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3.5.1 - Daniel 5:1

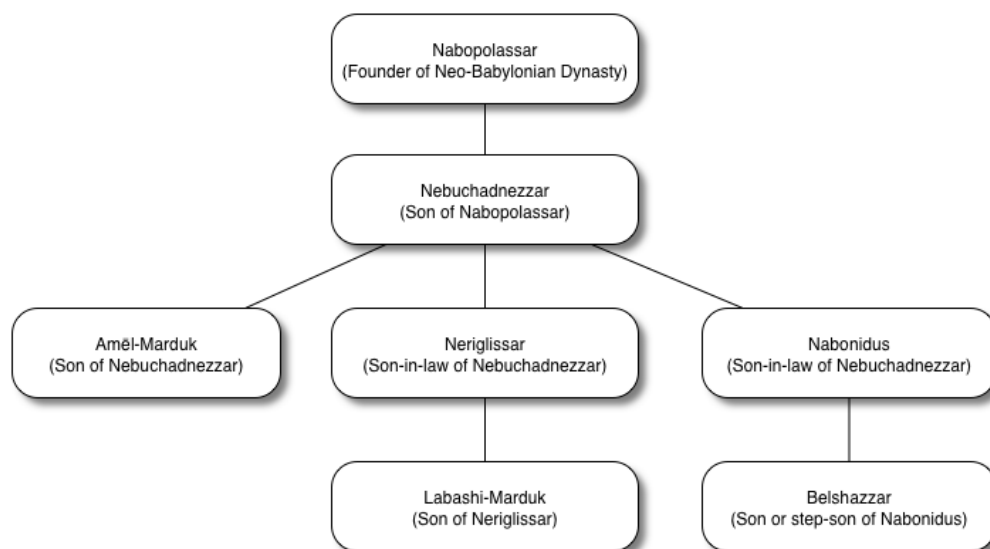


The events recorded in this chapter can be dated to the fall of [Babylon](#) to Medo-Persia in [539 B.C.](#) Approximately 30 years have transpired since [Nebuchadnezzar's](#) madness recorded in [chapter 4](#).¹ [Nebuchadnezzar](#) is no longer king of Babylon, having died about 23 years earlier.²

See [Chronology of Daniel](#)

Following the death of [Nebuchadnezzar](#), Babylonian rule was characterized by mismanagement, instability, and intrigue,³ moving through four successive administrations over a period of only 23 years, culminating in the coregency of [Nabonidus](#) and [Belshazzar](#).⁴

Kings of Babylon



5

Babylonian Rule after Nebuchadnezzar

Reign ⁶	Names ⁷	Relation	Length of Rule	End of Rule
605-562 B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar (Nebuchadnezzar , Nabuchodonosor)	Son of Nabopolassar	43 years	Death by illness
562-560 B.C.	Amel-Marduk (Evil- Merodach 2K. 25:27 ; Jer. 52:31)	Son of Nebuchadnezzar	2 years	Murdered by brother- in-law (Nerglissar)
560-556 B.C.	Nerglissar (Neglissar, Nergal-shar-uşur)	Son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar ⁸	4 years	Killed in battle ⁹
556	Labashi-Marduk (Laborosoarchod, Labosordacus)	Son of Nerglissar	A few months	Murdered by conspirators led by Nabonidus ¹⁰
556-539	Nabonidus (Nabunaid)	Son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar by marriage? ¹¹	17 years	Babylon falls to Medo- Persia (Dan. 5:31▶)
553/550-539 (coregent)	Belshazzar (Baltasar ¹²)	Grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, ¹³ son or step-son of Nabonidus. ¹⁴	14/11 years	Babylon falls to Medo- Persia (Dan. 5:31▶)

As we discussed in the introduction, the order Daniel received divine revelation differs from the order events are presented within successive chapters. In the 30-year period between chapters 4 and 5, Daniel received additional revelation as recorded in chapters 7 (the sequence of Gentile kingdoms represented as rapacious beasts) and 8 (the identities of the 2nd and 3rd kingdoms as Medo-Persian and Greece).¹⁵ In combination with revelation given in chapter 2 (Dan. [2:32▶](#), [39▶](#)), Daniel would know the kingdom of Medo-Persia was to follow the fall of Babylon (Dan. [7:5▶](#); [8:3-7▶](#), [20-21▶](#)). This information undoubtedly contributed to his ability to interpret the handwriting on the wall.¹⁶

Besides revelation God had provided directly to Daniel, he was an avid student of Scripture and studied the writings of the contemporary prophet Jeremiah (Dan. 9:1▶). In addition, Daniel was undoubtedly acquainted with the predictions concerning Babylon and Medo-Persia made by other prophets such as Ezekiel and Isaiah.

As this chapter opens, Daniel would have already known:

- The kingdom of Medo-Persia would overthrow Babylon (Isa. 13:1, 17; 21:2, 9; 45:1; Jer. 50:9; Jer. 51:11, 28-31; Dan. 2:32▶, 39▶; 7:5▶; 8:3-8▶, 20-21▶).¹⁷
- Cyrus would initiate the Jew's release from Babylon and the temple's reconstruction in Jerusalem (Isa. 44:27-28; 45:1-5). This, in turn, implies Cyrus would gain ascendancy over Babylon—the nation holding the Jews captive.
- The overthrow of Babylon would enable Jews to return to Israel (Jer. 50:4-5, 8, 19, 28; 51:45).
- The reign of Babylon would end with Nebuchadnezzar's grandson (Jer. 27:6-7).
- The seventy years of servitude were nearing fulfillment (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10).¹⁸

It was during this same 23 year period [between chapters 4 and 5] that Daniel received the revelations that are recorded in Daniel 7▶ and 8▶. . . . Now we haven't gotten there yet, we haven't gotten to the details of Daniel 7▶ and 8▶ but Daniel knows them by the time he comes into the throne room here in Daniel 5▶, he is fully aware of that background. . . . so when he comes in he has a pretty good idea what these revelations are going to be, whether or not God revealed anything special to him or not, he already knew pretty much what was going to happen just from his study of the Scripture.¹⁹

See *Divine Revelation in the Book of Daniel*.

