**Surviving in Dangerous Times – Lesson 7 – Daniel 5**

I. Review

II. Cast of Characters (as best as can be known from history)

 A. Nebuchadnezzar had several children – Evil-Merodach (son), and Nitocris and Kassaya (daughters)

 B. Upon Nebuchadnezzar’s death, Evil-Merodach became king – assassinated by Neriglissar, his brother-in-law, through marriage to Kassaya

 C. Neriglissar reigned 4 yrs, followed by son Labashi Marduk – liquidated within a month by Nabonidus

 D. Nabonidus married Nitocris and fathered Belshazzar, who co-reigned with his father

 E. “Father” in Dan 5:2,11,13,18 can also mean forefather or ancestor or grandfather

III. Belshazzar’s Feast (v1-4)

 A. Timeframe – 539 BC – last day of Babylonian Empire

 B. Who was Belshazzar

 1. Very proud – party boy – multiple wives and concubines –

 2. Worshipped material gods

 C. Held a great royal feast while the enemy was knocking at the door

 1. Attendees – 1000 nobles drinking wine

 2. Banquet was a display of pride, sacrilege, and idolatry

 3. City under siege from Media and Persia (prophesy about fall of Babylon about to be fulfilled – Is 21:2-10; Jer 51:34-37,54-58)

 D. Order for the temple vessels to be brought

 1. Taken by Nebuchadnezzar from Jerusalem

 2. Used for drinking by all attendees to praise the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone – God will not give His praise to another (Is 42:8)

IV. An uninvited guest (v5-9)

 A. Suddenly a human hand appears – writes on plaster of palace wall in front of lampstand

 B. King’s very serious reaction

 1. Face paled

 2. Thoughts alarmed him

 3. Hip joints went slack, knees knocked together

 C. King commands that conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners be brought in

 1. Read inscription and explain its interpretation

 2. Reward would be promotion to third ruler in kingdom along with accoutrements of the office (purple garment and gold necklace)

 D. Wise men enter but fail to read or interpret inscription

 E. King becomes greatly alarmed and paler, and nobles are perplexed

 F. Appears to be ignorant or very forgetful of Daniel’s abilities as demonstrated during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign

V. Queen makes a suggestion (v10-12)

 A. “O king live forever” – exact opposite of what the handwriting was about

 1. Most likely Nitocris daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and wife of Nabonidus, and thus, Belshazzar’s mother

 2. Historians cite her as a woman of extraordinary prudence

 B. Tells king of Daniel

 1. Has the Spirit of the Holy God

 2. Illumination, insight, and wisdom of the gods were found in him

 3. Appointed by Nebuchadnezzar as chief of all the wise men

 4. Had great ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems

VI. Daniel brought in (v13-16)

 A. Daniel had been sidelined for a number of years

 B. Questioned by king – are you that Daniel, one of the exiles, as opposed to the chief of the wisemen?

 C. Tells Daniel of situation in progress

 1. Heard that superior wisdom is found in you

 2. My wise men could not read or interpret this inscription

 3. Heard that you are able to interpret dreams and solve difficult problems

 4. Must have been difficult for Belshazzar that Daniel was the only one who could help him understand the writing

 D. King makes request of Daniel

 1. Interpret the inscription

 2. Reward would be promotion to third ruler in kingdom with all accoutrements

VII. Daniel’s response (v17-28)

 A. Keep your gifts and rewards or give them to someone else

 B. Nevertheless, I will read and interpret the inscription

 C. Some background before the interpretation of the inscription – background to the explanation needed because Daniel wanted to explain why the interpretation was so severe

 1. The Supreme God granted sovereignty, grandeur and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar

 2. He lifted himself up

 3. God deposed him, removed him from his position, and took away his glory

 4. Recognized God’s sovereignty over mankind and was restored to his position

 D. You have not humbled yourself despite knowing this info

 1. Have exalted yourself against God

 2. Have used His vessels improperly to praise false gods which are worthless

 3. Have not glorified the God who sustains your very life

 4. God sent this message in form of a hand writing an inscription

 5. An OT example of the fulfillment of Rom 1:18-21

 E. Finally gets to the message: mene, mene, tekel, upharsin

 1. Mene (a mina, numbered) – God numbered your kingdom and put an end to it

 2. Tekel (a shekel, weighed) – you have been weighed on the scale of justice and found deficient

 3. Upharsin or peres (a half shekel, divided) – your kingdom has been split into pieces (or split from you) and given to the Medes and Persians

 4. Repeated theme of Daniel – God is sovereign over who reigns and how long he reigns

VIII. Subsequent events (v29-31)

 A. Daniel clothed and adorned as the third ruler of Babylon

 B. Belshazzar slain – Babylonian Empire ends

 C. Darius the Mede became king (name means “The Royal One”)

 1. Not sure exactly who Darius was – not mentioned in history outside of Bible

 2. Some think he was a Median king called Cyaxares known by his throne name, Darius

 3. Some think he was a governor named Gubaru and that Darius is a title, not a name

 4. Some think Darius is another name for Cyrus – Cyrus was half Median – Dan 6:28 “Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, that is, in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

IX. Some lessons for today

 A. The wicked will not stand before a holy God – Ps 1

 B. God shows mercy to some and does not show mercy to others – Nebuchadnezzar vs. Belshazzar – Rom 9:15-18

 C. Transfer of power and wealth takes but a moment when God so desires – human power and wealth are transient commodities – trust in God not in anything else