SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



THE COMPLETE STUDY

Daniel

Chapter Five

The End of an Empire — Deep Dive and Workbook Companion in One

NASB 1995 | LESSON 5 | DEEP DIVE | THREE VOICES

Every workbook question from *Discovering Daniel* lesson 5 — the Scripture written out, each answer in one sentence, cross references, three teachers, critical thinking and a key question — with the **Deep Dive** woven in verse group by verse group: the Aramaic behind the story, **Amir Tsarfati**, **John MacArthur** and **David Guzik** at length, and diagrams of Babylon's last night, the journey of the vessels, the "third ruler," two kings beside each other, and the three words on the wall.

THE PASSAGE

Daniel 5:1–31

The feast · the hand · the fall

THE METHOD

Workbook + Deep Dive

Capture · Analyze · Compare · Execute

WHAT'S INSIDE

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One workbook lesson, one chapter, and the Deep Dive inside it — movement by movement

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"'TEKEL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient." — Daniel 5:27

BEFORE YOU BEGIN · THE PASSAGE

Daniel 5:1–31

The End of an Empire — Numbered, Weighed, Divided

† How to Read This Study

The workbook lesson runs in the order you work it at the table — **Capture the Scene**, **Analyze the Message**, **Compare This Passage with the Rest of Scripture**, **Execute** — with every question from *Discovering Daniel* written out, the NASB95 text under it, an answer in one sentence you can copy into the book, a cross reference, the three teachers, a point of critical thinking and a key question. Because the whole chapter is one lesson, *Capture the Scene* is read in four verse groups, and after each group the book pauses for **Going Deeper**: the Deep Dive movement for those verses — the passage marked, the Aramaic Daniel wrote, and the same three voices at length. Diagrams sit where the history and the three words matter. The book ends with the passage set inside the whole Bible, the three voices side by side, and questions for the table.

- **Capture the Scene** — what do I see? Observation, straight from the text, in four verse groups.
- **Going Deeper** — after each group, the Deep Dive for those verses: Aramaic, history and the three teachers.
- **Analyze the Message** — what does it say and mean? With *Discovering Daniel* open.
- **Compare** — how is it supported elsewhere in the Bible? Every cross reference written out.
- **Execute** — how does this affect my life? Off the page and into the week.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel | JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You | DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 5:25–28

Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.’ This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENE’—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. ‘TEKEL’—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. ‘PERES’—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”

† Before the Passage

Chapter 4 ended with Nebuchadnezzar on his knees, restored and praising the King of heaven. Chapter 5 opens more than twenty years later, on the last night of his empire, with a king who had heard that story all

his life and learned nothing from it. Belshazzar was the eldest son of Nabonidus, Babylon's last king, and ruled the city as co-regent while his father spent years in Arabia. For a long time critics said Daniel had invented him — no ancient king list had a Belshazzar — until the cuneiform records came out of the ground naming him exactly as Daniel does. That is why the best the king can offer is *third* ruler: Nabonidus was first and Belshazzar second. "Father" in verse 2 is the ordinary ancient word for an ancestor; Belshazzar was likely Nebuchadnezzar's grandson through his mother.

The date is October 539 BC. The Medo-Persian army under Cyrus is already in the land — Opis has fallen, Sippar has fallen — and the king throws a party for a thousand nobles behind walls he believes cannot be breached, with twenty years of stored food inside them. Isaiah had named Cyrus as Babylon's conqueror a century and a half before Cyrus was born and had written that the rivers would be dried up and the gates left open (Isaiah 44:27–45:1); Jeremiah had written that her princes would get drunk and sleep a sleep they would not wake from (Jeremiah 51:39, 57). The chapter is the night those prophecies came due.

Hold one word over the whole chapter: **knew**. "You knew all this" (v. 22). Belshazzar had the testimony of his own grandfather — a king humbled to the grass and restored when he confessed the Most High — and he toasted his idols with the vessels of that God's temple anyway. He is not judged for ignorance but for knowledge. Tsarfati reads the chapter for the Babylon of Revelation 18 and for a world that has heard and will not humble itself; MacArthur presses the sin against light and the God who holds every breath; Guzik walks the archaeology, the Euphrates and the three words on the wall. All three agree on the sermon: God's patience has a number on it, and when the number is up, it is up that same night.

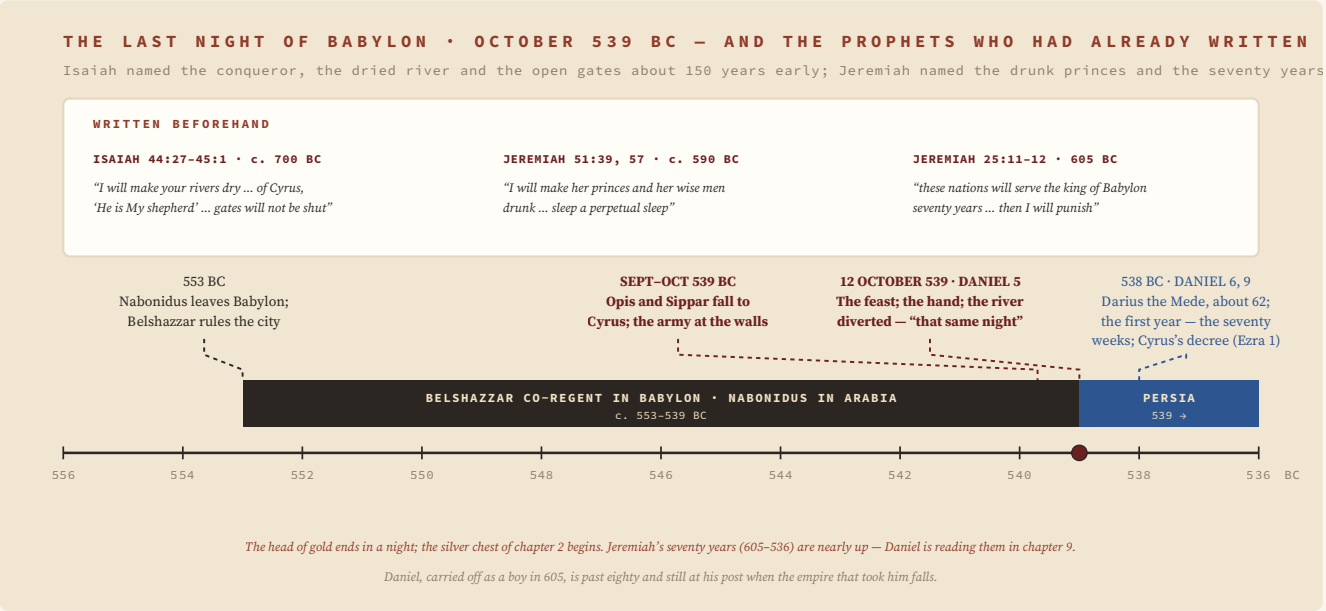


FIGURE 1 · THE LAST NIGHT OF BABYLON — OCTOBER 539 BC, AND THE PROPHETS WHO HAD ALREADY WRITTEN IT

PART ONE · DISCOVERING DANIEL · LESSON 5

DANIEL 5:1–31 · CAPTURE THE SCENE, WITH THE DEEP DIVE

The End of an Empire

On the last night of Babylon, with the Persians at the walls, Belshazzar toasts his idols with the vessels of God's temple — and a hand writes on the plaster. The wise men cannot read it; the queen remembers a forgotten prophet; Daniel refuses the reward, preaches the king his own grandfather's story, and reads three weights as three verbs. That same night the river runs low and the kingdom changes hands.

IN THIS PART

- Capture the Scene — ten questions on Daniel 5, verse by verse, in four groups
- Going Deeper I — *A Feast Under Siege, and a Hand on the Wall* (5:1–9), and the journey of the vessels
- Going Deeper II — *The Forgotten Man* (5:10–17), and why the best the king could offer was "third ruler"
- Going Deeper III — *You Knew All This* (5:18–24), and two kings beside each other
- Going Deeper IV — *Numbered, Weighed, Divided* (5:25–31), and the three words on the wall

01 CAPTURE THE SCENE

What do I see? · verses 1–9

Using my Bible, working through Daniel 5 verse by verse.

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 5:25-28 NASB95

Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.' This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. 'TEKEL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. 'PERES'—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."

1 **Who was at Belshazzar's feast, and what were the people doing that showed contempt for God (see Daniel 5:1-4)?** P. 101

Daniel 5:1 · NASB95

1 *Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.*

Daniel 5:3-4 · NASB95

3 *Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.* 4 *They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.*

IN MY WORDS

The king, his thousand nobles, his wives, and his concubines were drinking wine out of the sacred gold vessels stolen from God's temple while they toasted their idols of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

CROSS REFERENCE **1 Corinthians 10:21** "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons."

