

DANIEL

Week 15, chapters 5 and 6

We'll bring Daniel chapter 5 to a close and move into chapter 6 today.

We've covered up to verse 24; and what we've learned is that somewhat recent archeological finds have cleared up some issues regarding the King of Babylon who is the main character of this chapter. First, this king (***Belshatzar***) existed, which as early as 30 years ago was highly disputed. Second, this king's father was Nabonidus and Nabonidus was seldom at home in Babel to rule. Rather because he was a career military man before he was elevated to the throne, he led military excursions to far away places with the idea to both secure his empire's borders and to further expand Babylon's influence. Third, there was some type of arrangement between Nabonidus and his son ***Belshatzar*** that made ***Belshatzar*** the ruler in his father's stead during those long absences that were several years at a time. While there is no way to definitively prove it, the fact that the Babylonian Chronicles (actual records of the Babylonian Kingdom that have been unearthed and translated) speak of ***Belshatzar*** appointing high government officials to their offices, and then Nabonidus using those same officials when he was home and sitting on his throne, makes it clear that ***Belshatzar*** was the chief administrator of the empire except when his father was in town. So it is hard to think of the ruling arrangement between Nabonidus and son as anything other than a co-regency or something closely resembling it.

Thus when Daniel speaks of ***Belshatzar*** as "the king", common sense asks: what else would he be called? He was sitting on the throne, ruling over the kingdom, and out of the 17 years that Nabonidus is said to have ruled, he was gone at least 12 or 13 years of that time meaning ***Belshatzar*** was in full control for most of those 17 years. This was the man whom Daniel dealt with on a regular basis; not Nabonidus.

Then we have the matter of the mysterious writing appearing upon the wall during a great banquet given by ***Belshatzar*** in honor of himself. ***Belshatzar***, drunk and in a frivolous mood, broke with all caution and custom and ordered that the gold and silver Jerusalem Temple ritual goblets be brought to him, so that he and his guests could drink wine from them and make toasts to their gods. Their mocking of Yehoveh is the catalyst for the Lord shattering their party atmosphere as a ghostly hand and fingers appeared in front of everyone present and wrote upon a white plastered wall of the palace. But the words themselves were unintelligible; so the king, in a panic, literally screamed for his Chaldean seers to come and tell him what the writing said. They couldn't. So

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we're told that a queen entered the room and advised **Belshatzar** to call upon Daniel, as he had been so accurate in service to the Babylonian Patriarch Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel comes, takes a look at the writing and says yes he can, and will, tell the king what it means. But first, he takes the king down a peg by telling him that as great as Nebuchadnezzar had been, this king he was standing before was just a pretender. But even worse, even though Nebuchadnezzar wasn't without transgression upon the God of Israel, he had shown respect and wisdom and had responded on a number of occasions to the God Most High; enough that Yehoveh forgave and honored Nebuchadnezzar and allowed him to rule over Babylon for 43 years. But the story would be different for **Belshatzar**. The Lord had already judged him and the matter was settled. There would be no offer to repent and change. No chance to honor God and be forgiven. Rather, the arrogance of defiling the ritual vessels of the Lord's House that had been consecrated to honor exclusively the God of Israel showed that **Belshatzar** was beyond redemption and so his earthly and eternal fate were sealed.

We closed with a reading from the book of Hebrews chapter 10 that makes it abundantly plain that, like for **Belshatzar**, there is a spiritual line that a person can cross that disqualifies them from membership in the Kingdom of God. Any offer of divine grace is rescinded. And no church, Pope, Pastor or Rabbi decides where that line is; and only the Lord judges when the line has been crossed. It doesn't matter that someone goes forward publically, confesses and prays the sinners prayer; it doesn't matter that a person goes to church or synagogue regularly or even leads the proceedings; it doesn't matter that a person has mastered the language of Christian-eze and runs around calling upon the name of Jesus. If that person keeps on willfully sinning, behaving arrogantly towards the Lord, and denying the truth of God's Word, there is no atonement by Christ's blood or by the blood of any animal as a substitute for their sins. And there is no other kind of atonement available to call upon. The fires of Hell are the final resting place of that person.

