

# Babylon's Last Day (Dan 5)

## A Small Group Outline



1. **Praise** (*Purpose: To worship God*)
  - What are you thankful for this week? (*let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook*)
  - Song Service
    - Sing a few songs of praise to God
2. **Pray** (*Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord*)
  - What challenges did you have this week? (*write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook*)
  - Go into a season of prayer
3. **Review** (*Purpose: To learn accountability*)
  - Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? (*e.g. Who did your share you faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?*)
  - *Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.*
4. **Give** (*Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies*)
  - Our best option in the lockdown is to return tithes and offerings electronically. Ensure you get the bank details from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.
5. **Discover** (*Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word*)
  - **Notes for the facilitator**
    - For further insights read *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 522-538
    - Daniel was about 84 years old and Belshazzar about 36 when the events of Dan. 5 took place.
    - Belshazzar was co-regent with his father Nabonidus who was not in Babylon at the time the city was taken captive. He was recovering from an illness in Teima. That is why Daniel was offered to become the 'third highest ruler in the kingdom' (vs 7), because there were already 2 rulers overseeing the empire (*Stephen Bohr, Specialized Studies in Daniel*)
    - Allowed "to share in kingly authority at the **age of 15**, Belshazzar gloried in his power and in lifted his heart against the God of heaven" (*see Youth Instructor, May 19, 1898*)
    - The historian Herodotus says that the river Euphrates was diverted by the Persians and they marched into the city on a dry riverbed (*The Histories, I:189-192*). In future, end-time Babylon's support system, the Euphrates, too will be dried up (Rev. 16:12)
    - Babylon was well secured: it had 2 sets of walls; 2 inner walls of 3.6m and 6.7m thick respectively, while the 2 outer walls were 7.3m and 7.9m thick. (*Stephen Bohr*)
    - The Euphrates ran through the centre of the city and great brass gates protected the city where the river entered and exited. These brass gates were carelessly left open by the guards on the night the city was taken (see Isa. 45:1-3). The Euphrates was at its lowest when the city was taken on 12 October 539 BC. (*Ibid*)
    - Belshazzar threw a party while knowing that enemies were surrounding the city. In his pride and arrogance he thought the city was unconquerable. In fact the city had been under siege for 2 years already, and since Babylon had provisions for a 20 year long siege, the king was not concerned about this threat (*see Review & Herald, Feb. 8, 1881*)

- Note that the wine of Babylon in this story allowed the king to confuse the distinction between the holy and the common (see Lev. 10). In future, end-time Babylon too will take the sacred Sabbath & make it a common working day (*Stephen Bohr*)
- Notice that ‘Babylon’s wine’ was offered to the nobles and statesmen causing them to lose clear judgement, and instead of being a sober voice of reason to the king at that time, in their intoxication they went along with his daring and God-defying act of wanting to drink out of sacred Temple vessels.
- Whereas God gave Nebuchadnezzar 12 months before executing judgement in Dan. 4, Belshazzar’s judgement was executed **that very night**. Dan. 5:22 says it was because the proud king, knew the story of how God humbled his proud ancestor Nebuchadnezzar, and yet still did not repent.
- Babylon’s wise men could **read** the writing on the wall since it was in their native language, Chaldee, but they could not **interpret** it.
- Check out the prophecies of judgement against Babylon in Jer. 50 & 51.
- God miraculously preserved Daniel from the enemy armies on that last night of Babylon’s existence, and later even caused him to become a ruler in the new Medo-Persian empire (see Dan. 6:1-3). God’s Hand was on his life.
- There is a call in Jer. 50:8; 51:6, 45 to ‘flee from Babylon’/ ‘come out of her my people’, similar to the call in Rev. 18:4.
- Isa. 13:20 warns that Babylon will never be inhabited. It is still in ruins today, and has never been rebuilt. This is a foreshadowing that end-time Babylon too will one day be in ruins, never to be ‘rebuilt’.
- *Read Dan 5 as a group. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (*use only a few*). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
  - Put yourself in Belshazzar’s shoes for a moment, on the night Babylon fell. What is going through your mind? What are you experiencing? What are your fears, your hopes, your expectations?
  - What are the implications of knowing that there was an unseen Watcher, a heavenly representative at this party? How does it impact our living knowing that all our activities are open to heaven’s scrutiny and judgement? (*Read and answer one question at a time*)
  - What is the danger of mixing the sacred and the common? Are there ways in which this is being done today? (*Read and answer one question at a time*)
  - The king’s first response to Daniel was to remind him that he was a Jewish captive (vs 13) instead of a valued Babylonian statesman. What does this tell us about the king?
  - Why do you think the kings of Babylon kept using their ‘wise men’ even though they repeatedly were shown to be deficient in wisdom and understanding?
  - Belshazzar threw a party, knowing that enemy forces were encamped outside of Babylon. Are the things we have placed undue confidence in (*such as a job, a special person, bank account, house, etc.*) that could possibly fail us one day?
  - Why do you think Daniel rejected the king’s gifts and rewards (vs 17). What does that tell us about Daniel? (*Read and answer one question at a time*)
  - Whereas God gave Nebuchadnezzar 12 months before executing judgement in Dan. 4, Belshazzar’s judgement was executed **that very night**. Why do you think this was the case? (*Hint: See Dan. 5:22 – ‘though you knew all this’*)

- Based on the story of Dan. 5, why do you think we are judged for not taking hold of opportunities to know God better? What are the implications for us today? (*Read and answer one question at a time*)
- **Application Questions** (*select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
  - What would you do if you had only one day to live?
  - Belshazzar should have allowed the lessons learned from Nebuchadnezzar to shape his life. Who are the people that have shaped, or are shaping your spiritual life?
  - There was a call in the Old Testament to ‘come out of Babylon’ (Jer. 51:45). Babylon represents the opposite of God’s will in our lives. What may God be calling you away from (or ‘out of’), that could be hindering a deeper walk with Him?
  - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group’s secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. “I will live each day on purpose this week, as if it were my very last. I plan to, among other things, get up at 4am, spend quality time with God, make my family’s favourite meals, laugh, go for walks, and hug my loved ones everyday.”

6. **Share** (*Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith*)

- Do you have anyone you could share today’s lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. **Closing prayer**

*Prepared by Shandrell Penniken / Northern Conference*