The chapter opens with forces allied with Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, advancing upon Babylon:

A little before our chapter opens, Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, had entered into an alliance with Cyaxares II., his aged uncle; and the combined kingdoms had subdued various nations to the north and south. They now determined to annex the fast-decaying Babylonian empire to their dominions. In this, Cyrus was evidently the leading spirit, though while Cyaxares lived he was given precedence.²⁰

The armies of the Medes and Persians were encamped outside [Babylon's] walls. But Belshazzar felt secure, for the drawbridges had been drawn up, the brazen gates barred, and Belshazzar knew that the walls of the city were impregnable; and he was confident that his soldiers from their position on the lofty walls would be able to destroy any who should attempt to batter down the gates. The city also was provisioned for several years' siege, and with the tillable ground within the city walls its capture could be postponed indefinitely.²¹

The nonchalant attitude and arrogance of Belshazzar while under siege is similar to Nebuchadnezzar upon constructing the image of gold. The comparison appears intentional by the use of a similar phrase opening the respective chapters (Dan. 3:1▶ and Dan. 5:1▶):

There is also a similarity between the beginning of this chapter and the beginning of chapter 3. Chapter 5 begins, "Belshazzar the king made a feast . . ." . . . Similarly, chapter 3 begins, "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image . . ." . . . there is even a similarity in the sound between these two [Aramaic] phrases. . . . Also, there is a contrast between the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar that reaches its greatest height, and the Babylon of Belshazzar that meets its end.²²

For a discussion of Daniel's status within the court of Belshazzar as the chapter opens, see commentary on *Daniel 5:11*.

When discussing the **date** when the book of Daniel was written we mentioned the theory, held by some critics of Daniel, that the book was **written during the Maccabean era**, composed of stories made up long after Daniel's time along with allusions to events at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.²³

The court-tale is utilized in a religious setting; the story becomes a prophetic legend . . . The distinctive and original element in the chapter is the actual omen and its interpretation (Dan. 5:25-28), around which a narrative context has been constructed, using remembered historical facts such as the regency of Belshazzar, the forms of court-conflict tale and prophetic legend, the technique of midrash, and some of the characteristic structural, verbal, and theological features that appear elsewhere in the Daniel stories. . . . Of the kings in Daniel, Belshazzar might with most plausibility be viewed as a cipher for the sacrilegious Antiochus Epiphanes²⁴

The critics are blind to the numerous indications throughout the book, especially in this chapter, that the writer of Daniel must have been a contemporary of the events he records.

- **Belshazzar** - The author knew of Belshazzar, knowledge that was lost by the Maccabean era. “Annals in the Greek language ranging from about the beginning of the third century B.C. to the first century B.C. are absolutely silent concerning Belshazzar and the prominence which he had during the last reign of the Neo-Babylonian empire. The total information found in all available chronologically-fixed documents later than the cuneiform texts of the sixth century B.C. and prior to the writings of Josephus of the first century A.D. could not have provided the necessary material for the historical framework of the fifth chapter of Daniel.”²⁵ “Shea comments that if the book had been written in the second century, the name ‘Nabonidus’ probably would have been inserted rather than the then-forgotten ‘Belshazzar.’ How did the author come to possess such exact knowledge? The most logical explanation is that Daniel 5 contains a firsthand report by one who lived through the events.”²⁶
- **Coregency** - The offered reward of becoming “third ruler in the kingdom” (Dan. 5:8) posed a difficulty not understood in the Maccabean era down to the modern era. “Beginning in the 1860s, Babylonian sources came to light that named Belshazzar as the son of Nabonidus. They also stated that Belshazzar was made coregent over Babylon. These texts vindicated the historical nature of Daniel’s account. Furthermore, since these texts had been buried and forgotten and all memory of Belshazzar had been lost to history outside of the Bible and works dependent on it, they furnished proof positive that the writer of Daniel 5 must have been a contemporary who lived during the events recorded in the chapter. Since writers in later centuries, including writers during the Maccabean era, would have had no knowledge of Belshazzar based on the forgotten Babylonian texts, Daniel 5 could not have been composed in later centuries, disproving the long-held critical view that Daniel was written during the Maccabean era.”²⁷ A late-date forgery would not have intentionally created such a difficulty—a sign of the genuineness of Daniel. “At the elevation of Nabonidus as supreme king, Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, was doubtless suffered to be subordinate king and successor, in order to conciliate the legitimate party. Thus the seeming discrepancy becomes a confirmation of genuineness when cleared up, for the real harmony must have been undesigned.”²⁸
- **Absence of Nabonidus** - “The classical sources available concur that such a feast was held in Babylon on the night of its fall. Regardless of whether or not the banquet was held to celebrate Belshazzar’s accession, the fifth chapter of Daniel reveals a very precise knowledge of which ruler was present and which ruler was not present in the palace that night. Daniel locates Belshazzar there and implies that Nabonidus was absent from the palace or city at that time, by not mentioning him. The Nabonidus Chronicle confirms this implication by noting that Nabonidus had fled from Sippar just two days earlier and had not yet returned to Babylon by the time it fell to the Persians. However, the record in Dan 5 also recognizes by its reference to ‘third ruler’ that Nabonidus was still alive, even though not present in Babylon. Thus, this chapter in Daniel reveals a very precise knowledge of the circumstances in Babylon on the night of October 12, 539 B.C., and I would conclude that such precise knowledge is best explained by recognizing the account in Dan 5 as an eyewitness account.”²⁹

