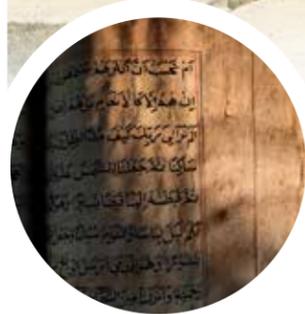


LIFE or DEATH?

The city of Babylon was surrounded by the combined army of the Medes and Persians; but Belshazzar, the new king of Babylon, was not concerned. He was surrounded by walls so thick that several chariots could ride side by side on its top. The city had stored so much food that he could waste food in feasting. The Euphrates River ran through the city, so they had water for all of their needs.



Do you think the king would have been very concerned, however, if he knew there was a prophecy given in the Bible more than 100 years before that time, stating exactly how Babylon would fall?

1 Which general did this prophecy say would lead the Medes and Persians against Babylon?
Isaiah 45:1 "Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut."

- a. Nebuchadnezzar
- b. Cyrus
- c. Daniel
- d. Alexander

When Cyrus surrounded the city of Babylon with his army, Belshazzar should have trembled and humbled his heart before God. But he did not. In fact, he rebelled against Him.



2 What did he boldly do to dishonor God?
Daniel 5:2-4 "Belshazzar gave the command to bring the _____ and _____ vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem.... Then they brought the gold vessels ... and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines _____ from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of _____ and _____, bronze and iron, wood and stone."



Nebuchadnezzar, the king's grandfather, had taken these golden vessels from God's sacred temple when he conquered Jerusalem. By drinking from these vessels and using them to honor his idol gods, Belshazzar was insulting and dishonoring the true God. He was saying that he thought his idols were better than God.

3 What happened next?
Daniel 5:5 "In the same hour the _____ of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the _____ that wrote."

A bright, shining hand appeared on the wall and slowly wrote strange words that gleamed like fire on the wall.

The king was frightened. His knees wobbled so badly that they hit each other. The hand disappeared, but the fiery words remained. In vain the king tried to read what it said.



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4 Could the wise men help him? **Daniel 5:7-9**
Yes / No
5 Whom did the queen mother say the king should call for help?
Daniel 5:12

- a. Mishael
- b. Azariah
- c. Daniel
- d. Hananiah

When Daniel came in, the king offered to give him great rewards if he would read the writing on the wall and tell what it meant. Daniel had no interest in the reward, but he said he would interpret the writing for the king.

6 What did Daniel say first? **Daniel 5:18-21**

- a. He reminded the king how God humbled his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar.
- b. He told the king how honored he was to interpret the writing for him.
- c. He explained that the wise men could not interpret the dream because they were not smart enough.
- d. He discussed the wisdom of the queen mother who praised his abilities.

Why do you think God gives us stories like these?

The Bible tells stories about the choices people made and the results of those choices. God wants us to learn from their experiences so we do not make the same mistakes!

7 What does **Proverbs 12:15** say? "The way of a _____ is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is _____."

If a mother tells her daughter, "Don't touch the stove," the daughter can learn from the parent's instruction and stay happy and well. Or she can learn from experience. If the daughter is disobedient and touches the stove, she learns from experience how terrible it feels to burn her hand.

Belshazzar did what was right in his own eyes.

Did that show that he was a fool? Yes. He could have learned from his grandfather, but he did not. Instead, he chose his own way and made a very sad mistake.

8 What did the writing on the wall mean?
Daniel 5:26-28 "This is the interpretation of each word. _____: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; _____: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; _____: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."



That very night, King Belshazzar was slain, and Darius the Mede became king. (Daniel 5:30, 31.)

While the Babylonians had been drinking wine out of God's holy vessels and praising their gods that knew nothing, the vast army of the Medes and Persians came right into the city.



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How did they do that?

Cyrus's army had been digging a big a ditch. That night they changed the way the Euphrates River flowed, so that instead of going through the city, the water went around it. The gates inside the city that led to the river had been left open by drunken guards, so the Medes and Persians went along the river bed and through the open gates into the city. Babylon was completely overtaken by Cyrus' army before the soldiers could fight.



After Persia took over Babylon, Daniel continued to faithfully obey God. He still prayed to God three times every day.

Because he was a good, honest worker, the new king promoted him to a high position in the Persian government.