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati sets the scene the text assumes but does not state: the Medo-Persian army was already outside the walls, and Belshazzar answered the siege with a party—defiance dressed up as confidence.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes this was not private indulgence but public blasphemy; drinking from the temple vessels while praising handmade gods was a deliberate insult aimed straight at the God of Israel.

CRITICAL THINKING

The sin was not merely drunkenness; it was the theology of the toast. Every other god in the room was one they had made— gold they had shaped, stone they had carved—so the vessels of the one God who had made them became props in the celebration of gods who could not. Contempt for God usually shows up first as forgetting who made whom.

KEY QUESTION

What has God given me for holy use that I have quietly repurposed for my own entertainment?

2 What suddenly appeared, and how did the king react (verses 5-6)?

P. 102

Daniel 5:5-6 · NASB95

5 *Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.* 6 *Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.*

IN MY WORDS

The fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster wall in full lamplight, and the king went pale, his thoughts terrified him, his hips went weak, and his knees knocked together.

CROSS REFERENCE **Hebrews 10:31** "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik points out the hand wrote opposite the lampstand—the best-lit spot in the hall—so no one could dismiss it as a trick of the shadows; God made sure the whole room saw it.

CRITICAL THINKING

A moment earlier Belshazzar was mocking a God he thought was safely distant, and a single disembodied hand undid him from the knees up. It takes very little of God to break a proud man—not a legion, not a voice from the sky, just five fingers. The bravado of blasphemy is always thinner than it looks.

KEY QUESTION

How much of my confidence would survive one unmistakable reminder that God is actually watching?

3 Whom did the king call upon to interpret the writing, and what was the result (verses 7-9)?

P. 103

Daniel 5:7 · NASB95

7 *The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom."*

Daniel 5:8-9 · NASB95

8 *Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.* 9 *Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.*

IN MY WORDS

He called in the conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners and promised purple, a gold necklace, and third place in the kingdom to whoever could read it—but not one of them could read the writing or interpret it, and the king grew even more terrified.

CROSS REFERENCE **1 Corinthians 1:20** "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur observes that Babylon's entire apparatus of occult wisdom—the same experts who had failed Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2 —was again exposed as useless the instant it faced the living God; the world's wisdom always stalls at the one question that matters.

CRITICAL THINKING

They could see the letters and still could not read them. The problem was not eyesight but revelation—the message was in front of them and remained sealed. This is the permanent limitation of human wisdom apart from God: it can catalog the evidence perfectly and still miss the meaning entirely.

KEY QUESTION

Where am I staring at something God has plainly written and asking everyone except Him to explain it?

GOING DEEPER · FROM THE DEEP DIVE

Movement I · A Feast Under Siege, and a Hand on the Wall

DANIEL 5:1–9 · A thousand nobles, the vessels of the temple, the gods of gold and silver — and five fingers on the plaster

Before the workbook moves on to the queen and the prophet, read the first nine verses as the Deep Dive reads them — the Aramaic for *a great feast*, *praised*, *the fingers of a man's hand* and the king's knees, and the three teachers on a party thrown under siege and the wisdom of the world that can read letters but not meaning.

> *"[1] Belshazzar the king held ⚠ a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. [2] When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver ⟳ vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. [3] Then they brought the gold ⟳ vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. [4] They drank the wine and ⚠ praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone."*
>
> DANIEL 5:1–4

לְחֶם רַב

LECHEM RAV · "A GREAT FEAST"

Literally "great bread" — a state banquet. Belshazzar "was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand": the king on display, drinking first. Then, "when he tasted the wine," he calls for the *ma'nayya*, the vessels Nebuchadnezzar had carried from the temple in Jerusalem and put, with some reverence, in the treasury of his god (1:2). Belshazzar takes them out to toast idols. It is not a lapse; it is a statement — that Babylon's gods beat the God of Israel.

שַׁבַּחוּ

SHABBACHU · "PRAISED"

"They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone." The verb is the one used for praising the true God (2:23; 4:34). Here it is spent on metal and wood — and the list runs in the order of the statue of chapter 2, gold down to stone, as if the king were toasting the very kingdoms God had already said would pass away.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati sets the night: the Persians at the walls, the city confident in its defenses, and a king who answers a siege with a party. He notes what the vessels were — the furniture of the worship of the one true God, taken when Jerusalem fell — and reads the feast as a deliberate act of contempt, Babylon mocking Zion. He draws the line to Revelation 18, where Babylon the Great says in her heart "I sit as a queen … and will never see mourning," and falls in one hour.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur calls the feast the portrait of a man who has lost the fear of God. Belshazzar is not an atheist; he knows exactly whose vessels those are. He uses them because he wants to show that the God of the Jews is nothing. And the sacrilege is public — a thousand nobles, wives, concubines. MacArthur notes that drunkenness, idolatry and immorality are the usual three at the end of a civilization, and Scripture puts them in one verse here.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik supplies the history: Nabonidus, the Nabonidus Chronicle and Cylinder, the co-regency from about 553, and the critics who said Belshazzar never existed. He quotes Trapp on drink — it takes "ale out of the pot, money out of the purse, and wit out of the head" (Proverbs 20:1; Ephesians 5:18) — and observes that Nebuchadnezzar, for all his pride, had never done this. The grandson's sin was to treat lightly what his grandfather had at least treated as holy.

"5 Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing. 6 Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together. 7 The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed."

DANIEL 5:5–9

אֶצְבְּעָן דִּי יַד־אֱנָשׁ

ETSBE'AN DI YAD-ENASH · "FINGERS OF A MAN'S HAND"

Not a whole figure — fingers, and the back of a hand, writing on the plaster "opposite the lampstand," in the brightest spot in the hall where everyone could see. Our phrase *the writing on the wall* comes from this verse. The hand that gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom (v. 18) now writes its end.

קִטְרֵי חַרְצֵהּ מִשְׁתָּרְיִן

QITREI CHARTSEH MISHTARAYIN · "HIS HIP JOINTS WENT SLACK"

Literally "the knots of his loins were loosed" — the king's legs give way, his face drains, his knees knock. A guilty conscience knows when God has spoken (Proverbs 28:1: "the wicked flee when no one is pursuing"). Then the reward: purple, a gold chain, and "third ruler" (*talti*) — the most a co-regent could give. And the wise men cannot read it: perhaps the letters were plain and the sense was not, perhaps God veiled it until His man came.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati stays on the suddenness: one moment the toast, the next the hand. He points out the place — opposite the lampstand, lit for all to see — because God's judgments on nations are not done in a corner. And he notes the collapse of the brave king: the man who mocked heaven a minute ago cannot stand up. For Tsarfati the scene is a preview of the day every proud power sees the hand (Revelation 6:15–17).

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

The king summons the whole establishment — conjurers, Chaldeans, diviners — and offers them the kingdom, and they fail, as they failed in chapters 2 and 4. MacArthur sees the pattern as the point: the wisdom of the world is helpless before the word of God. It can read letters; it cannot read meaning. And he notes the king's terror was correct. It was not superstition; it was the right response of a man who suddenly knew he had been seen.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik takes the writing as Aramaic the wise men could probably spell out but not interpret — three weights on a wall mean nothing until someone tells you they are verbs. He notes the escalation in verse 9: "greatly alarmed … even paler," and the nobles perplexed with him. The whole hall that had praised the gods of gold has gone quiet. The feast is over, and the night has hours left.



FIGURE 2 · THE VESSELS — FROM THE TEMPLE TO THE FEAST AND HOME AGAIN (2 CHRONICLES 36 TO EZRA 1)

01 CAPTURE THE SCENE

continued · verses 10–17

4 What did the queen suggest that the king do, and why (verses 10-12)?

P. 104

Daniel 5:11-12 · NASB95

11 *There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners.*
12 *This was because ☆ an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."*

IN MY WORDS

The queen—almost certainly the queen mother—told Belshazzar to send for Daniel, because from Nebuchadnezzar's day Daniel was known to have the Spirit of God in him and a proven gift for interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and untangling hard problems.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 2:48** Nebuchadnezzar had made Daniel "ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men"—a reputation the palace had since forgotten.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes it took someone who remembered the old king to rescue the young one; the queen mother had lived through Daniel's earlier ministry and knew the very man the current court had let fade into the background.

CRITICAL THINKING

Everyone in that hall was younger in the faith than the crisis required, except one person who remembered. There is a quiet ministry in simply having been around long enough to say, "I have seen God do this before—go get the man who knows Him." Institutional memory of God's faithfulness is worth more in a crisis than a room full of experts.

KEY QUESTION

Whose memory of God's past faithfulness am I positioned to carry for the people around me?