These facts fail to convince skeptics, not because they lack weight, but because they provide evidence incompatible with the materialistic world view of the skeptics: *accurate predictive prophecy given by a God Who is outside of time*. So they continue in their rejection and puzzlement concerning the book of Daniel:

Robert H. Pfeiffer of Harvard University . . . concluded: “We shall presumably never know how our author learned . . . that Belshazzar, mentioned only in Babylonian records, in Daniel, and in Baruch 1:11, which is

based on Daniel, was functioning as king when Cyrus took Babylon” [R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1948), pp. 758ff].³⁰

See commentary on [Daniel 5:28](#) concerning Daniel’s knowledge of the unity of the Medo-Persian Empire and the discussion of [Historical Details in Daniel](#).

Belshazzar the king

Belshazzar’s name may represent an appeal to the God **Bel** (Marduk³¹) to guard³² or protect the king: “Bel protect the king,” although other meanings have been suggested.³³ The link between the king’s name and his god, Bel, is significant in view of the disdain Belshazzar exhibits for the God of Israel. The termination of Belshazzar’s life (and kingdom) this night demonstrates the superiority of the God of Israel over Belshazzar’s god.³⁴

Prior to the 1860s, the only historical record of *Belshazzar* (*Baltasar* of the **LXX** and **OG**) was the biblical text and sources derived from it.³⁵ The **Chaldean** historian **Berosus**, living about 250 years after the events of Daniel, knows nothing of Belshazzar.³⁶ Neither do the Greek historians **Herodotus** or **Xenophon**³⁷ — whose account of Babylonian kings and events during the city’s fall differ from Berosus.³⁸

The omission of Belshazzar from the extra-biblical records of history led some earlier interpreters of Daniel to reach conclusions differing from a straightforward reading of the text. **Josephus** conflated Belshazzar (*Baltasar*) with Nabonidus.³⁹ Following a lengthy analysis, Keil concluded that Belshazzar must have been Evil-Merodach,⁴⁰ who was neither the last king of Babylon nor died on the night it fell to the Medes and Persians.⁴¹ Others suggested that Belshazzar was a brother or son of Evil-Merodach.⁴²

As mentioned earlier, the silence of the extra-biblical historical record concerning the existence of Belshazzar was used by critics to attack the veracity of Daniel.⁴³ But this assumed discrepancy in Daniel’s record was vindicated in the late 19th-century by the discovery and publication of cuneiform tablets confirming the biblical record:

As early as 1861, H. F. Talbot published a cuneiform tablet found at Ur containing the Name BEL-SHAR-USUR (“Bel protect the king!”). In 1882, Theophilus Pinches published the famous “Nabonidus Chronicle” and correctly inferred that the “crown prince” (obviously Belshazzar) “was regarded as king” because he was left in full control of the army in Babylon from at least 549 to 545 B.C. while Nabonidus was establishing a new military and commercial fortress at Teima in northwest Arabia [*Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* (1882), 7:150]. Still more texts appeared which contained the name “Belshazzar” and shed important light on his activities as the *mar-sharri* (son of the king). In 1916, Pinches published two legal documents dated in the twelfth and thirteenth years of Nabonidus (544-543 B.C.), which record oaths sworn by the life of Nabonidus, the king, and of Belshazzar, the crown prince. . . . The final blow to critical objections to the historicity of the fifth chapter of Daniel came in 1924, when Sidney Smith of the British Museum published a cuneiform document known as the “Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus,” which contains the statement that Nabonidus “entrusted the kingship” to Belshazzar. This crucially important statement reads as follows: “When the third year [553 B.C.] was about to begin, he [Nabonidus] entrusted the ‘Camp’ to his eldest son, the first-born, the troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his command. He let everything go, entrusted the kingship [*sarrutum*] to him and, himself, he started out for a long journey” [James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton U., 1969), p. 313].⁴⁴

Prof. Clay says, “the fact that Belshazzar was peculiarly with his father Nabonidus in his reign is illustrated by No. 39 of the Yale collection. This tablet reads as follows: In the month of Tebet, day 15th, year 7th, of Nabunaid, king of Babylon, Shumukin says as follows: The great star Venus, the star Sin and Shamash, in my dream I saw, and for the favor of Nabunaid, king of Babylon, my Lord, and for favor of Belshazzar, son of the king, my Lord, may my ear hearken to them.”⁴⁵

Belshazzar’s name occurs in a number of contract tablets and letters datable to the first fourteen years of Nabonidus’ reign. These comment on his business dealings with certain prominent banking houses or

“families,” most notably those of Nur-Sin and Egibi. In addition, they document Belshazzar’s rise to power prior to Nabonidus’ 11th year and outline some of his official duties as co-regent after 545 b.c. He appears to have had ample authority to give orders to temple officials in Uruk and Sippar and could even lease out temple land. His name disappears from the contract tablets in Nabonidus’ thirteenth year; it has been suggested that this coincides with Nabonidus’ return to Babylonia from Tema. . . . Belshazzar commanded Babylonian troops in the vicinity of Sippar when Cyrus of Persia conquered Anatolia (545 b.c.). Nothing is known of his activities after 543 b.c.⁴⁶

More than three-dozen ancient texts have been found attesting to Belshazzar’s historicity.⁴⁷ Yet this evidence did not silence the critics⁴⁸ who then complained the records fail to state the specific title of “king” was formally conferred upon Belshazzar.⁴⁹ However, a fair assessment of the records indicates Belshazzar acted as king.⁵⁰