Let's re-read the final few verses of Daniel 5.

RE-READ DANIEL 5: 24 – end

Daniel makes it clear to **Belshatzar**: you have not glorified the Lord, and so the words written on the wall are your epitaph. It is interesting how publically this is happening; 1000 high ranking officials, family members, and aristocrats are witnessing God's oracle of judgment upon this king. So no one will be able to deny that what Daniel says the writings mean are accurate, or that when God's pronounces judgment there is no escape.

The words were mene, mene, tekel, upharsin. But why couldn't the king's Chaldean seers at least identify the words if not their meaning? We're not told, and so there are a number of speculations. One is that the writing was in Hebrew so only a Jew would know it. But even if the Chaldeans didn't know Hebrew, they easily would have recognized that it WAS Hebrew. Some Rabbis have suggested that each word was written vertically instead of horizontally, and since they were all consonants it would have been confusing. Another, and I think more likely, possibility is that these weren't alphabet characters being used (as depicted by every illustration I've ever seen of this story), but rather they were what we could call idea grams. That is, they were non-standard

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symbols. No matter the case, the purpose was not just to cause anxiety and panic but they were to be read and interpreted.

Mene means numbered. Therefore, says Daniel, the number of days of your kingdom (the Babylonian Empire) has been counted as full and now it comes to an end. Tekel means weighed. The mental picture is of a balance scale; or better the scales of God's justice. And when Belshatzar is set upon those scales he come us short of righteousness. The final word is Upharsin, and this is actually two words. The "U" means and. Pharsin is a plural word (grammatically) and it means Persians. Where Daniel says the kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians some commentators have incorrectly said that this means that the kingdom will be effectively cut in half, with half going to the Medes and the other half to the Persians. What it means however is the kingdom will be dissolved, divided away from the Babylonian dynasty, and turned over to the Medes and Persians.

Fascinating; verse 29 tells us that upon hearing Daniel the king gave to Daniel the promised rewards of a purple garment (signifying royal position) and the gold chain of authority, and proclaimed that he would be one of 3 men who would administrate the Babylonian Empire. Apparently because Daniel's unerring deciphering of dreams and visions in the past, Belshatzar found no reason not to take Daniel at his word. He must have believed and accepted that Babylon's time was up, and therefore his own time was up.

This chapter ends with the words that that very night **Belshatzar** was killed. We're given no clue as to whom or what killed him. But Babylonian records strongly imply that when the Persians and Medes attacked Babylon, **Belshatzar** was left to lead the city's defenses and he died in the effort.

Let's move on to chapter 6.

READ DANIEL CHAPTER 6 all

Just as the first few words to open chapter 5 have created much controversy, so it is with the opening words of chapter 6. The issue is Daryavesh (Darius) the Mede. And it is that many scholars claim that this is a fictional character, and that all other records show that it was not Darius the Mede but rather Cyrus the Persian who conquered Babylon. Some well meaning Christian commentators have tried to harmonize this discrepancy by saying that they were the same person just going to two different names in two different languages.

We are going to do our best to untangle this, just as we did with the issue of Belshatzar and Nabonidus. But first it is important to know that even the several Babylonian and Persian records discovered aren't consistent regarding Darius, Cyrus, or the conquering of Babylon. So this drum beat accusation by liberal bible critics that the bible doesn't harmonize with Babylonian and Persian accounts, and therefore it is the bible that is in error, is dishonest. The handful of Babylonian and Persian accounts that address this matter don't even harmonize among themselves.

However before we address that, let's pause to reflect and get a little perspective, and to consider

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what we've seen illustrated over these past 15 weeks of studying Daniel. The Lord told the Kingdom of Judah in Jeremiah that they would be in exile for 70 years for their idolatrous and rebellious sins. As of the beginning of chapter 6, 68 of those years have now passed. Chapters 1 through 5, then, deal historically with all but the final 2 years of the Babylonian Captivity or Exile. Thus in the 7 remaining chapters (beginning with chapter 6) we're going to be dealing with a mere 24 month time span.

