

Night Scenes of the Bible
“The Night of Retribution”
Daniel 5
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Introduction: We learn from history and from Scripture that there is a last night for every nation, and there is a last night for every individual.

* Here in Daniel 5, we see both the last night of a nation, Babylon, and the last night of an individual, The King of Babylon, Belshazzar.

* Both happened in one night. It’s a wake up call.

* To us as a nation, and to us as individuals.

* Now, there are three characteristics about this night scene I want us to look at together:

- 1) A Night of Revelry
- 2) A Night of Revelation
- 3) A Night of Retribution

I. A Night of Revelry (v.v. 1-4)

A. Note the chronology (539 B.C.- 30 years after chapter 4)

1. Chapter 2- King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (head-gold (Babylon), breast and arms-silver (Medo-Persia), belly and thighs- brass (Greece), legs of iron (Rome), feet and toes- iron and clay (Roman Empire), and stone cut without hands.
2. Daniel 2:21- “God removeth kinds and setteth up kings”

B. Bible critics say Belshazzar was not the last King of Babylon, rather Nebonidus was.

1. In 1854, archaeologists found “The Nadonidus Cylinder.”

C. (v. 1) Belshazzar the King made a great feast

1. “A night of debauchery”

D. (v.v. 2-4) The folly of Belshazzar

1. His sacrilege (v.v. 2-3)
 - a. Wine, women, song
 - b. Proverbs 20:1- “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”
2. His idolatry (v. 4)

E. All this while the enemy surrounded the city

F. Why would the king party like this?

1. A false confidence in the strength of the city
 - a. The city walls were 22 feet thick and 90 feet high.
 - b. Gates, inner wall and mounts were bronze.
 - c. Us too- a false confidence!

- d. Illustration- My health, my wealth, my job, my family, my religion.
- 2. A sinful tendency to distract ourselves in times of danger and difficulty.
 - a. We don't want to think, so we try to distract ourselves to deaden our conscience.
 - i. Illustration- alcohol
 - b. We want to escape our problems.
 - c. How about you?
 - i. Debauchery and drunkenness
 - ii. Sacrilege (defy God)
 - iii. Idolatry (make our own gods)
 - d. Remember, God will bring retribution (sow & reap)
 - e. From "feasting and folly," we now see the finger of God!

II. A Night of Revelation (v.v. 23-24)

* The night of revelry became a night of revelation.

* God crashed the party!

A. The Finger of God (v. 5)

1. Illustration- Exodus 8- The Plagues
2. Exodus 31:18- The Ten Commandments
3. Luke 11:20- "cast out demons"
4. John 8- "wrought on the ground"
5. For us- God's Word

B. The Fear of the King (v.v. 6-9)

1. Why was he fearful? (v. 6)
 - a. His conscience
 - b. Conscience makes cowards of us all!
 - c. Illustration- Adam and Eve in the garden
 - d. Illustration- Herod Antipas- Killed John the Baptist
 - e. How about you?

C. The Faithfulness of Daniel (v.v. 10-29)

1. In comes the Queen Mother (v.v. 10-16)
2. Daniel is brought in.
3. Daniel speaks to the King!
 - a. He rejects the King's gifts (v. 17)
 - b. He rehearses the King's history (v.v. 18-21)
 - c. He rebukes the King's sin (v.v. 22-23)
 - i. "Sinned against the light" (v. 22)

- ii. “Deliberately defied God” (v. 23a)
- iii. “Became idolaters” (v. 23b)
- iv. “Failed to glorify God” (v. 23c)

4. Daniel interprets the handwriting (v.v. 25-29)

- a. “Numbered” (v. 26)
 - i. “Your time is up”
 - ii. God numbers our days!
 - iii. Life is short!
- b. “Weighed” (v. 27)
 - i. How God weighs us?
 - a. Righteously (the cross)
 - b. Found wanting (Ten Commandments)
- c. “Divided” (v. 28)

III. A Night of Retribution (v.v. 30-31)

* Perhaps the King said “I don’t believe it will happen to me.”

- It did happen! How?
 - God’s Word is true in Daniel 2 (“the head of gold” replaced “breasts and arms of silver”)
 - God is sovereign
 - God is righteous
 - God will judge sin
 - Lehman Strauss- *“There is a last night for every nation and there is a last night for every individual person. Every nation and every man is held accountable to God, and the Almighty holds an indictment against any and all who defy divine light and desecrate holy things. Babylonian pride and confusion are seen on every hand today. There is a handwriting against every man. But our Lord Jesus Christ has made salvation possible for every man, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross (Colossians 2:14). And now all who put their trust in Him are saved from the awful night of eternal banishment from the presence of God. But for the proud in heart who refuse to recognize the Most High God, there “is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 13).*

* Jesus- Matthew 24 (Days of Noah)

- Illustration- Rich fool
 - 1) Life is short and uncertain!
 - 2) Death is certain!

- * There is a last night for everyone!
 - Lord, teach us to number our days!