As Nabonidus’ eldest son,⁵¹ Belshazzar was appointed coregent⁵² and directed the affairs of the city of Babylon in his father’s ten-year absence.⁵³ In a similar way to how [Cambyses](#) would be called “king of Babylon” under Cyrus,⁵⁴ Belshazzar may have been “king:” his coregency may have been limited geographically to the city and surrounding districts rather than the entire empire.⁵⁵ Oaths invoking the name of Nabonidus include the name of “Belshazzar the king’s son.”⁵⁶ Offerings made by Belshazzar are described as being from “the king.”⁵⁷

In a document called *A Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus* (in BHT, 1924) Nabonidus declares his purpose of building the temple of Sin at Harran . . . The *Persian Verse Account* explicitly states that Nabonidus entrusted the kingship to his son Belshazzar. “He freed his hand; he entrusted the kingship (ip-ta-kid-su sharru-tam) to him. Then he himself undertook a distant campaign.” . . . Belshazzar performed important functions (some of them regal) while Nabonidus was in Tema. . . . Oaths are taken in the name of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. Note a phrase such as “the decrees (a-di-e) of Nabonidus king of Babylon and Belshazzar, son of the king.” The close association of the two names is . . . sufficient evidence, that Belshazzar is to be regarded as occupying *regal* status. . . . In one text (NB., pp. 101-103) Belshazzar possesses subordinate officials equal to those of the king. . . . Technically, therefore, Belshazzar occupied a position somewhat subordinate to that of Nabonidus. This would account for the fact that in *official* documents, events were dated according to the reign of Nabonidus. This technical subordination would always be preserved in *official* documents. To change this would be to give cause for suspicion of treason . . .⁵⁸

Belshazzar was indeed treated and regarded as king. The main points are these: 1. The Persian Verse Account states that Nabonidus “entrusted the kingship” to Belshazzar. 2. Several documents from Nabonidus’ reign indicate that Belshazzar was entitled to royal prerogatives, including the same tribute received by his father and the power to settle religious disputes. He was also served by a subordinate official who had a title usually reserved for an officer of the king and by a special messenger with a title similar to the messenger of the king. 3. Some documents treat Nabonidus and Belshazzar together as lords of the land. These include an astrologer’s report in Nabonidus seventh year that claims that the stars show favor toward Nabonidus, the king, his (the astrologer’s) lord, and Belshazzar, son of the king, his (the astrologer’s) lord. 4. Some documents state that oaths were sworn by the decrees of Nabonidus the king and Belshazzar, son of the king. Similar documents dating as early as Hammurapi (1792-1750 BC) demonstrate that oaths were always sworn by the gods and the king. Therefore, those who swore oaths by Nabonidus and Belshazzar must have considered both of them to be king.⁵⁹

Belshazzar’s authority as king would have been strengthened due to the absence of Nabonidus, who had been captured for some months prior to the events described in this chapter.⁶⁰

Cuneiform allusions to Belshazzar have thrown so much light upon the role which he played that his place in history stands clearly revealed. There are many texts which indicate that Belshazzar almost equalled Nabonidus in position and prestige. Dual rulership during most of the last Neo-Babylonian reign is an established fact.⁶¹

See commentary on [Daniel 5:7](#).

Having established Belshazzar as coregent, Nabonidus departed to Tema. His departure from Babylon may have been for military reasons,⁶² for reasons of age or health,⁶³ or due to his growing unpopularity in Babylon⁶⁴

because of his preference for the worship of the moon god Sin, of whom his father was a priest, and to whom he was dedicated,⁶⁵ instead of the patron God of Babylon, Bel (Marduk).⁶⁶

Nabonidus was known to be a loyal follower of the moon god Sin and this put him at odds with the powerful priests of Marduk in Babylon. Nabonidus came up with innovative religious practices, which increased the opposition to him by the priests of Babylon. This apparently was part of the reason for his residing much of the time away from Babylon.⁶⁷

Nabonidus was also intent on restoring the temple of the god Sin in Harran⁶⁸ whom he considered the king of all gods.⁶⁹

Belshazzar's subsequent actions in praise of the various gods of Babylon at the feast recorded in this chapter may have been meant to gain favor in Babylon by distancing himself from the his father's religious views. See commentary on [Daniel 5:2](#).

made a great feast

According to the Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon,⁷¹ when the feast was being held, the armies of Cyrus were laying siege to the city:

“Aye” answered Gobryas and his staff in “view of the revelry, it would not be at all surprising if the gates leading to the palace were open, for all the city is feasting this night.”⁷²

Then at the beginning of the following spring . . . [Cyrus] marched against Babylon . . . The Babylonians sallied out and awaited him; and when he came near their city in his march, they engaged him, but they were beaten and driven inside the city.

There they had stored provisions enough for very many years, because they knew already that Cyrus was not a man of no ambition, and saw that he attacked all nations alike; so now they were indifferent to the siege . . . [Eventually] the Persians took them unawares, and because of the great size of the city (those who dwell there say) those in the outer parts of it were overcome, but the inhabitants of the middle part knew nothing of it; **all this time they were dancing and celebrating a holiday which happened to fall then**, until they learned the truth only too well. [emphasis added]⁷³

Herodotus attributes the feast to a holiday and indicates the celebrants were aware the city was under siege.