5 How did the king greet Daniel, and what did he promise if Daniel could read the writing (verses 13-16)?

P. 105

Daniel 5:13 · NASB95

13 *Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?*

Daniel 5:16 · NASB95

16 *But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom."*

IN MY WORDS

He greeted Daniel almost dismissively—"Are you that Daniel, one of the exiles?"—and then dangled the same reward he had offered his failed magicians: purple, a gold necklace, and third rank in the kingdom.

CROSS REFERENCE **Proverbs 29:25** "The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted."

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur notes the king reduced Daniel to his refugee status—"one of the exiles from Judah"—the pride still working even in panic; a proud man will patronize the very person he desperately needs.

CRITICAL THINKING

Belshazzar's greeting reveals what his fear could not fully hide: he still saw Daniel as a captive foreigner, not as a prophet of the God who was at that moment condemning him. Desperation had driven him to summon Daniel, but it had not humbled him enough to honor him. Fear can make a man ask for help without ever making him repent.

KEY QUESTION

Do I seek God's servants for their gift while still refusing to bow to their God?

6 What was Daniel's response to the king's promise of reward (verse 17)?

P. 106

Daniel 5:17 · NASB95

17 *Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him.*

IN MY WORDS

Daniel refused the gifts outright—"keep them for yourself"—and said he would read and interpret the writing anyway, with no price attached.

CROSS REFERENCE **2 Kings 5:16** Elisha to Naaman: "As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing."—God's word is not for sale.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati hears in this the freedom of a man who serves the Most High: Daniel could not be bought because he did not need what Belshazzar was offering, and third place in a kingdom about to fall was worth nothing to a man who answered to the King of heaven.

CRITICAL THINKING

The rewards Daniel waved off would be worthless within hours—purple robes on a corpse's empire. Daniel refused them not only because they might compromise the message but because he could already see they were counterfeit. Nothing frees a person from the pull of a bribe like actually believing the kingdom offering it is finished.

KEY QUESTION

What rewards am I still chasing that will not survive the night?

GOING DEEPER · FROM THE DEEP DIVE

Movement II · The Forgotten Man

DANIEL 5:10–17 · A queen who remembered, a king who had only heard, and a prophet who would not be paid

Questions 4 to 6 asked what the queen suggested, how the king greeted Daniel, and how Daniel answered the offer. The Deep Dive adds who the queen was, why "third ruler" was the most a co-regent could give, and the three teachers on a prophet set aside until the crisis and unbuyable when it came.

> *"10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners. 12 This was because ☆ an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation.""*
>
> DANIEL 5:10–12

מַלְכְּתָא

MALKETA · "THE QUEEN"

Almost certainly the queen mother — the king's wives are already at the table (v. 2) — and quite possibly Nebuchadnezzar's daughter or widow, which is why she can say "your father … appointed him" from memory. She remembers what the court has forgotten: a man with "a spirit of the holy gods," *illumination, insight and wisdom*, who solved the dreams no one else could. Daniel has been set aside; a crisis brings him back.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati notes how completely Daniel has dropped out of the picture. He was chief of the wise men under Nebuchadnezzar; under Belshazzar he is not in the hall and not in the king's mind. The new regime had no use for the old prophet — until the wall. He reads it as the pattern of the faithful in every generation: ignored by the powerful in good times, summoned in the emergency, and still there when called.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

The queen mother's speech is a sermon on memory. MacArthur points out that everything Belshazzar needed to know was already in his own family's history — the dreams, the furnace, the seven years in the grass — and that he had let it all go. God does not hold men accountable only for what they have heard; He holds them accountable for what they had every chance to remember. "Let Daniel now be summoned" is the one piece of wisdom spoken in the hall that night.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik observes that Daniel is probably in his eighties and "seems to have been forgotten, or at least set aside." He finds that encouraging rather than sad: faithful men are often forgotten by the powerful, and God is not. He also notes the queen's theology — "a spirit of the holy gods," pagan language for something she cannot name — and that it was still enough to get the right man into the room.

“13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14 Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. 15 Just now the wise men and the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message. 16 But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.” 17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him.”

DANIEL 5:13–17

הַאַנְתְּ־הוּא דָנִיֵּאל

HA-ANT-HU DANIYYEL · “ARE YOU THAT DANIEL”

“One of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah” — the king cannot even grant Daniel his office, only his captivity. “I have heard about you” (v. 14), “I personally have heard” (v. 16): twice he admits he knows the prophet by rumor, having never sought him. And again the offer: purple, gold, *third ruler*.

מַתְּנָתָךְ לָךְ לֶהֱוִין

MATTENATAKH LAKH LEHEVYAN · “KEEP YOUR GIFTS FOR YOURSELF”

Literally “let your gifts be to yourself.” Daniel will read the writing, and he will not be paid for it — because a man who takes the reward first is tempted to soften the message, and because the kingdom being offered will not exist in the morning. He does not refuse the office later (v. 29); he refuses to be bought now.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati hears the contempt in “one of the exiles from Judah.” The king is told the man is a prophet and addresses him as a prisoner. And he hears the courage in Daniel’s answer: an old man, summoned by a drunk king at midnight, declining the robe before he opens his mouth. Daniel will say what God says, to whoever is on the throne, for nothing — the same Daniel who refused the king’s food as a boy.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur puts verse 17 beside verse 29. Daniel refuses the gifts and then receives them — so the refusal is not about the gifts; it is about motive. He will not let the king think the interpretation can be purchased, and he will not let himself be tempted to make it pleasant. The man of God speaks the same whether he is rewarded, ignored, or thrown to lions. That is what it means to be unbuyable.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes the reward is worthless — third ruler of a kingdom with hours to live — and that Daniel probably knew it. But he also notes the restraint: Daniel does not insult the king or gloat over the wall; he simply says he will read it. The courage is in what follows, when the prophet preaches to the king before he translates a single word.



FIGURE 3 · "THIRD RULER IN THE KINGDOM" — NABONIDUS, BELSHAZZAR, AND THE REWARD THE RECORD EXPLAINS

01 CAPTURE THE SCENE

continued · verses 18–24

7 **Briefly, what did Daniel then say about King Nebuchadnezzar (verses 18-21)?** P. 107

Daniel 5:18-20 · NASB95

18 O king, △ the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. 19 Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled. 20 But when ⚠ his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him.

Daniel 5:21 · NASB95

21 He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that △ the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.

IN MY WORDS

Daniel reminded Belshazzar that God gave Nebuchadnezzar his greatness, but when his heart grew proud God brought him down—driving him out to live like an animal until he learned that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of men.

CROSS REFERENCE **Proverbs 16:18** "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling."

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur points out that Daniel preached history before he preached judgment: Belshazzar had a case study in his own family of exactly what pride costs, and had learned nothing from it.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati notes the refrain of the whole book beating through Daniel's words—the Most High rules over the realm of mankind and gives it to whomever He wishes—the truth Nebuchadnezzar finally accepted and Belshazzar refused to.

CRITICAL THINKING

Daniel's sermon was essentially, "You had a front-row seat to this lesson and slept through it." The most dangerous ignorance is not the kind that never had a chance to learn, but the kind that watched someone else pay full tuition and still declined the course. Belshazzar's guilt was not that he lacked evidence; it was that he had the family archive and ignored it.

KEY QUESTION

What lesson has God already taught someone close to me that I am refusing to learn secondhand?

8 What did Daniel condemn Belshazzar for (verses 22-23)?

P. 108

Daniel 5:22-23 · NASB95

22 *Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, ⚠ have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this,* 23 *but ⚠ you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the ⇄ vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But △ the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified.*

IN MY WORDS

Daniel condemned him for refusing to humble himself even though he knew Nebuchadnezzar's story, for exalting himself against the Lord of heaven by desecrating His vessels and praising dead idols, and for failing to glorify the God who held his very breath in His hand.

CROSS REFERENCE **Romans 1:21** "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik highlights the hinge phrase—"even though you knew all this." Belshazzar did not sin in ignorance; he sinned against light, which is a heavier thing.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati draws out the sharpest line: the God "in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified"— Belshazzar owed his next heartbeat to the very God he was mocking.

CRITICAL THINKING

The indictment climaxes not with the blasphemy but with the ingratitude: the God he refused to glorify was the one holding his breath in His hand at that exact moment. Every second Belshazzar spent insulting God was a second God was actively keeping him alive. The deepest charge against him was not what he did to the vessels but what he withheld from the God who sustained him.

KEY QUESTION

Am I glorifying the God in whose hand my very next breath is held?

GOING DEEPER · FROM THE DEEP DIVE

Movement III · You Knew All This

DANIEL 5:18–24 · Nebuchadnezzar's story told back to his grandson — and the charge that he sinned against the light he had

Daniel's sermon before he reads a word. For each: the text marked, the Aramaic that carries the charge (*granted*, *you have not humbled your heart*, *was sent*), and the three teachers on a king judged not for ignorance but for knowledge.