Further chapter 6 will bring to a conclusion what we can rightfully call the "historical" portion of Daniel; that is the portion book that explains the general history of the Jews in exile in Babylon. What follows starting in Chapter 7 is mostly prophetic. And here is what must be Daniel's main point in these first 6 historical chapters and something we are meant to absorb deeply into our souls: the God of Israel is a God of awesome miracles and wonders. He is a sovereign God who is no respecter of persons; He will work in co-operation with a foreign power (we've seen this pattern before), even elevating a pagan king to the most powerful man the world has ever known, in order to achieve His purposes. This co-operation with Babylon was meant to not only subjugate Judah as a means of punishment for their gross transgressions against Him, but ironically to also arrange the circumstances for Judah's eventual deliverance. This is the End Times pattern as well, when the Anti-Christ who represents the entire gentile world will be raised up in co-operation with God to punish Israel once again, but ironically will also be used to bring about redemption.

Yet there is another part to the lesson of Daniel that is illustrated for us. I see it similarly as Calvin saw it; it is that we are shown that the only way we can truly know God is by means of a pure heart; and that heart must be Christ purified because self-purification to the needed level is humanly unattainable. If we are ever going to be given the slightest spiritual insight into the great holy mysteries spoken of in Scripture, including those we have read about in the book of Daniel, we must first have our minds washed clean by Living Water. Those who write commentaries about Daniel, but who haven't been purified by Messiah's work on the cross, of course see it as but naturalistic and mythical for they have no means to comprehend the awesome spiritual insights that burst forth from those verses. But even then, true Believers will only apprehend the tiniest fraction of that which we'll finally know when we meet our God face to face in eternity; so we have no place for pride or arrogance because we are part of God's elect.

Thus we learn that while faith will **not** be the ongoing requirement when we are living in heaven and then with God on a remade earth, on the other hand faith will **always** be our prerequisite to knowing God, being admitted into heaven, and winning the privilege of seeing God face to face. When we are finally in heaven and living with our Lord, the purpose FOR our faith on earth will have been fulfilled. But for the time we are in this present world, it is with troubles that we live because this is, after all, the world and not heaven. So ours must be more a walk of faith than sight since there is so little that we who presently live in a physical world of 4 finite dimensions can ever hope to know about an eternal God who lives in the limitless spiritual dimension.

This is why Believers who live long enough eventually learn that our life's journey will follow the pathways upon glorious mountain tops with great victories that inevitably descend into deep valleys of defeat and sorrows and then back up again. This bumpy journey is normal, and it is necessary, because just as we must exercise our muscles by straining against resistance to gain physical

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strength and stamina, we must exercise our souls against the heavy weight of life's great moral challenges to bring spiritual vitality, maturity and growth. This is how the Lord refines us, molds us, reshapes us.

Only as we pass by the many mile markers of our journey do we begin to perceive the larger and the finer things that the Lord has endeavored to teach us all those years. Our fears give way to perseverance in our faith. Our doubts give way to confidence in God's promises and assurances. As my father used to say: if we'll allow it, our experiences eventually lead us to relax in the Lord. We see all of these characteristics in the persons of **Daniel, Shadrakh, Meshakh, and Aved-N'go**. And we see the resistance they face in Nebuchadnezzar and the kings who followed him. These 4 Jews were not without emotions and concerns, but there was no anxiety or panic present. They were not perfect; but they allowed themselves to be perfected by the hand of God, through their earthly testing and trials. So we learn that our difficulties and challenges here on earth are not abnormal; rather they are needed and to be expected.

Let's talk now about King Darius the Mede who is said in verse 1 of chapter 6 to have taken over the kingdom (meaning the Babylonian Empire) at the age of 62. First let me mention that some bible versions have placed this opening verse (as it is in our CJB) as the final verse of chapter 5. I think that is incorrect, but it doesn't harm the text.