It seems to have been an anniversary feast; since, according to Xenophon and Herodotus, Cyrus knew of it before hand; either on account of the king's birthday, or in honour to his gods, particularly Shach, which was called the Sachaenan feast; , Jer. [51:41](#) which seems most likely, since these were praised at this time . . .⁷⁴

Belshazzar's Feast (Martin)



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Since the city had stored provisions for many years, they continued with the celebration, confident Babylon could not be taken.⁷⁵

It was hard for the Babylonians to believe that even the Medes and the Persians who had surrounded their beloved city could possibly breach the fortifications or exhaust their supplies which were intended to be ample for a siege of many years.⁷⁶

The enemy [Babylonians] upon the wall laughed his [Cyrus'] siege-works to scorn, in the belief that they had provisions enough for more than twenty years.⁷⁷

Like Israel and her One True God, the nations of the ancient Near East attributed success (or failure) in warfare to the power (or weakness) of their deity relative to the god of the enemy (Ex. 12:12; 18:11; 32:1, 23; 2S. 7:23; 2K. 18:34-36). Consider the words of the Rabshakeh to Hezekiah on behalf of Sennacherib, king of Assyria:

Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim and Hena and Ivah? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" (2K. 18:34-35)

Belshazzar may have used the occasion of the feast to demonstrate his allegiance to the gods of Babylon, praising them in return for their continued protection during the siege.

Nabonidus was known to be a loyal follower of the moon god Sin and this put him at odds with the powerful priests of Marduk in Babylon. Nabonidus came up with innovative religious practices, which increased the opposition to him by the priests of Babylon. This apparently was part of the reason for his residing much of the time away from Babylon. . . . we would suggest that this [the feast] was to demonstrate to the priests and to the gods of Babylon that the king was a loyal follower of them, . . . He was not like his father who had too much loyalty to the foreign moon god Sin; and he certainly was not like Nebuchadnezzar who had apostatized from Bel, Marduk and the rest to worship the God of Israel.⁷⁸

Some interpreters believe Belshazzar had knowledge, handed down from Nebuchadnezzar, the queen mother, or others associated with Daniel, concerning the [predictions of the Jewish prophets](#) that Babylon would be overthrown by Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to their homeland. One variation has Belshazzar miscalculating the seventy-year period so he believed the time of its fulfillment had already passed in vain. As a result, he planned to mock the failed Jewish God.⁷⁹

Belshazzar probably knew about Jehovah's prophecy concerning Medo-Persia's conquest of Babylon. . . . In light of these historical factors, it seems rather obvious that Belshazzar decided to desecrate the sacred vessels of Jehovah for one major reason—to show his utter contempt for the God of Israel and His prophecy concerning the fall of Babylon. The king was so confident of Babylon's defenses that he decided to challenge this God. His defiling of the vessels was his way of shaking his fist at God and saying: "You have said that Babylon will fall to the Medo-Persians who are now encamped outside our gates. I am declaring to you that Babylon will not fall. Its defenses are impregnable. No one will be able to take it. My actions show you what I think of you and your prophecy."⁸⁰

Scripture would seem to imply otherwise: Nebuchadnezzar only called for the vessels of the Jewish God after having been influenced by wine—this does not seem to have been the original intent of the feast.⁸¹ See commentary on [Daniel 5:2](#).

Other possible reasons for the feast include the celebration of the king's birthday, like Pharaoh (Gen. 40:20) or Herod (Mark 6:21). Or perhaps, like King Ahasuerus, Belshazzar intended to exhibit his kingdom's riches and the temple vessels were the first of various riches to be displayed (Est. 1:2-3, 7).⁸² The LXX suggests the feast commemorated the beginning of the king's rule.⁸³ Shea suggests the possibility, having previously served as coregent with his father Nabonidus, on the night of the events recorded in Daniel 5, Belshazzar took upon himself the kingship upon hearing of the defeat and flight of Nabonidus.⁸⁴

The references to Belshazzar as king . . . in chap. 5 are very direct and explicit. Aside from the fact that he is referred to as king seventeen times in this chapter, the most important consideration of all is that he was

addressed with the title of king in direct discourse by both the queen and Daniel. The evidence of this chapter is, therefore, that by the time the events recorded in this chapter occurred, Belshazzar was king of Babylon in fact. . . . Belshazzar must have become a full and official king sometime during that interval, according to the evidence from chap. 5. The question is: How and precisely when did this occur? There are two possible answers, and the first and more direct of them is that Nabonidus installed Belshazzar as king before the former set out with the army to meet Cyrus' forces at the Tigris. This would have been a reasonable occasion for the installation. Nabonidus may well have had a premonition of his defeat when he left the capital to fight against the invaders. . . . As precaution against the possibility that he might not return, Nabonidus could have installed Belshazzar as full king and coregent with him before he led his troops into the field. . . . the news that Sippar had fallen and that Nabonidus had fled may well have reached Babylon before the night of the 16th of Tishri. In addition, and perhaps more important, the news of Cyrus' victory over Nabonidus at Opis before his conquest of Sippar had surely reached Babylon before the capital itself fell. What was Belshazzar's reaction to such news? The defence of the heartland of Babylonia was now his responsibility. In order to insure the greatest cooperation possible from his troops and the population of Babylon in general, it was incumbent upon Belshazzar to command them from as great a position of strength and authority as possible. With his father's meeting defeat and fleeing before the enemy, the most direct course of action open to him to insure his acquisition of such power and authority was to occupy the throne of Babylon himself. In view of the turn of political and military events, it would have been logical for Belshazzar to have proclaimed himself king at this moment. Thus, there are two possible explanations of how Belshazzar became king by the time of the events described in the fifth chapter of Daniel if Nabonidus had not installed him as official king and coregent when leaving for Tema. Either Nabonidus installed Belshazzar as king before he went out to battle with Cyrus, or Belshazzar installed himself as king after he received the news of his father's defeat and flight. While the former explanation might seem more likely on general grounds, the latter fits the Nabonidus- Chronicle dates and the distances involved, and it also provides an explanation for the special banquet on the very night of Babylon's fall.⁸⁵

