

## A Message From God

### Daniel 5:10-17

#### Introduction

In this chapter King Belshazzar receives an unexpected message from the Most High God. In our last study we read about the lavish gala ball the king hosted in the enormous Babylonian palace. It was an apocalyptic party that was supposed to boost the spirits of a king and people who felt certain the gods of Babylon would make a perpetual provision against all their enemies (v.1). The king had the gall to call for the sacred objects captured from Jerusalem's temple to toast the gods they had come to trust (vv.2-4). To their shock and dismay a strange hand appeared out of no where and began to write on the plaster wall (vv.5-6) next to a burning lampstand (perhaps the golden menorah of the Temple). The panicked king called for the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers to read the writing and interpret its meaning (vv. 7-9). The king offers a reward (v.7) but no one is able to discern the mysterious message (v.8).

The writer of Hebrews reminded his Jewish audience that God, at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the father by the prophets, has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the words (Hebrews 1:1-2). God speaks. This pagan king joined a long line of people who were the recipients of a revelation from God. Unfortunately for this king it was a revelation of God as Judge.

The king is desperate to know the meaning of the message but can find no answers from Babylon's best. We live in a world where many people believe God is silent. In the past God used fingers writing on a wall to communicate revelation about impending judgment (see Ron Rhodes; *40 Days Through Daniel*; p.135). That might seem bizarre to you. But over and over again in the Old Testament God called for His revelation to be written down and preserved for us. How does God speak today? Through His Spirit and through His Son and through His Word. The Psalmist wrote; "*He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way*" (*Psalm 25:9 NIV*).

Have you ever wondered if God was trying to say something to you? What does the Bible tell us? The Bible reveals the living God to us. The Bible introduces us to Jesus Christ. The Bible offers guidance, wisdom, and light.

#### A Queen's Recommendation (vv.10-12)

*Daniel 5:10–17 (NKJV)* *10The 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.*

In an earlier passage we learned the king's wives and concubines drank with him (v.3). Who then is this queen? She is quite likely Belshazzar's mother. The names of Belshazzar's grandmother and mother have come down to us from ancient sources; the historian Herodotus identifies her as Nitocris. The queen mother became aware of the circumstances and made her way into the banquet hall and speaks. And like any concerned mother she begins with the middle

## **A Message From God**

### **Daniel 5:10-17**

eastern greeting “O king, live forever!”(see Daniel 2:4;3:9; 6:6). At this point she has no idea that her son has only a few fleeting hours to live.

*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.”*

The queen’s description of Daniel is remarkable. The translation “in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God” could read “in whom is the Spirit of the holy gods” in the sense that the gods of Babylon communicated their wisdom through Daniel. Our translation in context makes much more sense and can refer to the one true God of Israel working in Daniel.

“... *and in the days of your father*” that is the days of Nebuchadnezzar—who died in 562 B.C (these events are taking place October 12, 539).

Daniel is now in his 80’s. With the succession of kings Daniel may have slipped out of the court of Babylon or faded in importance or it could be that Daniel simply distanced himself from Nabonidus and Belshazzar. At the end of Nebuchadnezzar’s life—he became convinced of the authority and abilities of the one true God. The present administration exalted and praised the pagan gods. The queen mother indicates to the king that if an answer can be found Daniel was the man to help find that answer.

And why was Daniel the right man for the job? He was a man of humility. He was a man of integrity. In the New Testament Paul told Titus “Shew yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity” (Titus 2:7 NRSV).

Please—live in such a way that I can tell the truth about you at your funeral. Who are you really? Oswald Chambers wrote; “My worth to God in public is what I am in private.”

What was Daniel’s reputation? He is filled with the Spirit of the Holy God; light, understanding and wisdom. And not just any wisdom—like the wisdom of the gods. What does that mean? This is the kind of wisdom that does not seem available to mere mortals. What was Daniel able to do? He was the only one who could interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s strange dreams (chapter 2:1-49;4:1-38).

**How important is it to have a good reputation?**

## A Message From God

### Daniel 5:10-17

Daniel's reputation brought him before kings and brought him great honor in his lifetime. Daniel reminds me of Proverbs 22:29; "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings" (see also Genesis 41:46).

We can lose our good reputation in one selfish moment. We Christians can sing songs or speak soul stirring sermons or visit the sick, give money to the poor, fund worthy causes and lose all credibility in one act of selfish indulgence. Daniel in captivity holds on to holiness, and righteousness and honesty and integrity. Daniel is wise and self-less. Daniel cares for his captors and tells them the truth.

Daniel is honorable, holy, harmless, blameless. **What is your reputation?**

In the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy God calls Israel to obey God's Word. He warns them about adding or subtracting from God's Word (4:2). The Lord admonishes them; "*Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ; 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'*" (v.6). One translation puts it this way; "If you obey God's commands they will give you a reputation for wisdom and intelligence. When the surrounding nations hear these laws, they will exclaim, "What other nation is as wise and prudent as Israel!" (TLB).

