

Dr. Wendy Widder, Daniel, Session 8, Daniel 5: A Humbled King and God's Rescinded Power Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Widder, Daniel, Session 8, Daniel 5: A Humbled King and God's Rescinded Power, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Wendy Widder's lecture on Daniel 9 and 5 explores themes of repentance, revelation, and divine judgment. The lecture closely examines Daniel's prayer of confession and the appearance of Gabriel, leading to the famous prophecy of the "70 weeks" in Daniel 9. **She contrasts the humility of King Nebuchadnezzar with the arrogance of Belshazzar, whose desecration of temple vessels leads to his downfall.** Dr. Widder dissects Belshazzar's feast, the writing on the wall, and Daniel's interpretation, highlighting the importance of valuing God and learning from history. **The lecture connects the events in Daniel to broader prophetic themes and emphasizes God's sovereignty over kings and kingdoms.** Ultimately, Widder frames Belshazzar as a prototype for later defiant kings and urges listeners to acknowledge God's power in their own lives.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Widder, Daniel, Session 8 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).



**Widder_Daniel_Ses
sion08.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Widder, Daniel, Session 8, Daniel 5: A Humbled King and God's Rescinded Power

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Widder_Daniel_EN_Session08.pdf":

Briefing Document: Dr. Wendy Widder on Daniel 9 & 5

Overview: This briefing document summarizes Dr. Wendy Widder's lecture (Session 8) on the Book of Daniel, focusing on chapters 9 and 5. The lecture emphasizes the contrasting themes of repentance, God's sovereignty, and the consequences of defying God, as illustrated through Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 and the story of Belshazzar's downfall in chapter 5. While chapter 9 includes a controversial section about the "70 weeks" prophecy, the bulk of this lecture focuses on the context and content of Daniel's prayer.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Daniel 9: Repentance and Restoration

- **Context:** Daniel's vision (more of an epiphany or verbal revelation) in Daniel 9 is set in the first year of Darius the Mede's reign (539 BC). Daniel is studying the writings of Jeremiah, specifically the prophecy of Jerusalem's desolation lasting 70 years (Jeremiah 25 and 29).
- **Structure: Verses 1-3:** Establishes the time and setting (Darius' reign, Daniel reading Jeremiah's prophecies about the 70 year exile).
- **Verses 4-19:** Daniel's prayer of repentance, confessing the sins of the Israelites and pleading for God's restoration.
- **Verses 20-27:** A revelation delivered by the angel Gabriel (not covered in this lecture, reserved for the following one).
- **Daniel's Understanding:** Daniel recognizes that the 70-year exile is nearing its end but the promised restoration has not yet occurred, leading him to understand the need for repentance.
- **Daniel's Prayer (Verses 4-19):** Daniel acknowledges God's greatness, covenant faithfulness, and love (verse 4). He recognizes the "awesome" nature of God, not in a diluted modern sense, but as a being full of dread and fear.

- *Quote: "In the Bible, awesome is a dreadful, fearful. This is an otherly being. God is awesome. We should be full of awe. A little bit of dread, even, at who God is."*
- He makes a full confession of Israel's sins (verses 5-14): failure to obey, disobedience to the prophets, and the resulting curses described in the Law of Moses.
- *Quote: "We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly, we have rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. We have not listened to your servants, the prophets..." (v. 5-6).*
- He also repeatedly stresses their failure to "listen" or "obey" God's commands, using the Hebrew word "shama."
- He then moves to a supplication, begging for God's mercy and restoration, emphasizing not their righteousness but God's great mercy. (v. 17-19)
- **Connection to other prayers:** Daniel's prayer is similar to other post-exilic penitential prayers in Nehemiah 9 and Ezra 9. It draws heavily from the language of the covenant in Deuteronomy, emphasizing the need to "listen" to God.
- *Quote: "They share a lot of characteristics. So, after you read Daniel 9, go read these other two, and you'll hear a lot of the same language. It reaches back to Deuteronomy language where there are the covenants being established, and the people are called to obey, to listen, listen, listen. And if you don't listen, this calamity is going to happen."*
- **The central theme of "listening":** Widder emphasizes that the entire prayer is structured around the idea of listening (shama), highlighting the link between listening, obeying and experiencing God's mercy.
- *Quote: "In his confession, Daniel is going to say repeatedly that we didn't listen. We didn't obey. We didn't listen. We didn't listen. He says it over and over and over again. And when you get to the supplication, he says, because we didn't listen, we desperately need you to listen..."*

1. Daniel 5: The Fall of Belshazzar

- **The Setting:** Belshazzar holds a feast and blasphemously uses the sacred vessels from the Jerusalem temple for drinking (v. 1-4).
- **Significance of the Temple vessels:** The use of the temple vessels, emphasizes their importance and sacredness. By desecrating these vessels, Belshazzar is

directly challenging God's rule. The narrator makes it clear that God's presence comes to Belshazzar through the sacred temple vessels.