Was Belshazzar so carefree, confident, and boastful that he thought it was fitting and enjoyable to entertain his nobles while the Medo-Persian army was in sight and the city under siege? Hardly so. Rather, if Belshazzar had just proclaimed himself king, as suggested above, his accession would have provided an appropriate opportunity on which to hold such a function. A thousand of the nobles of Babylon were in attendance—a befitting audience at a feast celebrating the accession of the new king, but not for an ordinary social occasion in the palace.⁸⁶

This seems unlikely since the feast marked the end of his rule leaving no time for other events Scripture attributes to his reign (Dan. 7:1▶; 8:1▶).⁸⁷

Whatever the motivation, throwing a feast while under siege by a predicted victor seems the height of irresponsibility and bravado.⁸⁸

The feast took place in a large hall, possibly the throne hall of the Babylonian kings excavated by Koldewey beginning in 1899⁹⁰ and partially restored in 1968.⁹¹

To the south lies the largest chamber of the Citadel, the throne-room of the Babylonian kings. It is so clearly marked out for this purpose that no reasonable doubt can be felt as to its having been used as their principal audience chamber. If any one should desire to localise the scene of Belshazzar's eventful banquet, he can surely place it with complete accuracy in this immense room. It is 17 metres broad and 52 metres long. The walls on the longest side are 6 metres thick, considerably in excess of those at the ends, and lead us to suppose that they supported a barrel-vaulting . . . Immediately opposite the main door in the back wall there is a doubly recessed niche in which doubtless the throne stood, so that the king could be visible to those who stood in the court . . . As we have already seen from the east gate [p. 88-89], the walls of these chambers were washed over with white gypsum.⁹²

a thousand of his lords

It was not unusual for kings to hold elaborate feasts (Est. 1:3). The larger the feast, the more magnificent and rich the king.⁹³ Ptolemy Dionysius hosted 1,000 soldiers from Pompey's army while Alexander the Great invited 10,000 to a wedding feast.⁹⁴ A Persian monarch is reported to have provided daily food for 15,000 in the royal

The Throne Room

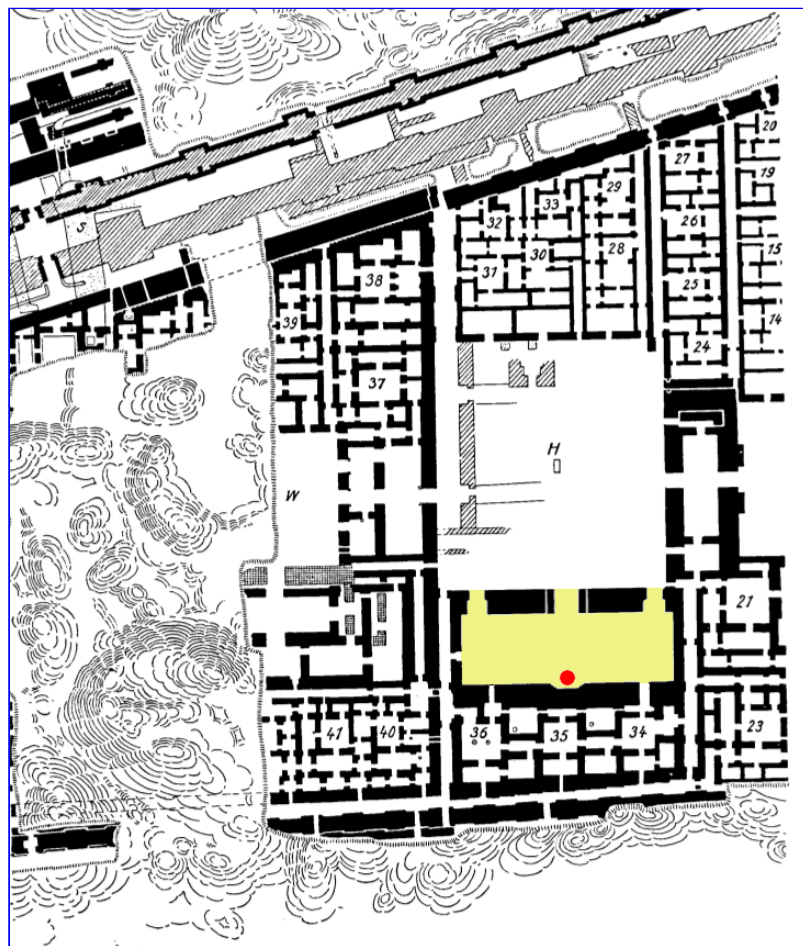
household.⁹⁵ The Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II entertained nearly 70,000 during the dedication of his capital.⁹⁶ Pliny records that the whole army of Xerxes, over 780,000 men, were entertained at a feast.⁹⁷

drank wine in the presence of the thousand

The king sat on an elevated platform where he dined in view of the assembled multitude (see [illustration](#)). The king drank wine “in front” of them.⁹⁸

This does not probably mean that he “vied with them in drinking” (Hävernick), but that he “drank in their presence, while seated at a separate table,”—as was the custom of the Persian kings on the occasion of their great banquets, according to Athenæus, *Deipnos*, iv. 10.⁹⁹

VLeng. cites Athenæus, iv, 10, who records that the Persian king generally dined in a separate hall, his magnates in another; but that on festal occasions he dined sitting at a separate table opposite his guests, . . .¹⁰⁰



3.5.2 - Daniel 5:2



While he tasted the wine¹⁰¹

89

Rendered by other translations as, “while under the influence of [the] wine.”¹⁰²

This is the prelude to the king’s decision to fetch the temple vessels. It was apparently not his initial plan, but the wine overcame what restraint he may have exhibited toward these holy items. “The drinking of wine is particularly noticed as the immediate occasion of the wickedness which followed.”¹⁰³

The *Aramaic* says: “When he tasted the wine.” This apparently indicates what we have rendered: “When the wine was beginning to taste good.” It cannot mean: at the very first sip of wine. The wine had already produced that well-known boldness and pseudo-courage. In this case this unwholesome frame of mind led to a deed that is unparalleled in the records of antiquity.¹⁰⁴

A proverb warns kings not to become intoxicated. “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink” (Pr. 31:4). The only thing worse than an intoxicated man is a *powerful* intoxicated man.