> *"18 O king, △ the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. 19 Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled. 20 But when ⚠ his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him. 21 He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that △ the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes."*
>
> DANIEL 5:18–21

YEHAV · "GRANTED"

יְהַב

"The Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar." Daniel begins the sermon where chapter 4 ended: everything the great king had was *given*. His power was real — "whomever he wished he killed … spared … elevated … humbled" — and it was borrowed. Then the heart "was lifted up" (*rim*), and the giver took it back: deposed, driven out, a beast's heart, grass and dew, *until he recognized* that the Most High rules.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Daniel retells chapter 4 to a man who grew up in it. Tsarfati notes that this is the kindest thing in the chapter: before the verdict, the prophet gives the king the testimony that could have saved him — a grandfather who was humbled and restored. God's warnings always come with a way back. Belshazzar had the whole story and the living example, and he still chose the vessels and the toast.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

"Until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind." MacArthur calls this the thesis of the book of Daniel, and notes that Daniel preaches it to Belshazzar as history, not theory. Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest king on earth and God put him on all fours to teach him one sentence. The grandson heard that sentence from the cradle. There is no excuse left in the room.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik draws out the structure: the sermon has three parts — what God gave Nebuchadnezzar, what pride cost him, and what humility restored to him — and only then the charge. He points out that Daniel speaks of Nebuchadnezzar with a kind of respect; the old king had learned. The contrast with the young one is the whole indictment.

"22 Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, ⚠ have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, 23 but ⚠ you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the 🔁 vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But △ the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified. 24 Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out."

DANIEL 5:22–24

לָא הַשְׁפַּלְתְּ לִבְבָךְ

LA HASHPELT LIVVAKH · "YOU HAVE NOT HUMBLED YOUR HEART"

Shephal, "to bring low" — the thing Nebuchadnezzar had finally done, and his grandson would not. "Even though you knew all this" (*yeda'ta*): the charge is knowledge. Belshazzar is judged by the light he had (Luke 12:47–48; James 4:17). Then the catalogue: exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven, drank from His vessels, praised gods that cannot see or hear — and the deepest line: the God in whose hand is your *nishma*, your life-breath, you have not glorified.

שְׁלִיחַ

SHELIACH · "WAS SENT"

"Then the hand was sent from Him." The hand did not appear; it was dispatched. Daniel names the sender before he reads the message, so that the king cannot hear the three words as an omen or a trick. The God whose vessels he drank from is the God who wrote on his wall.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati reads verse 23 as God's charge against every proud civilization: it knew, it exalted itself, it worshiped what it made, and it did not glorify the One who gave it breath. He sets it beside Romans 1:21 — "even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God" — and beside the Babylon of Revelation 18, which also drank from golden cups and also fell in a night. The vessels were the last straw, not the first.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

The sin is not that Belshazzar did not know; it is that he knew and did not humble himself. MacArthur presses the point as the most sobering in the chapter: judgment is proportioned to light. The man who has heard the Gospel a thousand times and drinks anyway is in Belshazzar's seat. And the final charge is the one every unbeliever will face: the God who gives you every breath, you have not glorified (Acts 17:25, 28). He holds the breath; He can take it tonight.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Daniel does not flatter, does not soften, and does not hedge, and that he is speaking to a drunk absolute monarch surrounded by a thousand of his nobles. He draws the lesson for preachers from it: the message is not adjusted to the audience's power. He also notes the precision of the charge — Daniel lists exactly what the king did that night, as if God had been in the hall. He had.

TWO KINGS, ONE LESSON · DANIEL'S SERMON SETS CHAPTER 4 BESIDE CHAPTER 5

The grandfather was humbled and restored; the grandson knew the whole story and would not humble his heart. Judged by the light he had.

	NEBUCHADNEZZAR · CHAPTER 4	BELSHAZZAR · CHAPTER 5
What God gave	*sovereignty, grandeur, glory, majesty (5:18–19; 4:22)*	*a city, a throne, a thousand nobles — and his grandfather's story (5:22)*
The pride	*"his heart was lifted up … behaved arrogantly" (5:20; 4:30)*	*"exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven" (5:23)*
The sacrilege	*took the vessels, but kept them in a treasury (1:2)*	*drank from the vessels and praised gods of gold (5:3–4, 23)*
The warning	*a dream, Daniel's counsel, twelve months' grace (4:19–29)*	*none left to give — "you knew all this" (5:22)*
The judgment	*deposed, driven out, a beast's heart, grass and dew (5:21; 4:33)*	*numbered, weighed, divided — "that same night" (5:26–30)*
The end	*"until he recognized … the Most High" — restored (5:21; 4:34–37)*	*slain; the kingdom given to the Medes and Persians (5:28, 30–31)*

FIGURE 4 · TWO KINGS, ONE LESSON — DANIEL'S SERMON SETS CHAPTER 4 BESIDE CHAPTER 5

01 CAPTURE THE SCENE

continued · verses 25–31

9 What did the words on the wall say (verses 24-28)?

P. 109

Daniel 5:25-28 · NASB95

25 *Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.'* 26 *This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.* 27 *'TEKEL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.* 28 *'PERES'—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."*

IN MY WORDS

The words were MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN—God has numbered the days of your kingdom and ended it; you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient; and your kingdom is divided and handed over to the Medes and Persians.

CROSS REFERENCE **1 Samuel 2:3** "for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and with Him actions are weighed."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik explains the words were the names of weights and coins—numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided—so the wise men may have read the letters yet missed that they were a verdict, a divine accounting rendered against the king.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur notes the terrifying economy of it: no lengthy charge, just four words of settled judgment—God had already done the counting and the weighing, and only the sentence remained to be read.

CRITICAL THINKING

TEKEL is the most searching word on the wall—"weighed and found deficient." Belshazzar was not measured against other kings, who were also wicked; he was set on God's scale and came up short of God's standard. A man can outweigh every rival he compares himself to and still register as nothing on the only balance that counts.

KEY QUESTION

If I were weighed tonight on God's scale rather than against the people around me, what would the needle say?

10 What happened later that night (verses 30-31)?

P. 110

Daniel 5:30-31 · NASB95

30 *That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.* 31 *So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.*

IN MY WORDS

That very night Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom—the sentence on the wall was carried out before the sun came up.

CROSS REFERENCE **Luke 12:20** "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?"

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati notes the precision of fulfilled prophecy—Babylon the head of gold gives way to Medo-Persia the chest of silver from the chapter 2 statue, exactly as God had shown Nebuchadnezzar decades before.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur underscores the speed: there was no interval for second thoughts or a change of policy—between the reading and the reckoning was a single night.

CRITICAL THINKING

The gap between the warning and the judgment was a matter of hours, and Belshazzar spent even those hours unrepentant. God's patience had a last page, and Belshazzar was living on it without knowing it. The frightening thing about an "appointed time" is that it never announces which night it is.

KEY QUESTION

If tonight were the night my account came due, is anything left unsettled between me and God?

GOING DEEPER · FROM THE DEEP DIVE

Movement IV · Numbered, Weighed, Divided

DANIEL 5:25–31 · Three weights on a wall, read as three verbs — and the night the Euphrates ran low

The three words and the night they came true. The Aramaic weights and the verbs Daniel made of them, the pun on Persia, the diverted river, and the three teachers on a sentence read at midnight and carried out before dawn.

> *"[25] Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.' [26] This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. [27] 'TEKEL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. [28] 'PERES'—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.'"*
>
> DANIEL 5:25–28

מְנֵא מְנֵא תְּקֵל וּפַרְסִין

MENE MENE TEQEL U-PHARSIN · "NUMBERED, WEIGHED, DIVIDED"

As written, the words are weights and measures: a *mina*, a *shekel*, and *half-minas* (*parsin*, plural of *peres*, with *u-*, "and") — like finding "dollar, dollar, dime, half-dollars" on the wall. Daniel reads them as passive verbs. **MENE**, twice for certainty: God has *numbered* the days of your kingdom and they are up. **TEKEL**: you have been *weighed* on the scales (*moznayya*) and found *deficient* (*chassir*, lacking) — 1 Samuel 2:3; Psalm 62:9; Proverbs 16:2. **PERES**: your kingdom is *divided* and given to the Medes and Persians — and *peres* sounds like *Paras*, Persia. The pun is the verdict.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati takes the three words as the shape of every judgment of God on a nation: the days are counted, the weight is taken, the kingdom is handed on. He underlines that the number was already fixed — Jeremiah's seventy years for Babylon were nearly complete (Jeremiah 25:11–12) — and that Daniel knew it; chapter 9 opens with him reading that very prophecy. For Israel the fall of Babylon was not a catastrophe but a release date.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

"Weighed on the scales and found deficient." MacArthur says this is the sentence every man will hear who is weighed by his own works. God does not grade on a curve; He weighs against His own holiness, and no one is heavy enough. The only man who ever balanced the scale is the One whose righteousness is credited to those who trust Him. He reads TEKEL as the Gospel's diagnosis — and the reason the Gospel is needed.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik cites Clarke's summary — numeration, weighing, division — and notes the courage of Daniel in reading it aloud: he announces to the king, in the king's hall, that the king's kingdom ends tonight. He also notes verse 29: Belshazzar keeps his word and robes Daniel anyway. It is the last act of a doomed man, and there is something almost dignified in it — and it changed nothing.

