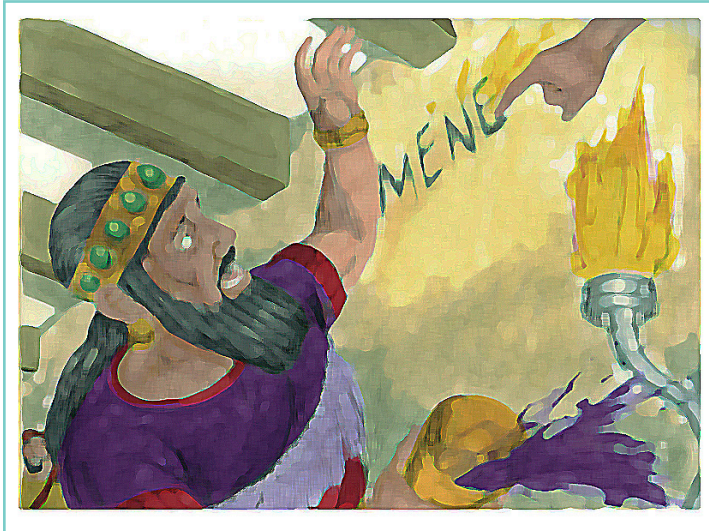


Lesson 4: Judgment



Old Testament

New Testament

Where in the Bible?

Most of the books of the Prophets are near the end of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament: History

Israelite history is often broken down into three sections: the **pre-exilic** period, the **exilic** period, and the **post-exilic** period — referring to the times before, during, and after the exile to Babylon. There were prophets who taught in each of these periods.

Biblical Time Period: Exile

The time of the Exile was a significant period in the history of Israel. God's people were first attacked and conquered in the north by the Assyrian Empire, then later in the south by the Babylonian Empire. Many of the people were carried away into exile in Mesopotamia, far from home.

Eventually God brought King Cyrus of Persia to power over the Babylonians. God's people were allowed to return home to rebuild their temple and their nation. The Prophet Daniel lived under the Babylonians, as well as under the rulers of the Medes and Persians.

Introduction

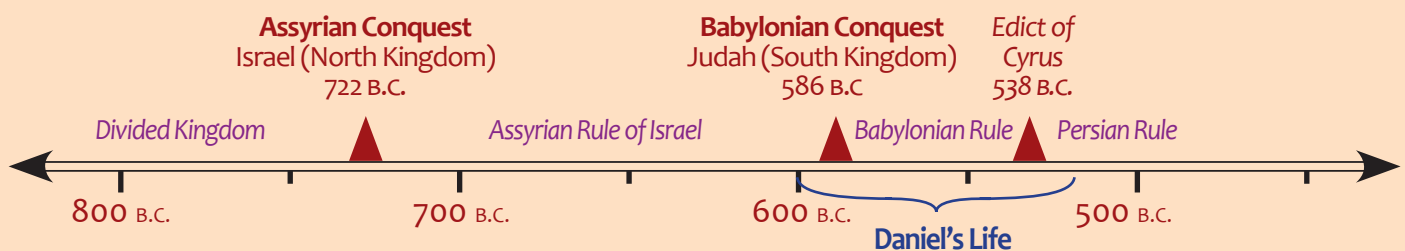
Belshazzar had become the new King of Babylon. He threw a great feast for his nobles, serving wine to them in the gold vessels that had been stolen from God's Temple in Jerusalem. Suddenly, a hand miraculously appeared and wrote a message from God on the wall of the palace.

Read: Daniel 5:1-30

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

When in Time?

The Assyrian Empire conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. Years later, the Babylonian Empire from Mesopotamia overcame the Assyrians. In 586 B.C., they conquered the southern kingdom of Judah, carrying many of the Judean nobility into exile in Babylon. The Babylonian exile lasted until 538 B.C., when King Cyrus of Persia allowed God's people to return to their homeland. Some stayed in Persia.



Discuss: Daniel 5:1-30

1. King Belshazzar of Babylon was a powerful man in his day. Why do you think he threw great parties and invited so many lords and nobles? How did that help him in his rulership of the country?
2. According to verses 2-4, what was so offensive to God about what Belshazzar did? Do you think the king had any idea that he was doing anything wrong? Why or why not?
3. They say, "Ignorance is no excuse." In our lives, do we always know when we are doing things wrong? In what way are we accountable for our actions regardless?
4. Verse 5 says: "The fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall." How do you picture this scene? Was the hand big or small? What do you imagine the marks looked like?
5. Prior to this story, Daniel had worked in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian ruler who conquered Judah. According to verses 13-16, what was Daniel known for?
6. What sort of king had Nebuchadnezzar been? According to verses 20-21, what did God do to teach him a lesson? What lesson did Nebuchadnezzar finally learn? Does it seem like Belshazzar learned anything from his father's experience?
7. What did the three words on the wall mean?
 - a) Mene:
 - b) Tekel:
 - c) Parsin:
8. Was Daniel able to explain the words because he was smart or clever? Read 2 Peter 1:19-21. How does Peter describe the source and authority of biblical prophecy?

Where in the World?

In the centuries prior to the coming of Jesus, the Jewish people had been exiled to the lands of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. Advances in travel and trade also meant that people could more easily move from place to place.

This "spreading out" of the Jewish people is referred to as the **Diaspora** (*die-AAH-spoe-rah*).

By the time of Jesus, there were more Jews in the Diaspora than were actually living in Israel.



"The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations." (Deuteronomy 4:27)