This made some leaders in Medo-Persia very angry. They wanted to get Daniel in trouble, so they tried hard to find something he had done wrong. But they couldn't find a single time when he had swerved from complete integrity. He had done the right thing every single time! (Daniel 6:1-4.)

Integrity: Always being honest

9 In Daniel 6:3, we read that Daniel had an "excellent spirit." Who gave Daniel that excellent spirit? **Daniel 5:11**

- a. Daniel
- b. His friends
- c. God

Daniel had God's Holy Spirit living in him. Do you know that Jesus offers to give us that Spirit, too? (Luke 11:13.) Having God's Holy Spirit in us changes us.

10 What kind of people will we be when the Holy Spirit is living in us? **Galatians 5:22, 23** "But the fruit of the _____ is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

The king could see these good fruits in Daniel's life, so it is not surprising that the king wanted Daniel to be in charge of everything.

Unfortunately, Daniel had enemies who hated how good he was. Together, they planned a way to get rid of Daniel. But they could not find anything wrong with him.

11 So what did they do to get Daniel in trouble? **Daniel 6:5-7** "Then these men said, 'We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God.'



So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: 'King Darius, live forever! All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any _____ or _____ for thirty days, except _____, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.'

If they couldn't get Daniel in trouble for doing what was wrong, they would get him in trouble for doing what was right!

The princes thought their plan was foolproof. They were sure he would never stop praying to his God.

If the king would sign their decree and make it the law, it could never be changed—not even by the king himself!

Satisfied with their crafty plan, Daniel's enemies wrote the decree and took it to the king. Sure enough, the king liked their praise and flattery, and he signed the decree. Now it was the law, and anyone who disobeyed would be punished. (Daniel 6:9.)

Daniel had a good habit. Every day, he went to his window three times and prayed there where everyone could see him.

Now that the king had made this new law, Daniel had a decision to make:

- 1. Pray at his window > Honor God > Face certain death in the lion's den
- 2. Pray in secret > Dishonor God > Avoid the lion's den

12 What did Daniel do? **Daniel 6:10** "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went _____. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees _____ times that day, and prayed and gave



_____ before his God, as was his custom since early days."

Daniel's enemies saw him, not just once, but three times that day, praying to his God. They ran to the king and reminded him of the law he had just signed.

The king immediately realized that a plot had been laid to destroy his faithful friend.

13 What did he do? **Daniel 6:14** "And the king, when he heard these words, was _____ displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to _____ him; and he labored till the going down of the _____ to deliver him."

14 At the end of the day, those wicked men came back to the king. What did they tell him? **Daniel 6:15** "Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, 'Know, O king, that it is the _____ of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be _____.'"

Sadly, the king gave the command to throw Daniel into the lion's den. (Daniel 6:16, 17.)



All night, Daniel stayed in the lions' den.

The king walked sadly back to his palace. He refused to eat, and he did not sleep all night. Early in the morning he hurried back to the den of lions. He called, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" (Daniel 6:20.)



15 What was Daniel's answer? **Daniel 6:21, 22** "Then Daniel said to the king, 'O king, live forever! My God sent His _____ and _____ the lions' mouths, so that they have not _____ me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.'"



Quickly, they took Daniel out of the lions' den, and found that the lions had not hurt him at all.

Some people would say, "Those lions were not hungry." Oh, yes, they were! Next, the king had Daniel's accusers and even their families thrown into the den of lions. The Bible says that the lions broke their bones before they even landed at the bottom of the den. (Daniel 6:24.)

God says, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).



Both Daniel and King Belshazzar, whom we learned about in the last lesson, could choose either life or death.

By refusing to learn from his grandfather's punishment, defying God, and choosing to live for the pleasures of this world, Belshazzar chose death.

But Daniel chose life. He lived to please God and chose to obey Him no matter what the consequences were.

16 What will you choose? Will you choose life? _____

Answers

- 1. b
- 2. gold / silver / drank / gold / silver
- 3. fingers / hand
- 4. no
- 5. c
- 6. a
- 7. fool / wise
- 8. mene / tekell / peres
- 9. c
- 10. Spirit
- 11. god / man / you
- 12. home / three / thanks
- 13. greatly / deliver / sun
- 14. law / changed
- 15. angel / shut / hurt