- *Quote: "He had invaded God's territory. Those vessels were God's. And by doing that, he had challenged God's rule. God answered. God came into Belshazzar's territory."*
- **The Writing on the Wall:** A hand appears and writes on the wall, causing Belshazzar great alarm.
- **The Queen's Intervention:** The queen mother suggests calling Daniel, highlighting his past wisdom and connection with Nebuchadnezzar. Her tone is uncertain, but Widder suggests a hint of sarcasm.
- **Belshazzar's Response:** When he asks for Daniel, Belshazzar does not acknowledge Daniel's wisdom or that he is the chief magician. Instead, he refers to him as one of the exiles from Judah. The speaker explains that this is because Belshazzar is intentionally ignoring and trying to show up his father, the man who held Daniel in high regard.
- **Daniel's Interpretation:** Daniel refuses the king's gifts, gives a history lesson on Nebuchadnezzar, rebukes Belshazzar for his hubris and idolatry, and then interprets the writing:
- *Mene, Mene:* God has numbered your days and brought your kingdom to an end.
- *Tekel:* You have been weighed and found wanting.
- *Perez/Parsin:* Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.
- **The Fall:** Belshazzar is killed that night, and the kingdom is given to Darius the Mede.
- *Quote: "The biblical narrator doesn't care. All he cares about here is that Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed that very night. This judgment was instant."*
- **The Significance of 62:** The fact that Darius is said to be "about 62" is significant. The word count of the inscription in Aramaic is equal to 62, suggesting that Darius is the one to bring about the omen's fulfillment.
- **The Fall of Babylon:** The narrative emphasizes God's sovereignty in raising and bringing down kingdoms, fulfilling prophecy through the rise of the Medes and Persians.

- **Belshazzar as a Prototype:** Belshazzar is portrayed as the opposite of Nebuchadnezzar, highlighting the contrast between a humble king who acknowledged God's power and a blasphemous king who defied it. Belshazzar serves as a prototype for future wicked rulers in the book of Daniel.
- *Quote: "Nebuchadnezzar was a great king who acknowledged God as the source of his power and greatness. Belshazzar is a blasphemous, defiant king who shakes his fist at Israel's God and thumbs his nose even. He's the book's first glimpse of a blasphemous, defiant king who's judged by God."*

1. Linguistic Insights:

- The lecture provides an analysis of the Aramaic inscription (Mene, Tekel, Parsin), highlighting that they are nouns of weights and measure. Daniel's interpretation provides the matching verbs which point to judgment of the kingdom.
- This section emphasizes the complexity of the Aramaic language, specifically the consonantal nature and the use of vowel patterns to change the word's meaning.
- *Quote: "When he interprets it, he interprets verbs. So he says mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end. Tekel, you've been weighed and found wanting. Your kingdom is divided."*
- The choice of these words emphasizes the theme of valuing what God values. Belshazzar's failure to value is at the crux of the story.

Overall Message:

This lecture highlights the importance of humility and obedience to God, contrasted with the consequences of pride and defiance. Daniel's prayer in Chapter 9 demonstrates the need for repentance to experience God's restoration. The story of Belshazzar in chapter 5 illustrates God's sovereignty over all nations and that God will punish those who defy Him. The lecture also reinforces the idea of learning from historical examples to honor God in our own lives, recognizing our dependence on Him.

4. Study Guide: Widder, Daniel, Session 8, Daniel 5: A Humbled King and God's Rescinded Power

Daniel: A Study Guide on Chapters 5 & 9

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. How does Daniel 9 differ from Daniel's previous visionary experiences in chapters 7 and 8?
2. What is the primary focus of Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9:4-19?
3. What specific historical event prompts Daniel's prayer and repentance in Daniel 9?
4. In Daniel 9:4, how does Daniel describe God at the beginning of his prayer?
5. What is the significance of the word "shama" in Daniel's prayer?
6. How is the temple symbolically represented in the events of Daniel 5?
7. What is Belshazzar's attitude toward Daniel, as implied by his speech?
8. What three elements are present in Daniel's lengthy speech before interpreting the writing?
9. Explain why the wise men were unable to interpret the writing on the wall in Daniel 5.
10. What is the significance of the number 62 in the context of Daniel 5?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Unlike Daniel's symbolic visions in chapters 7 and 8, Daniel 9 is not a vision but an epiphany, a verbal revelation received from the angel Gabriel, with a focus on repentance and restoration rather than symbolic kingdoms.
2. The main focus of Daniel's prayer is a long confession of his people's sins, acknowledging their failure to listen to God and the prophets, and a plea for God's mercy and restoration.
3. Daniel's reading of the prophet Jeremiah and his understanding that the 70-year period of desolation of Jerusalem was coming to an end prompts his prayer.

