him, but he was murdered by his brother-in-law the Nergal-sharezer in 560 B. C. The Nergal-sharezer's son Labashi-marduk succeeded him in 556 B. C., but he in turn was assassinated by a group that included Nabonidus who then became king. Nabonidus entrusted the rule of his kingdom to his son Belshazzar while Nabonidus retired to Arabia. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Daniel 5:1)
  2. When Belshazzar came to the throne, the Persian army approached Babylon threatening to invade the city, so Belshazzar evidently tried to boost his officials' morale by hosting a great feast for them, Daniel 5:1.
  3. Belshazzar then called for the vessels Nebuchadnezzar had taken from God's temple that his guests might drink wine from them in blasphemous praise of the sovereignty of Babylon's gods over the gods of other lands that Babylon conquered, implying that Babylon's gods would protect them from Persia, Daniel 5:2-4.
- C. God thus revealed His sovereignty in contrast to godless Belshazzar's blasphemous activity, Daniel 5:5-31:
  1. While Belshazzar praised Babylon's gods over Judah's True God, a hand suddenly appeared writing a message on the wall behind the gold candlestick that had been taken from Jerusalem's temple, Dan. 5:5-6.
  2. The king cried for his counselors to read and interpret the message, offering to make the one who could do so the third ruler in the kingdom (after his father Nabonidus and himself), but they could not, Daniel 5:7-8.
  3. The queen entered the hall to report that Daniel had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, so Belshazzar called Daniel to interpret the writing, promising to make him the third ruler of the kingdom, Daniel 5:9-16.
  4. Daniel told the idolatrous Belshazzar to keep his gifts, but that he would interpret the writing, Daniel 5:17.
  5. Providing a context for the message, Daniel said Nebuchadnezzar had testified that he came to revere God, but Belshazzar did not humble himself though knowing of Nebuchadnezzar's testimony, Daniel 5:18-22.
  6. Indeed, Belshazzar had exalted himself against God by misusing God's holy vessels, Daniel 5:23.
  7. Daniel then explained the writing that announced God's judgment on Belshazzar in Daniel 5:24-28:
    - a. MENE was "an Aramaic noun referring to a weight of 50 shekels . . . from the verb *menah*, "to number, reckon," Bible Know Com., O. T., p. 1346. The noun is doubled to make it emphatic, meaning God had really numbered Belshazzar's kingdom, and finished it, Daniel 5:24-26. Belshazzar's reign was finished!
    - b. TEKEL "is a noun referring to a shekel . . . from the verb *tekal*, "to weigh," Ibid. Belshazzar had been weighed in the balances by God and found to be lacking, so he himself would be punished, Dan. 5:25, 27.
    - c. UPHARSIN, with the "U" being the conjunction "and," renders the noun *parsin*, a "half-mina (25 shekels)" and comes from the verb *peras*, "to break in two, divide," Ibid. The kingdom of Babylon would be divided with part being given to the Medes and the other part to the Persians, Daniel 5:25; 28, Ibid.
  8. In spite of the negative news about him in the message that Daniel had explained, Belshazzar nevertheless rewarded Daniel by making him third in the kingdom, Daniel 5:29.
  9. That very night, Belshazzar was slain by the invading Persians and Darius the Mede took the kingdom at age 62. This occurred in 539 B. C. when Daniel was 83 years old! (Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Daniel 5:30)
  10. God thus demonstrated His ongoing complete sovereignty over Nebuchadnezzar's successors!

***Lesson:*** Though Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by several ungodly kings ending with Belshazzar who desecrated God's holy temple vessels regardless of knowing about Nebuchadnezzar's testimony that God was to be honored, God still demonstrated His sovereignty by the handwriting on the wall and its fulfillment that very night.

***Application:*** May we trust the CONTINUING absolute sovereignty of God over all rulers, both godly and ungodly.