"29 Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. 31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two."

DANIEL 5:29–31

בֵּהּ בְּלֵילְיָא

BEH BE-LEILYA · "THAT SAME NIGHT"

Herodotus and Xenophon record how it was done: Cyrus's engineers diverted the Euphrates, which ran through the city under the walls, and his soldiers walked in along the riverbed while the city feasted. Isaiah had written "I will make your rivers dry" and "gates will not be shut" (44:27; 45:1); Jeremiah, that her princes would be made drunk and "sleep a perpetual sleep" (51:39, 57). The head of gold is gone in a night; the silver chest of chapter 2 has arrived. Darius the Mede, about sixty-two, receives the kingdom — and Daniel, who was a boy when Babylon rose, is still standing when it falls.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati reads the last two verses as prophecy keeping its appointments to the hour: Isaiah's Cyrus, Jeremiah's seventy years, Daniel's own statue. Babylon, the most secure city on earth, fell almost without a fight on the night it mocked God. He turns it toward the end of the age — the Babylon of Revelation 18 falls "in one hour" with the same suddenness — and toward Israel, for whom the fall of one empire has again and again been the door to going home.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

"That same night." MacArthur lets the three words carry the weight. There was no appeal, no delay, no deathbed. The sentence read at midnight was executed before dawn, exactly as Luke 12:20 says of the rich fool: "this very night your soul is required of you." The lesson is not for Belshazzar; he is past lessons. It is for the reader who is still drinking: today, if you hear His voice.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik walks the archaeology of the fall — the Nabonidus Chronicle, the diverted river, Cyrus's entry a few weeks later, the city taken on the sixteenth of Tishri — and the identity of Darius the Mede, whom he takes to be Gubaru, the governor Cyrus set over Babylon. Then he steps back: Daniel has outlived the whole Babylonian empire. The exile who refused the king's food in chapter 1 reads the last king his sentence in chapter 5, and will serve the next empire in chapter 6.

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN · THREE WEIGHTS ON A WALL, READ AS THREE VERBS

As written, weights and measures — like "dollar, dollar, dime, half-dollars." As Daniel read them, the sentence of a kingdom (5:25–28)

מנא	תקל	ופרסין
MENE · MENE	TEKEL	UPHARSIN · PERES
a mina (the weight)	*a shekel (the weight)*	*and half-minas (the weight)*
NUMBERED	**WEIGHED**	**DIVIDED**
"God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it" — said twice, for certainty. The days were counted (Jeremiah 25:11–12).	"You have been weighed on the scales and found deficient" — lacking (1 Samuel 2:3; Psalm 62:9; Proverbs 16:2).	"Your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians" — and peres sounds like Paras, Persia. The pun is the verdict.

"THAT SAME NIGHT" · v. 30 — HOW THE CITY FELL

Herodotus and Xenophon: Cyrus's engineers diverted the Euphrates, which ran through the city under the walls, and his soldiers walked in along the riverbed while the city feasted. Isaiah 44:27 — "I will make your rivers dry"; 45:1 — "gates will not be shut"; Jeremiah 51:39, 57 — drunk princes who sleep and do not wake. Written long before; kept to the hour.

FIGURE 5 · MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN — THREE WEIGHTS, THREE VERBS, AND HOW THE CITY FELL

PART TWO · DISCOVERING DANIEL · LESSON 5

DANIEL 5 · WHAT IT MEANS, WHERE ELSE IT IS TAUGHT, HOW I LIVE IT

Analyze, Compare, Execute

With the night captured and the Deep Dive read, the workbook turns to meaning: where the vessels came from and how God answered their misuse, what the king's fear and his forgetting reveal, what Daniel's refusal and his boldness show, and what the four words and the speed of the judgment say about God's patience — then four times Scripture shows that patience running out, and how to examine my own heart before the scales do.

IN THIS PART

- Analyze the Message — eight questions with *Discovering Daniel*: the vessels, God's reaction, the king's fear, the forgotten prophet, Daniel's motives, the four words, his boldness, and why the king sat and took it
- Compare — the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Babylon the Great in Revelation 18, and the world in our day (2 Timothy 3:1–5)
- Execute — Romans 2:4 and 6:1–2 on testing God's patience; 2 Corinthians 13:5, 2 Peter 1:10–11, 1 Thessalonians 5:21–22; Psalm 139; 1 Thessalonians 4; Romans 12:1–2; 2 Corinthians 3:18
- Closing Thoughts, and the study helps that close the book

02 ANALYZE THE MESSAGE

What does it say and mean?

Using both my Bible and my copy of Discovering Daniel.

1 **Where had the gold and silver vessels that King Belshazzar used in his feast come from (see Daniel 5:2-3)?** P. 102

Daniel 5:2 · NASB95

2 *When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.*

IN MY WORDS

They came from the temple of God in Jerusalem, plundered by Nebuchadnezzar when he conquered Judah roughly seventy years earlier and stored away as spoils of war.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 1:2** "The Lord gave Jehoiakim... into his hand... and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes these vessels had been set apart for the worship of the living God; to drink from them at an idol feast was to take what was holy and drag it deliberately into the profane.

CRITICAL THINKING

Nebuchadnezzar took the vessels but never dared to drink from them—he stored them in a temple treasury with a kind of superstitious respect. It was the grandson, further from the God of Israel and more sure of himself, who crossed the line his conqueror grandfather would not. Distance from God tends to grow bolder, not more careful, with each generation.

KEY QUESTION

What did the generation before me still treat as holy that I am tempted to treat as ordinary?

2 **How did God react to His sacred vessels being used in such a flippant manner (see page 104 in Discovering Daniel)?** P. 104

Daniel 5:5 · NASB95

5 *Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.*

IN MY WORDS

God reacted immediately and personally—the moment they toasted their idols with His holy vessels, His own hand appeared on the wall and wrote the sentence of judgment.

CROSS REFERENCE **Galatians 6:7** "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."

> **AMIR TSARFATI** · Discovering Daniel
>
> Tsarfati frames it as the tipping point of the night: Belshazzar had crossed from indulgence into open mockery of God, and God answered the blasphemy on the spot—no messenger, no delay, His hand against the wall of the king's own palace.

> **CRITICAL THINKING**
>
> The word to notice is "suddenly." There was no thunderclap of warning, no prophet at the door first—God let the toast finish and then wrote. His patience with Babylon had lasted decades, but the response to this particular act was instant. Long forbearance and sudden judgment are not opposites; they are the two ends of the same rope.

KEY QUESTION

Have I mistaken God's long patience for God's indifference?

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3 **As we read the account of what happened in the banquet hall, what clues are we given about the fear and desperation felt by Belshazzar and the partygoers (see verses 6-9)?** P. 106

> Daniel 5:6 · NASB95
>
> 6 *Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and ⚠ his knees began knocking together.*

> Daniel 5:9 · NASB95
>
> 9 *Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.*

> **IN MY WORDS**
>
> The clues are physical and public—a face drained white and then whiter, thoughts in turmoil, hips gone weak, knees literally knocking, a king shouting for the occultists, and a whole company of nobles left baffled and afraid.

CROSS REFERENCE **Isaiah 21:3-4** "my mind reels, horror overwhelms me"—the same collapse of the confident when God's judgment draws near.

> **JOHN MACARTHUR** · Grace to You
>
> MacArthur observes the collapse was total and involuntary; the man who had felt secure enough to mock God could not even keep his own knees from betraying him. Guilt exposed strips composure faster than any army could.

CRITICAL THINKING

Minutes earlier this was the most powerful man in the room, and now his body is broadcasting terror he cannot govern. The feast was an attempt to project control while the enemy stood at the gates, and one hand on the wall demolished the performance. Bravado is only ever a costume; fear is what is underneath when God pulls it off.

KEY QUESTION

What am I using noise, activity, or bravado to keep from feeling?

4 What does the fact Belshazzar had to be reminded about Daniel's past exploits tell you about Belshazzar?

P. 107

Daniel 5:11 · NASB95

11 *There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners.*

IN MY WORDS

It tells me he was spiritually careless and self-absorbed—he had let the godliest, wisest man in his kingdom fade into the background and had ignored the very lessons of God's dealings under his own grandfather.