In the mystery of God’s sovereignty, Jeremiah reveals the willful drinking of the king as part of God’s plan leading to the overthrow of **Babylon**:

“Babylon shall become a heap, A dwelling place for jackals, An astonishment and a hissing, Without an inhabitant. They shall roar together like lions, They shall growl like lions’ whelps. In their excitement **I will prepare their feasts; I will make them drunk**, That they may rejoice, And sleep a perpetual sleep And not awake,” says the LORD. (Jer. 51:37-39) [emphasis added]

Because the plunderer comes against her, against Babylon, And her mighty men are taken. Every one of their bows is broken; For the LORD is the God of recompense, He will surely repay. **“And I will make drunk Her princes and wise men, Her governors, her deputies, and her mighty men.** And they shall sleep a perpetual sleep And not awake,” says the King, Whose name is the LORD of hosts. (Jer. 51:56-57) [emphasis added]

Even as [Belshazzar](#) prepares to desecrate the temple vessels, he is fulfilling God’s plan for his own downfall. Belshazzar’s drunkenness and fall [typifies](#) the deranged behavior of the nations under the influence of Babylon the harlot prior to the return of Christ:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and **the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.** (Rev. 17:1-2) [emphasis added]

bring the gold and silver vessels

The temple vessels were previously taken by [Nebuchadnezzar](#) during a series of [deportations](#) culminating in the overthrow of Jerusalem. See commentary on [Daniel 1:2](#).

By the sovereignty of God, Nebuchadnezzar was allowed to seize the vessels. Yet he demonstrated a modicum of appreciation for their sacred use by placing them in the treasure house of his god. They had remained there, in relative security, for almost seven decades.

Belshazzar’s command to fetch the vessels does not appear to have been premeditated, but arose under the stimulus of wine. The wine may have nourished an idea previously laid dormant in his heart. While sober, men can put on a front of civil and advanced behavior, suppressing inner motives and beliefs.¹⁰⁵ Under the loosening influence of wine, these repressed views fully surface: in this instance, demonstrating Belshazzar’s contempt for the God of Israel and the vessels that had once served Him.

Considering the various nations subjugated by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:8; 28:14), one would assume the Babylonian treasury held vessels from any number of different campaigns. Yet Belshazzar specifically requested the vessels of the God of Israel.¹⁰⁶ His request of the vessels may have been intended to demonstrate his preference for the God’s of Babylon over the God of Israel—whom his father had honored in public (Dan. 4:1-3, 34-37).¹⁰⁷ Belshazzar intended that he and his guests would use the vessels of Israel’s God to raise a toast in praise of the idols of Babylon. Since the God of Israel had no idolatrous representations of His own, perhaps the king conceived of the idea to fetch the vessels as a stand-in for the missing idols of this strange god who had been defeated by his predecessor.

The Jews don’t have any idols, look there’s the idol of Bel, there’s the idol of Marduk, there’s the idol of Venus, where are all the idols, where is the idol of the God of Israel? He doesn’t have any, so this is what we’ll do. We’ll get all the vessels from the temple, that’s the only material thing that you have. And so he strips them and he brings them out and he drinks out of them.¹⁰⁸

They had all the idols of the other gods, but there’s only one God in the world that doesn’t have any idols, this funny God of Israel. So they say well, who’s that God; he let us capture the Jews so he can’t be very powerful, let’s get his vessels out and desecrate them.¹⁰⁹

There is no doubt he brought forth those vessels by way of ridicule, for the purpose of triumphing over the true God,¹¹⁰

which his father Nebuchadnezzar

The father-son relationship of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar is emphasized throughout this chapter:

The claim that Nebuchadnezzar was the father of Belshazzar is found in Daniel 5▶ on the lips of the queen (Dan. 5:11▶), Belshazzar himself (Dan. 5:13▶), and Daniel (Dan. 5:18▶), and Daniel addresses Belshazzar as Nebuchadnezzar’s son (Dan. 5:22▶). Moreover, Daniel the author calls Nebuchadnezzar the father of Belshazzar in his narration of the events (Dan. 5:2▶).¹¹¹

Besides the inspired biblical record concerning Belshazzar, we have archaeological records wherein: 1) Nabonidus refers to Belshazzar as “his firstborn son.”¹¹² 2) Nabonidus does not appear to have been of royal descent—he was not a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar. Much ink has been spilled by biblical interpreters attempting to reconcile the biblical and archaeological information concerning the relationship of Belshazzar to Nebuchadnezzar.

3.5.2.1 - Belshazzar as Immediate Son of Nebuchadnezzar?

If we restrict our consideration to statements found in Daniel 5▶, we might conclude Nebuchadnezzar was the immediate father of Belshazzar.

