

Ouachita Baptist University

Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

Vaught Sermon Notes: Daniel

W.O. Vaught Archive

6-6-1982

A Wild Party that Destroyed a Nation

W. O. Vaught

Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/vn_daniel



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Vaught, W. O., "A Wild Party that Destroyed a Nation" (1982). *Vaught Sermon Notes: Daniel*. 17.
https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/vn_daniel/17

This Sermon Notes is brought to you for free and open access by the W.O. Vaught Archive at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Vaught Sermon Notes: Daniel by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

A WILD PARTY THAT DESTROYED A NATION

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL
NUMBER 13
DANIEL 5:1-9

Dr. W. O. Vaught, Jr.
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

In our last study we learned that Nebuchadnezzar was converted and issued a salvation tract to his empire. Now chapter four is not in chronological order, but was brought in here to tell us what the result will be in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. He lived many years after his conversion and did his best work then for his empire. He ruled 44 years--from 605 B.C. to 562 B.C.

Look At These Historical Facts

1. Nabo Polassar was the great father of Nebuchadnezzar and was instrumental in building the foundation of the Chaldean Empire. He was largely responsible for overcoming the Assyrians and for bringing together the clans that formed the Chaldean Empire.
2. Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled from 605 to 562 B.C. was the famous son of Nabo Polassar and ruled the Chaldean Empire while it was the greatest power in the world.
3. Evil-Merodock ruled only two years, 562 to 560 B.C. and was a very poor ruler. In fact he was so incompetent that his brother had to kill him.
4. Neriglissar came next to the throne and ruled from 560 to 556 B.C. Was old when he began to rule. He had married one of the daughters of Nebuchadnezzar.
5. Nabonidus ruled from 556 to 539 B.C. He tried to pull the empire together and he saw it was hopeless, so he retired and went to what we would call "Tucson" and there lived it up for many years. But while he was gone, he left a co-ruler in charge named Belshazzar. So Nabonidus went to Tema in Northern Arabia and there spent his retirement years. And when Cyrus the Great came and took the land, he decided to leave Nabonidus there in retirement.
6. Belshazzar--539 B.C.

The historical evidence of these events is quite amazing in secular history and this is the way these events took place. As Cyrus the Great decided to take Babylon he sent his able General, General Gobrias to the city of Babylon with a large army. When General Gobrias arrived he found that the city was walled and he could not penetrate the thick walls of the city of Babylon. Cyrus the Great arrived and they found that the Euphrates River flowed right through the city of Babylon. They decided to dam up the river and divert the water so they could walk into the city in the river bed. The engineers had completed this amazing accomplishment on the very night that Belshazzar's feast took place. Right at this time there were four spheres of influence in the world.

1. Media 2. Chaldea 3. Egypt 4. Lydia. Cyrus the Great was able to conquer Media, Lydia, and Egypt and now in our study, we will see his conquest of Chaldea or Babylon.

DANIEL 5:1 "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." This is the feast that Belshazzar threw which proved to be the downfall of his empire. I call this party a "whing-ding." He had invited a thousand of his lords and this was a party to end all parties.

When we read "He drank wine before them" it means that he got drunk in the presence of all these guests.

Was there such a man as Belshazzar? Just because he does not appear in the official list of the kings of Babylon many have contended that he never lived. But we have abundant evidence that not only was there such a man, but we know much about him and why he led the nation to ruin while Nabonidus lived it up in Tema.

Sir William Rawlingson went to Babylon in 1854 and in his archeological work he dug up tablets which give much information about Belshazzar. Those tablets were sent to the British Museum and there they were translated. From them we know much about Belshazzar. We learn that Belshazzar was a great hunter and once when he went hunting, one of his noblemen killed his limit before Belshazzar did. As a result, Belshazzar had him cut to pieces and out of that incident grew the saying, "Has the king bagged his limit yet?" These tablets also tell about one of the parties Belshazzar threw and at that party General Gedates was present and one of the dancing girls mentioned how beautiful he was. Belshazzar rolled off his couch and cut him to pieces. From these things you gather that a mad man was ruling Babylon. From this incident came another famous saying, "Never mention my name. It's not worth it."

So at this big feast in Babylon, on the very night the army of Cyrus the Great was walking into the city in the dry river bed, Belshazzar tied one on and got drunk before 1000 of his important guests. In this conduct he proved that he could not guide the empire and he showed that he lost control and had no poise. People who lose their poise soon go down the drain.

(We might insert here that drinking in our own Washington, D.C. is heavier than any capitol in the world. Almost every event of any kind in Washington is always begun with a cocktail party. On television they showed a slot machine where you can dial the number and select any kind of drink you want. And on planes today before the other passengers can be served food, they always go through the plane and take orders for liquor for the passengers.)

The principle is this--any man who cannot control himself cannot control a nation.