But the next thing to notice is the careful wording of the passage that the kingdom PASSED to Darius. In other words Darius is not said to have conquered the Babylonians. Rather, in some kind of unspoken political process, he was entrusted with the throne. In fact in chapter 9, the opening words of verse 1 say: "In the first year of **Daryavesh**(Darius) the son of **Achashverosh**, a Mede by birth who was made king over the **Kasdim** (the Chaldeans)....." So the theme throughout Daniel regarding Darius is that he didn't become king by taking the throne away from somebody. Rather he was given it; somebody assigned the throne to him. But who? Why?

The next issue regarding Darius is that for the longest time there was found no reference to a king called Darius among Babylonian, Median, or Persian documents. Thus, as typical, the bible critical school of commentators assumed that he was either a completely made-up character by the author of Daniel; or the author got names mixed up and put the wrong person at the wrong time in history. Since the issue of Darius is a serious one, and to this day it is controversial, we're going to spend a bit of time with it so that you can amaze and dazzle your friends. Not really. It is so that you can remain confident in the integrity of the book of Daniel without having to fall back to merely "believing what you want to believe". So stay with me because this is a bit complicated, but it is also quite fascinating. And to get started I must first tell you that in Daniel chapter 10, the opening verse speaks of King **Koresh** (King Cyrus), who follows King Darius to the throne of the former Babylonian Empire. Is there a relationship between these two men?

Another issue is that the ancient Babylonian, Median and Persian records, as well as the later Greek records of famous historians such as Herodotus who lived about 75 years after the Daniel chapter 6 events, and of Xenophon of Athens who lived a bit more than a century after the events of Daniel chapter 6, don't find a full consensus on the succession of kings after Nebuchadnezzar, and especially the succession of the Median and Persian kings after Babylon fell into their hands.

However, some archeological findings have shed some light on the matter that, while not clearing up everything, helps substantially.

In the northwestern corner of Iran, in the province of Kermanshah, is a place along an ancient roadway that connected Babylon with Media called MountBehistun. Chiseled into that mountain is a 50 foot high, 70 foot wide Bas relief that includes an inscription that has added some fascinating insight into the history of the Medes and Persians. Here is a translation of that inscription:

Thus speaks Darius the king: My father was Hystaspes, the father of Hystaspes was Arshama, the father of Arshama was Ariyamna, the father of Ariyamna was Cispis, the father of Cispis was Achaemenes.

What makes this find so important is that it speaks of King Darius (a man the critical bible scholars say didn't exist in Daniel chapter 6), and then gives what is claimed to be his ancestral history.

But then in the equally as ancient Cyrus Cylinder is found this record that translates this way:

I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of the land of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters, son of Cambyses, great king, king of the city of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, great king, king of the city of Anshan, great-grandson of Cispis, great king, king of the city of Anshan.

There are two Cyrus's that are spoken of here: Cyrus the 1st and Cyrus the 2nd. Cyrus the 2nd is the king who is mentioned in Daniel chapter 10, and is better know as Cyrus the Great. Why is this discovered record important? Because it verifies a couple of things: it verifies that a Persian King named Cyrus ruled over Babylon, and that the Patriarch of his family line is a fellow named Cispis. Just as Darius the king in the MountBehistun is also supposed to be in the family line of Cispis. So, King Darius and King Cyrus are related, each owing their royal blood to one Cispis. Bible critics who don't want their to be a Darius, and don't want their to be a close relationship between the Medes and Persians because it messes up their agenda, go so far as to say that Darius must have been an alternate name for Cyrus since both are said to come from Cispis. It's just that the family tree in between Cispis and Darius must be in error. Notice how everything, no matter the source, no matter how ancient, must be an error if it doesn't fit the bible critical scenario that Daniel is a fictitious legend that was written far later in coded language meant to reference Antiochus Epiphanies.

But what makes these ancient records even more fascinating is that the line of Darius is the line of the kings of Media, and the line of Cyrus is the line of the kings of Persia. Therefore we begin to understand the close relationship between the kingdom of Media and the kingdom of Persia; they had a common Patriarch: Cispis. It is not unlike the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah; they both came from a common father, Jacob. So despite their differences that at times even spilled over into open warfare, they always held a certain bond between them due to a long common family history that each clung to.

