

GLEANINGS FROM THE BOOK OF DANIEL

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

DANIEL CHAPTER 5:1-12

A NEW KING

Some background to help you understand this section of scripture. The date of this account is 539BC. It's been 23 years since Nebuchadnezzar's death. Belshazzar was left in charge of the city of Babylon, while his father Nabonidus, was either fighting the Medo-Persians, or in Arabia. Meanwhile the Medo-Persian army had surrounded Babylon while Belshazzar partied! He was confident that Babylon could not be defeated because it was protected by 17 miles of walls that were 22 feet thick, 90 feet high, a number of huge bronze gates, accompanied by a system of inner and outer walls and moats to keep an invading army out.

1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. 2 While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father* Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

5 In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6 Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other. 7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." 8 Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.

10 The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father*, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father*—your father* the king—made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. 12 Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."

*Belshazzar is the great, great, great grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.

1) What was the God-given purpose of the gold and silver vessels taken from the Temple in Jerusalem?

2) Why do think God was so angry with Belshazzar?

3) Whose fingers do you think wrote on the wall?

4) Why did Belshazzar promise to make whoever could interpret the writing the *third* ruler in the kingdom (vs. 7) rather than the *second* ruler in the kingdom?

5) Why do you think Belshazzar turned to the other wisemen first, rather than to Daniel who had a better reputation for interpreting dreams? What does that tell you about King Belshazzar?

6) Like the gold and silver vessels, God has given each of us spiritual gifts to serve Him (ref. 1Cor. 12 & Romans 12). Give an example of how a Christian might misuse those gifts.

7) How can you protect yourself from misusing the gift(s) that God has given you?