A good reputation comes from obeying the Word of God. Some people think the way to a good reputation is to convince others that you are smart or clever or talented or glamorous. **Knowing and obeying God's Word will prove much more valuable.** A good reputation comes from consistent living and submission and obedience to Christ. Do you remember the story of Ruth? She thanked Boaz for his kindness and admitted she was a stranger and a foreigner. Boaz said, "Yes I know; and I also know about all the love and kindness you have shown your mother-in-law since the death of her husband, and how you left your mother and father in your own land and have come here to live among strangers" (Ruth 2:10-11). Boaz saw that Ruth was hardworking, loving, kind, faithful and brave. The qualities earned her a good reputation which she demonstrated consistently over her life. Your reputation is formed by the people who watch you at work, in your home, in your school or in your church or in your community. A good reputation comes when you live out your deeply held beliefs in community.

The king's message was a mystery! Who better to solve the mystery than the most famous detective in all history! In the ancient world solving problems, riddles and mysteries were a kind of sport. The description of Daniel stands in stark contrast to the failed abilities of his contemporaries. The Lord God had given Daniel the ability to solve complex problems.

It is also interesting the queen mother refers to Daniel by his Hebrew name and also mentions his Babylonian name; Belteshazzar which means Bel, protect his life, or Bel protect the king's life (Bel was a Babylonian deity).

There is a sense of urgency and immediacy in the queen mother's recommendation.

## A Message From God

### Daniel 5:10-17

#### A King's Reward (vv.13-16)

*13Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.*

*15Now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing.*

Why does the king ask; "Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?" It is the king's declaration of superiority.

The king acknowledges that Daniel has a reputation of being filled with God's Spirit; light, understanding and wisdom.

How can we be filled with God's Spirit; light, understanding and wisdom?

The Psalmist wrote; "*I am a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Your commandments from me*" (119:19 NKJV). The Psalmist is saying, I am a stranger here. I need guidance. Have you ever gone to a strange place where they spoke a strange language or had strange customs? Did you have a guide or a map? We are strangers on the earth. We need a guide. We need a map. We need help to find our ultimate destination.

The Bible promises us guidance. The Bible promises wisdom. The Bible makes us wise, wiser than our enemies; wiser than our teachers wiser than the world that ignores **God's Word**.

**Wisdom comes from allowing God's Word to teach us.**

*"I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes"* (Psalm 119:99).

*"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Psalm 119:105).

Over and over again the wise men and astrologers prove useless in a crisis. **What is it that they claim? We have the answers to your questions.** Why not call psychics and astrologers and the wise of this world **Babylonian life coaches?** They claimed power and access to Babylon's gods and goddesses—but consistently failed to interpret mysteries.

*16And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."*

Over and over again Daniel consistently maintained that he had no special gift or ability. But rather God—the one true God gave him the ability to decipher mysteries. Daniel 1:17; "God

## **A Message From God**

### **Daniel 5:10-17**

gave them (Daniel and his friends) learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” Daniel said of God; “He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in darkness, and light dwells in him” (2:22).

Once again the king offers a reward for providing the proper interpretation for the writing on the wall.

What does the king promise? A purple robe. A chain of gold. Third ruler in the kingdom! Honor. Riches. Power.

A 30% coupon to Kohl’s. A Mr. T. starter set. An all access pass to the movers and shakers in Babylonian society. Jeremiah the prophet warned; “Let not the rich man glory in his riches” (Jeremiah 9:23). Humility is your greatest guard against greed.

Gold is real money. But it is not a real god. The Bible gives repeated warnings; riches are unreliable; uncertain; unsatisfying; unproductive; and unprofitable. “He that trusts in riches shall fall” (Proverbs 11:28). We trust the Lord. “Riches make themselves wings and fly away” (see Proverbs 23:5). Jesus warned about the deceitfulness of riches which choke the Word (see Matthew 23:22). Riches are unsettling; “trust not in uncertain riches” (1 Timothy 6:17). James warns “your riches are corrupted” (James 5:2). When something is corrupted—it cannot produce that which is beneficial.

### **A Prophet’s Refusal (v.17)**

*17Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation.*

Daniel knew that the king’s rewards were nothing compared to the blessings and benefits of faithfully following the living Lord.

Abram was offered a reward for defeating the enemies of the king of Sodom. “Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High (*El Elyon*); Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, “I have made Abram rich” (Genesis 14:22-23).

**Be careful. It is not always wise to receive gifts from unworthy leaders for services rendered to them (see 2 Kings 5:15-16).**

What does the prophet’s refusal tell us? Daniel is not motivated by greed. What is the king offering? Honor. Riches. Power.

Daniel is far more interested in honoring God and doing what’s right.

## **A Message From God**

### **Daniel 5:10-17**

Daniel knows the truth. The king along with his rewards will soon disappear.

Jesus said, “*For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled*” (Matthew 5:17 NKJV). The jot is the smallest Hebrew letter, yodh—looks very much like an apostrophe (‘). A tittle is a very small extension or protrusion on several Hebrew letters which distinguished these letters from similar ones. The Lord’s point is that every letter of every word of the O.T. is vital and will be fulfilled.

The Bible reveals the living God to us. The Bible introduces us to Jesus Christ.

Paul reminded Timothy to study God’s Word so that he would be thoroughly equipped for every good work (see 2 Timothy 3:17).

Babylon was about to come under the authority and control of a new king.

Do you think Daniel sounds a little disrespectful to the king? **Sometimes being true to your beliefs and convictions sounds disrespectful.**

Look around you. The world you live in, the people in power, will one day change.

### **Conclusion**

Our world is about to come under the control of a new King.

Does God have a message for you?

Are you at a loss to understand what God is trying to say to you?

Do you need guidance, wisdom, light?