4. Daniel addresses God as the "great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments," highlighting God's power and faithfulness.
5. The Hebrew word "shama," meaning "to hear" and "to obey," underscores the people's failure to listen to God and Daniel's plea for God to now listen to them.
6. The lampstand, gold vessels, and the word "palace" in Daniel 5, mirror the furniture of the temple, which suggests that God's presence has moved into the palace as Belshazzar blasphemes.
7. Belshazzar's speech indicates a disdain for Daniel, referring to him as "one of the exiles" and highlighting his connection to Nebuchadnezzar, as opposed to acknowledging Daniel's position as chief magician.
8. Daniel's speech first includes a history lesson regarding Nebuchadnezzar and then an indictment of Belshazzar, before finally interpreting the writing on the wall.
9. The writing was likely written without vowels in Aramaic, making it a challenge to interpret the exact meaning, especially if the words were run together. The words could be read as nouns but needed to be interpreted as verbs.
10. The number 62 connects to the sum of the values of the three weights and measures in the inscription on the wall, mina, shekel and half shekels, thus indicating that Darius was the literal fulfillment of the judgment upon Belshazzar.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Write a well-organized essay addressing each question. Support your answers with evidence from the source material.

1. Analyze the significance of Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 within the broader narrative of the book of Daniel. How does it contribute to the themes of repentance, exile, and restoration?
2. Compare and contrast the characters of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar in Daniel, examining their responses to God's power and their respective roles in the narrative.
3. Discuss the symbolic importance of the temple vessels in chapter 5. How do these objects, and their misuse, convey deeper meanings about God's sovereignty and judgment?

4. Explain the significance of the writing on the wall in Daniel 5. How does Daniel interpret the writing, and what is the theological importance of his interpretation?
5. Describe the function of the queen and consider her tone. How does she advance the narrative and impact the reader's understanding of Belshazzar and Daniel?

Glossary of Key Terms

Ahasuerus/Xerxes: A Persian king, possibly connected to Darius, whose name appears in various forms in historical and biblical texts.

Antiochus IV: A Seleucid ruler known for his oppression of the Jewish people in the second century BC, who is connected to the themes of desecration and oppression within Daniel's visions.

Babylon: A powerful ancient city and empire that conquered Jerusalem and exiled the Israelites; its fall is a major event in Daniel 5.

Belshazzar: The last king of Babylon, known for his blasphemous actions at a feast, ultimately facing judgment from God; his character serves as a contrast to Nebuchadnezzar.

Chaldeans: An ancient people associated with Babylon; Daniel uses this term to refer to the kingdom Belshazzar is ruling.

Cyrus: A Persian king who conquered Babylon and issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland, thus ending the period of enforced exile.

Darius the Mede: A ruler who succeeded Belshazzar in Babylon, with the number 62 connecting him to the judgment of Belshazzar. He is the king in Daniel 6, and his connection to the prophetic fulfillment of Babylon's fall is an important aspect of the text.

Epiphany: A sudden, striking insight or revelation, used to describe Daniel's experience in chapter 9.

Exile: The forced removal of the Israelites from their homeland, a period of punishment and separation, as well as a setting for Daniel's prophetic experiences.

Gabriel: An angel who delivers important messages and revelations to Daniel, particularly in chapters 9 and 10.

Jeremiah: A prophet whose writings Daniel studies, including the prophecy of the 70-year desolation of Jerusalem.

Medes: An ancient people group that, along with the Persians, conquered Babylon; the fulfillment of prophecy by a Median king emphasizes God's sovereignty.

Nebuchadnezzar: A powerful king of Babylon who conquers Jerusalem; he is known for his initial pride but eventually acknowledges God's sovereignty.

Penitential Prayers: Prayers that express deep sorrow and remorse for sins; the prayer in Daniel 9 is considered one of these.

Restoration: The return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, a key theme in Daniel 9.

Sackcloth and Ashes: Traditional symbols of mourning, repentance, and humility, often used to express sorrow for sin.

Shama: A Hebrew word meaning "to hear" or "to obey," appearing frequently in Daniel 9, particularly in the context of confession and supplication.

