

Chapter 5

“The Hand Writing On The Wall”

Summary

- Daniel interprets the message on the wall for Belshazzar
- The city and empire of Babylon fall to the Medes and Persians

Outline

- I. The Great Feast
 - A. The party - vs. 1
 - B. Desecrating the vessels from the Temple - vs. 2-4
- II. The Writing on the Wall
 - A. The message on the wall - vs. 5
 - B. The king's reaction - vs. 6-7
 - C. No help in sight - vs. 8-9
 - D. The queen's advice - vs. 10-12
 - E. Daniel is brought in - vs. 13-16
- III. Daniel Interprets the Writing
 - A. Refusing the reward - vs. 17
 - B. Nebuchadnezzar's rise and fall - vs. 18-21
 - C. The pride of Belshazzar - vs. 22-23
 - D. The message - vs. 24-28
- IV. Epilogue
 - A. Daniel is rewarded anyway - vs. 29
 - B. The fall of Babylon - vs. 30-31

Notes

- Takes place in October, 542 B.C. Over 20 years since chapter 4.
- vs. 1 - this appears to be a religious festival celebrated while the city is besieged
- vs. 2 - see 1:3
- vs. 2 - “father” can mean “father”, “grandfather”, or maybe even any predecessor.
- vs. 5 - Archeologists found that the throne room in Nebuchadnezzar's palace had white plaster on the walls.
- vs. 7 - “third ruler” - since Belshazzar was second to Nabonidas it was the best he could offer.
- vs. 10 - the queen was probably Belshazzar's mother
- vs. 22 - “son” can mean “son”, “grandson”, or maybe even any descendant
- vs. 30 - the Golden Head (Babylon) of chapter 2 has fallen
- vs. 31 - the Silver Breast and Arms (Persia) of chapter 2 has risen
- vs. 31 - We'll talk about Darius the Mede next time.

Who is Belshazzar???

- Only in recent times has archaeological evidence showed the name Belshazzar
- Still a lot of debate and confusion about him.
- He was the ruler of the city and region of Babylon beginning around 553 B.C.
 - Nabonidas, his father, was the ruler of the empire but lived at Teima
- Some conjecture that he is a son of Nebuchadnezzar whose mother was married by Nabonidas on his ascension to power...
- ...or maybe his mother was Nebuchadnezzar's daughter who was married by Nabonidas...
- DOES IT REALLY MATTER?!?!?!?!?

The Message on the Wall

- Probably written in Hebrew/Aramaic - מנא, מנא, תקל, ופרסין
- All of these words are in the past tense
- Mene
 - means "numbered, counted"
 - The days of Babylon and Belshazzar are over.
- Tekel
 - means "weighed, balanced"
 - Babylon and Belshazzar had been found wanting on God's scale
- Upharsin, Peres
 - "Pharsin" is the plural form of Peres, and "U" means "and"
 - means "divided"
 - The Babylonian Empire is conquered by the Medes and the Persians

The Fall of Babylon

- There are a few different ancient accounts that vary in detail
- The Medes and Persians expanded in power and made progress against Babylon
- Nabonidas and the Babylonians were defeated in the Battle of Opis in 540 B.C.
- By 542 B.C. the city of Babylon is under siege by the Medes and Persians
- In October, 542 B.C., Babylon falls without a battle.
 - Greek historian Herodotus says the Persian army diverted the Euphrates River that ran under the walls of the city and entered through the river bed.
 - This also appears to have been in the middle of a religious festival in the city
- Babylon and its territories are absorbed into the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians, ruled by Cyrus the Great.
- Prophecies about Babylon's fall:
 - Isaiah 13:17-22, 21:1-10
 - Jeremiah 51:33-58