CROSS REFERENCE **Judges 2:10** "there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes Daniel was likely in his eighties and pushed to the margins of a court that no longer had time for the God he served; a man does not forget a prophet like Daniel by accident but by choosing other counsel.

CRITICAL THINKING

Daniel had not left; Belshazzar had simply stopped consulting him. The most important voice in the kingdom was still available the whole time—it just was not wanted until the wall lit up. We rarely lose access to godly wisdom in a dramatic break; we let it go quiet by never asking, and then are surprised we have to be reminded it exists.

KEY QUESTION

Whose God-given wisdom have I let go silent in my life simply by never asking for it?

5 What does Daniel's rejection of the king's offer of rewards tell you about Daniel's motives and priorities?

P. 108

Daniel 5:17 · NASB95

17 *Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him.*

IN MY WORDS

It tells me Daniel served God and not gain—his priority was to deliver God's truth faithfully, not to profit from it, and he refused to let a reward make it look as though the message had been bought or softened.

CROSS REFERENCE **Matthew 6:24** "No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and wealth."

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur notes the integrity of a man who would not take payment for God's word, especially payment that might tempt him to shade the message; Daniel's freedom from the reward was the guarantee of his honesty.

CRITICAL THINKING

Refusing the reward before speaking was itself part of the sermon. Had Daniel accepted purple and gold and then pronounced doom, the message would have been unimpeachable anyway—but by refusing first, he made unmistakable that no earthly incentive was steering a single word. The messenger who wants nothing from you is the one you can trust to tell you everything.

KEY QUESTION

Is there any reward shaping what I am willing to say to the people I should be telling the truth?

6 What does the meaning of the four words MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN—as well as the swiftness of the judgment that followed—tell us about how God felt toward Belshazzar?

P. 109

Daniel 5:26-28 · NASB95

26 *This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.*
27 *'TEKEL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.* 28 *'PERES'—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."*

IN MY WORDS

It tells me God's patience with Belshazzar had run completely out—the words announce a finished, final verdict already reached, and its execution that same night shows settled judgment rather than a warning meant to bring him to repentance.

CROSS REFERENCE **Proverbs 29:1** "A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy."

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati stresses the finality: "numbered… and put an end to it" is not a threat to be averted but a sentence already passed. Belshazzar had been given the light of his grandfather's example and refused it, and the time for warnings was over.

CRITICAL THINKING

There is no "unless" anywhere in the writing. Nebuchadnezzar's earlier judgment came with a road back—humble yourself and be restored—but Belshazzar's came as a closed accounting: numbered, weighed, divided, done. God's mercy is vast, but it is not infinite in the sense of never concluding; the same God who waits a lifetime can also write a final line.

KEY QUESTION

Am I presuming on a mercy that has, for others before me, come to a last page?

7 Why do you think Daniel was willing to speak so boldly against King Belshazzar, even though that could mean a death sentence?

P. 110

Daniel 5:23 · NASB95

23 *but* ⚠ *you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the* ⇄ *vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But* △ *the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified.*

IN MY WORDS

Because after a lifetime with God, Daniel feared the Lord far more than he feared the king, had nothing left to gain or protect at his age, and knew that his life was in God's hand and not Belshazzar's.

CROSS REFERENCE **Acts 5:29** "We must obey God rather than men."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes an old prophet has learned that the God who kept him through Nebuchadnezzar, through the lions still ahead, and through seventy years of exile was not going to be outmatched by a doomed king's threat; boldness like this is the fruit of a long obedience.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati points to the phrase Daniel had just used—the God in whose hand is Belshazzar's own breath—as the reason Daniel could not be intimidated: the king holding the death sentence did not even hold his own next breath.

CRITICAL THINKING

Daniel's boldness was not recklessness; it was arithmetic. He had spent a lifetime learning that the God who numbers a king's days also numbers a prophet's, and no tyrant can shorten a life God is not finished using. The man who truly believes his times are in God's hand becomes almost impossible to threaten.

KEY QUESTION

What could someone actually take from me that God has not already secured?

8 **For what three reasons did the king sit there and take Daniel's words (see page 110 in Discovering Daniel)?** P. 110

Daniel 5:22 · NASB95

22 *Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, ⚠ have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this,*

IN MY WORDS

He took it because he was desperate and out of every other option, because Daniel's God had just proved undeniably real by writing on his wall, and because his own conscience knew every word of the charge was true—he had no answer to give.

CROSS REFERENCE **John 3:20** "For everyone who does evil hates the Light... so that his deeds will not be exposed."—yet Belshazzar could not look away.

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati's reading of the scene is that Belshazzar had run out of alternatives; the wise men had failed, the writing still stood on the wall, and the only voice that could interpret it was the one condemning him—so he sat and listened because there was nothing else left to do.

CRITICAL THINKING

A king with armies and executioners sat still under the rebuke of an unpaid old exile, and the reason was that the truth had cornered him. Conviction can pin a powerful man to his chair when no soldier could. But sitting still under the truth is not the same as bowing to it—Belshazzar heard every word and still did not humble his heart.

KEY QUESTION

When the truth corners me, do I merely sit and absorb it, or do I actually bend?

03 COMPARE THIS PASSAGE WITH THE REST OF SCRIPTURE

How is it supported elsewhere in the Bible?

Babylon fell because it never grasped how vulnerable it had become—four times Scripture shows God's patience running out.

1 The Flood (Genesis 6-7).

P. 111

Genesis 6:5 · NASB95

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

a. What does Genesis 6:5 tell us mankind was like during the days of Noah?

IN MY WORDS

It tells me humanity was thoroughly corrupt—that every intent of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually, wickedness with no relief in it.

CROSS REFERENCE **Genesis 6:5** "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

b. What did God resolve to do (see verse 7)?

IN MY WORDS

He resolved to blot out man and the living creatures from the face of the earth, grieved that He had made them.

CROSS REFERENCE **Genesis 6:7** "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land... for I am sorry that I have made them."

c. Did anyone outside of Noah's family come to repentance and join them on the ark (see Genesis 7:7)?

IN MY WORDS

No—only Noah, his wife, his sons, and his sons' wives entered the ark; a hundred and twenty years of warning brought not one outsider to repentance.

CROSS REFERENCE **2 Peter 2:5** God "did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah... with seven others."—eight souls, no more.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes the flood generation had Noah's preaching and the slow, public building of the ark as a standing sermon for decades; judgment came not because they lacked warning but because they despised it.

CRITICAL THINKING

The most sobering line is the count: eight people. Noah preached for around a hundred and twenty years and persuaded no one outside his own household. Faithfulness is not measured by the size of the response—Noah was completely obedient and almost completely unheeded, and God still called him righteous.

KEY QUESTION

Would I keep obeying God at length if, like Noah, I saw almost no one respond?

2 Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19).

P. 112

Genesis 19:12-13 · NASB95

Then the two men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

a. What did God say about Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18:20?

IN MY WORDS

He said the outcry over Sodom and Gomorrah was very great and their sin exceedingly grave.

CROSS REFERENCE **Genesis 18:20** "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave."

b. In Genesis 19:12-13, what warning was given to Lot and his family about Sodom and Gomorrah, and why?

IN MY WORDS

The angels warned Lot to get everyone he had out of the city because they were about to destroy it, since its outcry had become so great before the LORD that He had sent them to destroy it.

CROSS REFERENCE **Genesis 19:13** "we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the LORD."

c. What judgment did God pour out upon the two cities and the surrounding area (see verse 24)?

IN MY WORDS

The LORD rained down burning sulfur and fire out of heaven upon Sodom, Gomorrah, and the whole plain.

CROSS REFERENCE **Genesis 19:24** "Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven."

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur notes God's justice is never blind or arbitrary—the sin had reached a point where the outcry itself demanded response; even here God rescued the one righteous household first, for the Judge of all the earth deals justly.

CRITICAL THINKING

Even in this judgment God moved to get Lot out before the fire fell—mercy operating inside the very act of wrath. But notice how Lot's warning was received: his sons-in-law thought he was joking. Familiarity with a doomed city had dulled them so completely that a warning of fire sounded like a punch line.

KEY QUESTION

Is there a warning from God that I have started treating as a joke because I have lived alongside the danger too long?

3 Babylon the Great—Revelation 18.

P. 113

Revelation 18:2-3 · NASB95

And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit... For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."

a. How does an angel describe the sins of Babylon the Great, the political and economic system of the Antichrist (see verses 2-3)?

IN MY WORDS

The angel declares her fallen and become a dwelling of demons, saying all the nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her immorality and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from her sensual luxury.

CROSS REFERENCE **Revelation 18:2** "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons."

b. What did another voice say about the sins of Babylon (see verse 5)?

IN MY WORDS

Another voice from heaven said her sins had piled up as high as heaven and that God had remembered her iniquities.