How Belshazzar Defied The Lord At His Party

DANIEL 5:2 "Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his prince his wives and his concubines, might drink therein." While Belshazzar was getting drunk, he commanded his servants to bring in the golden vessels out of the place where his grandfather had stored them. Nebuchadnezzar had brought these golden vessels out of Solomon's Temple

when he destroyed it in 587 B.C. Now the temple in Jerusalem was so constructed that everything in it spoke of Jesus Christ. In the Holy Temple when a lamb was killed for the sacrifice and a golden cup was taken to catch the blood from that sacrifice. Then the high priest, dressed in white, would take that cup and once a year he would go into the holy of holies and sprinkle the blood over the mercy seat, thus making atonement for the sins of the people and for the whole nation. Now this is the golden cup Belshazzar took and used for the wine at his drunken party. In other words, it was wine versus the blood of Christ.

So here we have a picture of a decadent nation. This is a picture of a nation mocking and ridiculing God. This is why the Lord placed the material in chapter four here beside this incident in chapter 5. He wanted to call attention to the fact that Belshazzar had rejected the grace of God as seen in his grandfather's life.

DANIEL 5:3-4 "Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." They sang their songs in the midst of their drunken party and some of the songs have come down to us. But they are so evil if I translated them you would say that I am guilty of Pornography.

- First, they sang to Marduke--This God is equal to Zeus or Jupiter. This was the main God, like we say, "Jehovah."
- Second, they sang to Nebo or Nabu. This is the God of education.
- Third, they sang to Nergal. This was the God of war, and since the Persians were at their door, they decided to sing to this God.
- Fourth, they sang to Ishtar--This equals the Latin God, Venus, or the Greek God, Aphrodite.

This is probably the most wicked scene portrayed in all the Bible. Drinking, dancing girls, immorality going on all over the place.

Walls Were Used For Inscriptions

In that day they used the banquet walls for inscribing certain facts concerning the life of the King. All the great important things he had done in his lifetime were inscribed on the walls. One would tell about what a great hunter he was. Another would tell about how handsome he was.

They used trumpets and they would blow the trumpets with great fanfare and all the banquet festivities would be brought to a halt. Then some motor-mouth would call attention to the most recent accomplishment of the king. There would be a story of how the king had killed a lion. Possibly it was an old lion that had no teeth and it wasn't any great accomplishment, but because King Belshazzar had done it, they made a great spectacle of the accomplishment. They would tell at great length how brave he was to kill the lion all by himself. Then someone would jump up and tell how the lion would have killed him had not the brave Belshazzar come to his aid and killed the vicious lion. Then they would all lift their goblets and drink to Belshazzar and say, "Hail to the king."

Now it was right at this time that a hand came out of the wall, just came out from nowhere and while they were all looking at the wall, the hand began to write a new message on the wall.

DANIEL 5:5-9 "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished." The wise men of Babylon could not tell the meaning of the handwriting on the wall and this is where Daniel will come back into the picture again.

DANIEL 5:5 "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." So in the midst of that great drunken "whing-ding" King Bleshazzar looked up to the wall and saw a new and strange writing. It was different from any writing he had ever seen before.

DANIEL 5:6 "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." This is a pitiful picture of a wicked king. No wonder Babylon crumbled and never rose to be a strong empire again.

DANIEL 5:7 "The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." So here the king raised his voice and called for the State Department. (If the guards around that palace had looked down, at that very moment they would have seen General Gobrias and the army of Cyrus the Great entering the city in the dry river bed. The words here for cry out mean "He threw a tantrum." No man can think when he is afraid and when a man loses himself like this, he is not capable of governing anything. So all the officials of the empire were called in to see the writing on the wall. Here is a picture of a man depending on other men in a crisis. Two scriptures that apply right here are as follows--

PSALM 118:8-9 "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes."

JEREMIAH 17:5-8 "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

So here is man depending on man in a crisis. They neglected Bible doctrine and because of it God's anger was kindled against them. In the midst of his great excitement and fright, King Belshazzar made his great offer to the one who would tell him the interpretation of the writing.

DANIEL 5:8 "Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. The wise men of Babylon could read the words, but they could not tell the meaning of them. The word used here for "read" means to understand. They could not understand the meaning of the words.

DANIEL 5:9 "Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished." Here Belshazzar goes to pieces again. One thousand of his nobility were there with him and it had now become a tantrum convention. Pandemonium had broken out. So the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar was called into the picture at this stage, and it is entirely possible that she was a believer. Nitrocris had married Nabonidus. She was in the palace and she heard the call of her son's voice thus she was drawn into the banquet hall.

DANIEL 5:10 "Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:" Naturally she came in and made the usual introduction--"O king live forever." This was the first sane thing that had been said at the party. Immediately we realize that a person with real stability and poise was speaking. So she advised Belshazzar not to get excited and not to be disturbed.

DANIEL 5:11 "There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers;" Here is the man for the crisis. Please notice the same phrase here that Nebuchadnezzar had used of Daniel earlier in our story. The queen gave a quick sketch of Daniel and the part he had played in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar.

DANIEL 5:12 "Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation." Now it wasn't Daniel's business to go around and try to straighten out kings and rulers. Daniel was too wise for that. He was going to let God do that instead. Daniel operated on the principle of "Mind your own business."

Please notice that the queen said of Daniel--

1. He has life (Salvation).
2. He has doctrine.
3. He knows how to apply doctrine to experience.

So again Daniel is the man for the crisis and in our next study we will see how he met the crisis of the handwriting on the wall.