Seventy Years: The period of desolation prophesied by Jeremiah that Daniel recognizes is coming to an end, prompting his prayer for restoration.

Temple Vessels: Sacred objects from the Jerusalem Temple that are misused by Belshazzar, symbolizing the violation of God's holiness.

5. FAQs on Widder, Daniel, Session 8, Daniel 5: A Humbled King and God's Rescinded Power, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Daniel 5 & 9

- **What is the main focus of Daniel chapter 9?**
- Daniel chapter 9 primarily focuses on repentance and God's promise of restoration for his people. This chapter is distinct from the symbolic visions found in other parts of Daniel. It features a long prayer of confession from Daniel and a revelation delivered by the angel Gabriel about the future, though the lecture primarily focuses on the prayer and its context. Daniel, recognizing that the 70-year exile prophesied by Jeremiah is nearing its end, understands that true restoration requires confession of sin and a turning back to God.
- **How does Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 demonstrate his understanding of Israel's situation?**
- Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 demonstrates a profound understanding of the reasons behind Israel's exile. He acknowledges the consistent failure of the people to listen to God's commandments and to heed the warnings of the prophets. Daniel recognizes that their suffering is a direct consequence of their disobedience. The prayer is also structured around the concept of "listening." Daniel confesses their failure to listen to God (shama in Hebrew) and then pleads for God to listen to their plea. He doesn't plead based on their own righteousness, but based on God's mercy.
- **How does the historical and chronological context contribute to the significance of Daniel 9?**
- The setting of Daniel 9 is crucial. It's set in the first year of Darius' reign, specifically 539 BC, which marks the end of the Babylonian Empire and the rise of Media-Persia. This is also the time when the 70-year exile was ending. Daniel's understanding of Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the 70 years shapes his prayer and his hope for restoration. This timing is significant as it positions the prayer of repentance at a crucial juncture in Israel's history, on the cusp of a new beginning after long desolation.

- **What is the significance of the detailed description of Darius in Daniel 9:1?**
- The detailed description of Darius, including his genealogy as the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, and being made king over the Chaldeans, highlights God's active role in history. It emphasizes that God is orchestrating the rise and fall of kingdoms, as well as fulfilling prophecy. The connection to both Persian and Median lineage is a specific reminder that Babylon was prophesied to fall to a Median/Persian power. The way it's stated emphasizes that God is the one who "made him" king.
- **What is the main theme in Daniel chapter 5?**
- The main theme of Daniel chapter 5 revolves around the concepts of blasphemy, pride, and God's ultimate sovereignty. Belshazzar, in a display of arrogance, desecrates sacred vessels taken from the Jerusalem temple during a drunken feast, thus defying the God of Israel. This act of defiance triggers divine judgment, evidenced by the miraculous writing on the wall. The story contrasts the humility of Nebuchadnezzar (who, after experiencing God's power and judgement, acknowledged God's authority) and the pride of Belshazzar who failed to learn from the past.
- **What does the writing on the wall in Daniel 5 signify?**
- The writing on the wall in Daniel 5, consisting of the words "Mene, Tekel, Parsin," signifies God's impending judgment on Belshazzar and his kingdom. Daniel interprets these words as divine pronouncements: "Mene" indicates that God has numbered the days of Belshazzar's kingdom; "Tekel" signifies that Belshazzar has been weighed and found wanting; and "Perez" means that Belshazzar's kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and Persians. The words are based on monetary weights and value, highlighting the failure of Belshazzar to value what was truly sacred.

- **How does the narrator draw a contrast between Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 5?**
- The narrator of Daniel 5 emphasizes a stark contrast between Belshazzar and his father Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar, after initial pride, eventually recognized God's power and authority, resulting in his humbling himself and acknowledging God's place as sovereign. Belshazzar, on the other hand, arrogantly disregards God, showing contempt for His sacred things, and failing to learn from the past. This contrast underscores the importance of humility and recognizing God as the ultimate source of power. Daniel points out that Belshazzar knew about Nebuchadnezzar's experience, yet failed to learn from it.
- **What is the significance of Darius the Mede being 62 years old in Daniel 5?**
- The narrator's specific comment that Darius the Mede is about 62 years old is unusual because it's not a round number like 60. Some commentators suggest this unusual specificity is a deliberate choice. The numerical value of the words in the inscription, *mina, shekel, and two half-shekels*, add up to 62, suggesting Darius is the person who brought about the fulfillment of the judgment. The specificity highlights the idea that every detail has meaning and that even the rise of a king aligns with God's purpose.