CROSS REFERENCE **Revelation 18:5** "for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities."

c. How quickly are we told that Babylon's judgment will take place (see verse 8)?

IN MY WORDS

In a single day—her plagues of death, mourning, and famine come, and she is burned up with fire, because the Lord God who judges her is strong.

CROSS REFERENCE **Revelation 18:8** "For this reason in one day her plagues will come... and she will be burned up with fire."

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati links the two Babylons directly—the literal city that fell in one night under Belshazzar is the preview of the final world system of the Antichrist, which Revelation says falls just as suddenly and just as completely.

CRITICAL THINKING

Historical Babylon fell in one night; end-times Babylon falls in one day. The pattern is deliberate—God is showing that the collapse of Belshazzar's empire was a rehearsal for the collapse of every God-defying system that will ever rise. What happened on the wall in Daniel 5 is a trailer for the last chapter of world history.

KEY QUESTION

Am I investing my life in a system God has already announced He will bring down in a day?

4 **The World in Our Day (2 Timothy 3:1-5). In 2 Timothy 3:1-5, the apostle Paul warned what mankind would be like as we approach the end times.** P. 114

2 Timothy 3:1-5 · NASB95

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

IN MY WORDS

Paul's list of the last days reads like a description of Belshazzar's banquet and of our own culture—people who love themselves, money, and pleasure more than God, keeping an outward form of religion while denying its power—which means God's patience is once again running toward its limit.

CROSS REFERENCE **2 Chronicles 36:16** "they continually mocked the messengers of God... until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reminds us this is not primarily about pagans but about a form of godliness that has denied its power—religion kept as a costume; the same self-satisfied blindness that toasted idols with holy cups can wear a churchgoing face.

CRITICAL THINKING

The chilling phrase is not any single vice but "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power." Belshazzar did not deny that gods existed—he had a whole pantheon and used sacred vessels to honor them. The last-days danger Paul names is not open atheism but hollow religion, which is exactly what filled that banquet hall.

KEY QUESTION

Do I hold a form of godliness while quietly denying its power in how I actually live?

04 EXECUTE

How does this affect my life?

Bringing Daniel 5 home to my own walk.

1 What are some ways that we as Christians test the patience of God?

P. 115

Romans 2:4 · NASB95

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

IN MY WORDS

We test His patience by presuming on His grace as a license to keep sinning, by delaying obedience we already know He wants, by treating conviction as optional, and by mistaking His slowness to judge for approval of how we live.

CROSS REFERENCE **2 Peter 3:9** "The Lord is not slow about His promise... but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish."

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur warns that God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance, not to embolden us in sin; to read His patience as permission is to repeat Belshazzar's exact error.

CRITICAL THINKING

Belshazzar's sin was not that he had never heard of God but that he had banked on God staying quiet. Every believer runs the same risk in miniature: the longer God waits before dealing with a known sin, the easier it becomes to assume He does not mind. Patience misread becomes presumption, and presumption is what wrote on the wall.

KEY QUESTION

Where have I started reading God's patience with a particular sin as His permission for it?

2 What question does the apostle Paul ask in Romans 6:1? And how does he answer in verse 2?

P. 115

Romans 6:1-2 · NASB95

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

IN MY WORDS

Paul asks whether we should keep sinning so grace can increase, and answers with an emphatic "May it never be!"— for we who have died to sin cannot go on living in it.

CROSS REFERENCE **Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes Paul's answer is not that continuing in sin is forbidden so much as that it is absurd—a person who has genuinely died to sin cannot comfortably go on living in the very thing they died to.

CRITICAL THINKING

Paul does not answer the question with a rule; he answers it with an identity. The reason a believer does not go on sinning that grace may abound is not fear of punishment but the strangeness of a dead man returning to his grave. Grace does not merely forgive the old life—it ends it, and you cannot keep living somewhere you have already died.

KEY QUESTION

Am I trying to keep living in something I claim to have died to?

3 What exhortations are we given in the following passages?

P. 116

a. 2 Corinthians 13:5

IN MY WORDS

I am to test and examine myself to see whether I am actually in the faith, rather than assuming it.

CROSS REFERENCE **2 Corinthians 13:5** "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!"

b. 2 Peter 1:10-11

IN MY WORDS

I am to be all the more diligent to make my calling and election sure, because practicing these things keeps me from stumbling and secures a rich welcome into Christ's eternal kingdom.

CROSS REFERENCE **2 Peter 1:10** "be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you... you will never stumble."

c. 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

IN MY WORDS

I am to examine everything carefully, hold fast to what is good, and abstain from every form of evil.

CROSS REFERENCE **1 Thessalonians 5:21-22** "examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil."

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur notes that self-examination is not morbid introspection but Christian realism; the same Scriptures that assure the believer also command him to check that the assurance rests on genuine faith.

CRITICAL THINKING

Each of these commands puts the scale in my own hands before God ever has to pick it up. Belshazzar was weighed against his will and by surprise; the believer is told to do the weighing now, deliberately, while there is still time to respond. Self- examination is simply refusing to let TEKEL be the first time I am measured.

KEY QUESTION

When did I last honestly examine myself instead of just assuming I am fine?

4 Why do you think frequent self-introspection is so important for us as believers?

P. 116

Psalm 139:23-24 · NASB95

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

IN MY WORDS

Because sin grows quietly and the heart drifts without announcing it, so regular self-examination catches small compromises before they harden and keeps me honest, humble, and dependent on grace instead of coasting on assumptions.

CROSS REFERENCE **1 Corinthians 11:28** "But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik points out the psalmist does not merely examine himself; he invites God to do the searching, knowing our own audits are too gentle on us—real introspection ends by asking God to show us what we cannot see.

CRITICAL THINKING

The reason frequent examination matters is that decline is silent. Belshazzar did not wake up one morning intending to blaspheme; he arrived there by a thousand small unexamined steps away from his grandfather's God. A heart checked often stays close; a heart never checked does not stay still—it wanders, and only notices when the wall lights up.

KEY QUESTION

What small drift would a search of my heart today turn up before it becomes a wall-writing?

5 What is God's will for us, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5?

P. 117

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 · NASB95

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.

IN MY WORDS

God's will is my sanctification—that I be set apart to Him in holiness, abstaining from sexual immorality and governing my body in purity and honor rather than in the passions of those who do not know Him.

CROSS REFERENCE **1 Peter 1:15-16** "like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior... 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur notes Paul defines God's will not first as a decision to discern but as a character to pursue; before I ever ask what God wants me to do, Scripture says what God wants me to be—holy.

CRITICAL THINKING

We often agonize over God's will as if it were a hidden location, when the first thing Scripture calls His will is a condition: sanctification. Belshazzar wanted an interpretation of the writing; God wanted a changed man. Before God tells me where to go, He tells me who to become—and the second question is usually the one I am actually avoiding.

KEY QUESTION

Am I chasing God's will for my decisions while dodging His clearly stated will for my purity?

6 What call are we given in Romans 12:1-2?

P. 117

Romans 12:1-2 · NASB95

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

IN MY WORDS

We are called to present our whole selves to God as a living, holy sacrifice, refusing to be conformed to this world and instead being transformed by the renewing of our minds so we can prove and live out His good, acceptable, and perfect will.

CROSS REFERENCE **Galatians 6:14** "the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Tsarfati draws the contrast with Babylon: the banquet hall was the world's pattern in full display—self, pleasure, and idolatry—while Romans calls the believer to be transformed out of that mold and set wholly on the altar of the living God.

CRITICAL THINKING

The two dangers are conformity and transformation, and they pull in opposite directions on the same person. Belshazzar was fully conformed—poured into the mold of his culture until he fit it perfectly and could no longer see God at all. The renewing of the mind is the only thing that keeps a believer from being quietly pressed into the same shape as the room he lives in.

KEY QUESTION

In what area am I being quietly conformed to the world's mold instead of transformed out of it?

7 Why do you think God so greatly desires for us to pursue purity and Christlikeness?

P. 118

2 Corinthians 3:18 · NASB95

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

IN MY WORDS

Because He made us to reflect His own character, purity is where we are most free and most useful to Him, and Christlikeness is both the goal of our salvation and the truest evidence that we belong to Him.

CROSS REFERENCE **Romans 8:29** "He predestined [us] to become conformed to the image of His Son."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes God's desire for our holiness is not the demand of a killjoy but the love of a Father restoring His children to what they were made to be—the image of Christ, which is where our deepest good and His glory finally meet.

CRITICAL THINKING

God's pursuit of our purity is not Him withholding pleasure but Him refusing to let us settle for Belshazzar's version of it. The banquet promised joy and delivered terror; holiness looks costly and delivers freedom. God wants our Christlikeness because He wants us actually whole—and because a life conformed to Christ is the one argument the watching world still cannot answer.