So, what the Cyrus cylinder also informs us is this: ***I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king,***

mighty king, king of Babylon..... In other words, Cyrus claims to be the King of Babylon, and other records such as those from Josephus, Herodotus and Xenophon all claim that it was Cyrus the Great who conquered Babylon. Nowhere is it claimed that Darius the Mede conquered Babylon; and neither does Daniel make that claim (even though bible critical scholars twist the plain meaning to say that the bible does). So then how does this square with the Daniel chapter 6 verse 1 claim that Darius the Mede became the King of the Chaldeans (Babylonians)? Simple; it was indeed Cyrus the Great who was known as a great warrior leader who attacked and conquered Babylon. But for his own good reasons (no doubt for political expediency) he appointed this 62 year old Mede named Darius as the caretaker king over Babylon while Cyrus attended to other matters. Chaldea was the district where the capital of Babylon, the city of Babel, was located. Remember: the book of Daniel makes it clear that Darius didn't conquer Babylon; rather the throne was given to him by someone. That someone was Cyrus the Great. And then in a few years Cyrus removed Darius and sat on the throne of what was the Babylonian Empire, but now is the Media-Persian Empire, himself. The puzzle pieces seem to have fallen together logically, historically, and biblically.

So, with the prophesied succession of Empires that are symbolized in Daniel chapter 2 with Nebuchadnezzar's dream-statue of the 4 metals in mind, we see that the head of gold that is Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon now conquered and gone, the transition of the Babylonian Empire into the possession of the silver arms and chest of the dream statue has occurred. And the silver arms and chest are plainly shown (in Daniel 6) to be the Medes and Persians. This is further verified by ancient Median and Persian records and inscriptions. So we can now safely cast aside yet another warrantless accusation as to the veracity of the book of Daniel.

Verse 2 explains that Darius (***Daryavesh*** the Mede) went about organizing the empire by putting 120 loyal governors (viceroys) in charge of various nations, kingdoms and districts that formed the empire. These 120 reported to 3 chiefs (no doubt something like 40 governors reporting to each of the chiefs), and then the 3 chiefs reported to Darius. Interestingly one of the 3 chiefs was Daniel. And Daniel, as the exceptional human being and administrator that he had always proved to be, outshone all the others and became the favorite of King Darius. Daniel was so obviously supreme in ability over the others that Darius shared with his inner circle that he was strongly considering putting Daniel in charge over even the chiefs; thus making him a sort of vice-king to Darius. Verse 4 highlights that this tremendous character and ability was present in Daniel due to "an excellent spirit" in him. This doesn't refer to Daniel's tireless efforts or determined faithfulness to serve whoever occupied the throne, but rather to an endowment of God upon him. In modern Church-speak we would say that the Lord had given Daniel the spiritual gift of administration. As much as this exceptionalism shown by Daniel was appreciated by the elderly King Darius, it caused deep resentment and jealousy between the other 2 chiefs and many of the 120 governors. These were, after all, mostly self-serving politicians who each had their own ambitions to fulfill.

Verse 6 explains that these men who weren't about to have the Jewish Daniel raised above them convened a meeting to try to figure out what to do about it. But they had a problem; even they couldn't find fault with anything he did. So the only solution was to use Daniel's religion against him in order to entrap him. Such is the way of politicians and those who feel threatened in their positions.

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John 8:1-6 CJB

CJB *John 8:1 But Yeshua went to the Mount of Olives.*

² *At daybreak, he appeared again in the Temple Court, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.*

³ *The Torah-teachers and the P'rushim brought in a woman who had been caught committing adultery and made her stand in the center of the group.*

⁴ *Then they said to him, "Rabbi, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery.*

⁵ *Now in our Torah, Moshe commanded that such a woman be stoned to death. What do you say about it?"*

⁶ *They said this to trap him, so that they might have ground for bringing charges against him; but Yeshua bent down and began writing in the dust with his finger.*

We'll continue with Daniel 6 next week.