KEY QUESTION

Do I see God's call to holiness as Him taking something from me, or restoring me to what I was made for?

Closing Thoughts · Lesson 5

Belshazzar had an appointed time. According to Psalm 139:16, every one of our days was written in God's book before there was yet one of them — He is the One who numbers our days and decides how much time we are given to do His will. The tragedy of Daniel 5 is not merely that a king died, but that the window closed while he was still toasting idols with the cups of the living God. He had a lifetime of warning in his own family and spent his last night mocking the God who held his breath.

The word that ought to arrest me is TEKEL — "you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient." Belshazzar was not weighed against Nebuchadnezzar or against the other kings of the earth; he was set on God's own scale. And that is the scale I will one day stand on too. For the believer, the judgment is not about salvation — Christ has already borne the wrath, and there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). But 1 Corinthians 3 says our work will still be tried by fire to see what it was made of: gold and silver and precious stones, or wood, hay, and straw.

So the question Daniel 5 leaves me with is not only "Is my account settled?" but "What am I building with the days I have left?" Belshazzar had time and squandered it on a party. Paul says to make the most of our time, because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16). The handwriting on the wall was God numbering a wasted life — and every life He numbers, He also means to be spent on things that will last when the fire has tested them.

"TEKEL — you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient."

Daniel 5:27

Most of us will never see a hand write on a wall. But every one of us has an appointed number of days, and a God in whose hand our very breath is held. The lesson of Belshazzar is that the reckoning is nearer and more personal than we let ourselves believe, and that no amount of noise, wealth, or religion will move the needle on God's scale. Settle the account now through Christ, who alone tips the balance — and then spend what is left of the numbered days building the gold, and not the straw.

STUDY HELPS · CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

Babylon's fall foretold, the vessels returned, and the God who holds every breath

> *"It is I who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!' And I will make your rivers dry. It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"*
>
> ISAIAH 44:27-28

> *"Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:"*
>
> ISAIAH 45:1

> *""I will make her princes and her wise men drunk, Her governors, her prefects and her mighty men, That they may sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake up," Declares the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts."*
>
> JEREMIAH 51:57

> *"Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and put in the house of his gods;"*
>
> EZRA 1:7

> *"Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling."*
>
> PROVERBS 16:18

> *"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'"*
>
> LUKE 12:20

> *"nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;"*
>
> ACTS 17:25

> *"And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,"*
>
> HEBREWS 9:27

AMIR TSARFATI · Discovering Daniel

Isaiah names Cyrus and describes the dried river and the open gates about a hundred and fifty years before the night of Daniel 5; Jeremiah describes the drunk princes who sleep and do not wake. Tsarfati reads the chapter with those pages open: the fall of Babylon is a demonstration that God announces history before He makes it — and Ezra 1:7 is the sequel, the same vessels carried home to Jerusalem by the same Cyrus. What Belshazzar drank from, the returning exiles put back in the temple.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

Proverbs 16:18 is the chapter in one line, and Luke 12:20 is its New Testament twin — a man congratulating himself over his goods the night his soul is required. MacArthur ties Acts 17:25 to Daniel's charge in verse 23: the God who gives breath was not glorified by the man He was keeping alive. And Hebrews 9:27 is why the chapter is in the Bible: death once, and after that the scales. TEKEL is written over every life that has not been weighed in Christ.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik lines the prophecies up with the history — Isaiah 44–45 and Jeremiah 50–51 against Herodotus and the Nabonidus Chronicle — and finds them in agreement on the river, the gates, the drunkenness and the speed. He adds Ezra 1:7–11 for the vessels, 5,400 articles counted back into Jewish hands, and lets Proverbs 16:18 stand as the moral: pride before destruction, a haughty spirit before stumbling, a king's knees knocking before a wall.

STUDY HELPS · THREE VOICES

At a Glance

Three voices, one chapter

The same chapter, read three ways. Tsarfati listens for Israel and for the Babylon still to fall; MacArthur presses the sin against light and the God who holds every breath; Guzik walks the archaeology, the river, and the three words. Together they keep Daniel 5 from becoming either a ghost story or a proverb.

THE MOMENT	TSARFATI · the times	MACARTHUR · sovereignty	GUZIK · text & history
The feast (5:1–4)	Babylon mocking Zion; Revelation 18's queen who will never mourn.	A man who has lost the fear of God; three sins in one verse.	Nabonidus and the co-regency; Trapp on drink; the grandfather never did this.
The hand (5:5–9)	Judgment lit for all to see; a preview of Revelation 6.	The world's wisdom reads letters, not meaning; the terror was correct.	Weights on a wall mean nothing until they are verbs.
The forgotten man (5:10–17)	Ignored in good times, summoned in the emergency, still there.	Accountable for what he had every chance to remember; unbuyable.	Daniel in his eighties, set aside; the reward worthless.
The sermon (5:18–24)	The warning comes with a way back; Romans 1:21.	Judgment proportioned to light; the God who holds the breath.	No flattery to a drunk monarch; God had been in the hall.
The three words (5:25–28)	The shape of every judgment on a nation; Jeremiah's seventy years.	TEKEL is the Gospel's diagnosis; no one is heavy enough.	Mina, shekel, half-minas; *peres* sounds like Persia.
That same night (5:29–31)	Prophecy to the hour; Babylon the Great falls in one hour.	No appeal, no delay — "this very night your soul is required."	The Euphrates diverted; Daniel outlives the empire.

DANIEL 5 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Belshazzar was real.** Critics called him an invention until the Nabonidus Chronicle and Cylinder named him as Nabonidus's son and co-regent — which is why the best he can offer is *third* ruler (vv. 7, 16, 29). GUZIK
- ***Knew* is the spine of the chapter.** "You knew all this" (v. 22). Belshazzar had his grandfather's testimony and sinned against it. He is judged by the light he had (Luke 12:47–48; James 4:17). MACARTHUR
- **The vessels were the last straw, not the first.** Taken from the temple and kept with some reverence by Nebuchadnezzar (1:2), toasted to idols by his grandson (v. 3), carried home by Cyrus (Ezra 1:7–11). TEXT

The hand wrote where everyone could see. “Opposite the lampstand” (v. 5): God’s judgments on nations are not done in a corner, and the man who mocked heaven could not stand up. TSARFATI

- **Daniel could not be bought.** “Keep your gifts for yourself” (v. 17) — then he receives them (v. 29). The refusal was about motive: the message would not be softened for a reward. MACARTHUR
- **Three weights, three verbs.** Mina, shekel, half-minas on the wall; numbered, weighed, divided in Daniel’s mouth — and *peres* puns on *Paras*, Persia. The verdict was in the spelling. TEXT
- **Prophecy kept its appointment to the hour.** Isaiah named Cyrus and the dried river 150 years early; Jeremiah named the drunk princes and the seventy years; the Euphrates ran low that same night. TSARFATI
- **Daniel outlived the empire.** The boy who refused the king’s food (ch. 1) reads the last king his sentence (ch. 5) and serves the next empire (ch. 6). Faithful men are forgotten by the powerful, and not by God. GUZIK

† Questions for the Table

1 **Belshazzar answered a siege with a party and toasted his idols with God's vessels. What is the "party" you throw when you do not want to face what is at the walls — and what holy thing are you handling lightly while you do it?**

Distraction under threat is not courage; I will face what is at the walls and keep what is holy, holy.

DANIEL 5:1–4

2 **The wise men could read the letters and not the meaning. Where are you relying on the world's expertise to read something only God's Word can interpret?**

The world can spell out my situation; only Scripture can tell me what it means.

DANIEL 5:7–8

3 **Daniel had been set aside until the crisis. If you have been forgotten by the people who used to need you, what does it mean that the queen remembered and God never forgot?**

Being set aside by men is not being set aside by God; I will stay faithful where I am until I am called.

DANIEL 5:10–13

4 **"Keep your gifts for yourself." Where is a reward — approval, money, position — tempting you to soften what God has given you to say?**

I will say what God says for nothing, so that no one can think it was bought.

DANIEL 5:17

5 **"You knew all this." What truth have you known for years — from Scripture, from your own family's story — that you have not humbled your heart under? What would humbling it look like this week?**

I am responsible for the light I have; I will bow under what I already know before I ask for more.

DANIEL 5:22–23

6 **The sentence read at midnight was carried out before dawn. If tonight were your "that same night," what would be numbered, what would be weighed, and whose righteousness would you be standing in?**

I cannot balance the scale; I will stand in Christ's righteousness and live today as if the number were up tonight.

DANIEL 5:26–30

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He had his grandfather's story and the vessels of his grandfather's God, and he toasted his idols with them. The hand wrote where everyone could see; the prophet read it for nothing; and that same night the river ran low and the number was up. God's patience is long, and it is counted.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

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