Keil suggests that for Daniel to criticize Belshazzar regarding his knowledge of God’s judgment of Nebuchadnezzar’s pride, that Belshazzar must have been Nebuchadnezzar’s immediate son and not his grandson.¹¹³ This may not be weighty evidence if one considers that many grandchildren are old enough to have communicated with their grandparents before their passing.¹¹⁴

Some suggest Belshazzar could be the immediate son of Nebuchadnezzar, but also the adopted son of Nabonidus, who married Nebuchadnezzar’s widow:¹¹⁵

As Nabonidus assumed the throne in 556 B.C., only six years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, and Belshazzar was probably at least a teenager when Nebuchadnezzar died—if he was old enough to be coregent with Nabonidus in 553 B.C.— it is possible that he was a genuine son of Nebuchadnezzar and that his mother, after Nebuchadnezzar’s death, was married to Nabonidus.¹¹⁶

A much easier solution is simply to say Belshazzar was the real son of Nebuchadnezzar and his wife, Nitocris; . . . Nebuchadnezzar and Nitocris were married; they had a son, Belshazzar. Nebuchadnezzar died and apparently Nitocris remarried Nabonidus. He did this to gain royal favor with the court; remarrying Nitocris made Belshazzar his foster son, this way he’d have a claim to royalty, and he left Belshazzar in charge of the palace.¹¹⁷

Leupold submits that (since only six or seven years had transpired between the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the accession of Nabonidus to the throne) the new king may have taken a wife of Nebuchadnezzar who already had a son by that great king and adopted the child. This is quite possible since ancient kings inherited the previous monarch’s harem, and the children of the former king may have been adopted as their own. Nabonidus was not of Nebuchadnezzar’s family line and may have taken an offspring of the former king to strengthen his claim to the throne.¹¹⁸

Another suggestion is that a younger woman from Nebuchadnezzar’s harem was the mother of Belshazzar whom Nabonidus married (Nitocris being elderly or deceased by the time Nabonidus assumes the throne).¹¹⁹

Yet, when we consider information from additional passages outside this chapter, a difficulty arises for this view. A prophecy of Jeremiah identifies the last king of Babylon as Nebuchadnezzar’s *grandson*:

And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him. So all nations shall serve **him and his son and his son’s son**, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them. (Jer. 27:6-7) [emphasis added]

Although the Aramaic (and Hebrew) term for “son” need not designate an immediate descendant, one of its appearances in Jeremiah’s passage seems to.

1. Jeremiah's prophecy is a timing-text employing two time-related terms: *now* and *until*. The passage establishes a chronological endpoint, "the time of his land," when Babylon will lose the ascendancy God had *now* given it. (Among those interpreters who take this passage as a timing-text we find: Calvin,¹²⁰ Clarke,¹²¹ Fausset,¹²² Gill,¹²³ Henry,¹²⁴ Larkin,¹²⁵ Poole,¹²⁶ Wesley,¹²⁷ and the notes for the *Geneva Bible*.¹²⁸)
2. The phrase "son's son," בן-בנו [b^en-b^enô], combines the word for *son* in a way that does not admit of an open-ended meaning such as "a remote descendant." The phrase occurs here and in Genesis 11:31 where it refers to Terah's *grandson* Lot.
3. If Jeremiah's use of "son" and "son's son" merely means "a remote descendant," the phrase would be redundant: "son" alone would suffice to span the required generations (as is commonly the case elsewhere in Scripture).
4. If the phrase "son's son" can span many generations, the prediction loses specificity. All it would communicate is descendants of Nebuchadnezzar will continue to reign until *whenever* the Babylonian Empire happens to come to its demise—something one might naturally assume without need of divine revelation.¹²⁹

3.5.2.2 - Relation of "Father" and "Son" in the Bible

Although the chapter repeatedly refers to **Nebuchadnezzar** as **Belshazzar's** father, it is our view Jeremiah 27:6-7 indicates the ascendancy of the Babylonian kingdom will end under the reign of a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. This precludes Nebuchadnezzar as the immediate father of Belshazzar. It seems the related terms "father" and "son," as used of the relation between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, must describe something other than an immediate father-son relationship.

Wilson has listed seven ways in which the term "father" was used in the time of Nebuchadnezzar and twelve possible meanings for "son." "Father" may refer to one's immediate father, grandfather, ancestor, or as in the case of kings, a predecessor. Likewise "son" may mean one's immediate offspring, grandson, descendant, or successor.¹³⁰

3.5.2.2.1 - A Remote Descendant

A common use of the term "father" in Scripture spans more than one generation.

Jeremiah expressly mentions the fact that Evil-merodach was king of Babylon, and places his reign after that of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:28-31). Would not the author of Daniel have noted this fact? Yet he calls Nebuchadnezzar the father of Belshazzar. He must, therefore, use the word "father" in the sense of ancestor.¹³¹

Neither in Hebrew, nor in Chaldee, is there any word for 'grandfather,' 'grandson.' 'Forefathers' are called 'fathers' or 'fathers' fathers.' But a single grandfather, or forefather, is never called 'father's father' but always 'father' only.¹³²

A small sample from among many biblical examples that could be cited include: Abraham is said to be the *father* of many nations (Gen. 17:5); King Amaziah is said to have two fathers, both *father* David and his immediate *father* Joash (2K. 14:3); Abraham is described as the *father* of the Jews living in New Testament times (John 8:39; Mat. 3:9; Luke 1:73; Acts 7:2; Rom. 4:1); Jesus is described as the *son* of David, the *son* of Abraham (Mat. 1:1); Paul refers to Isaac as the *father* of the Jews (Rom. 9:10).

Thus, **Nebuchadnezzar** and **Belshazzar** can be "father" and "son" without Belshazzar being the immediate child of Nebuchadnezzar.

3.5.2.2.2 - Not a Descendant

There is an even broader use of the *father/son* terminology beyond bloodlines: establishing a predecessor/successor relationship based on other factors besides line of descent. This use is found both in Scripture and in extra-biblical historic texts.

On the Black Obelisk erected by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III about 830 BC, a contemporary king of northern Israel, Jehu, is called “son of Omri” even though Jehu had exterminated the descendants of Omri (885-874) [2K. 10:1-17 records the massacre of the descendants of Ahab son of Omri by Jehu], an earlier king of northern Israel. Shalmaneser, who conducted several campaigns in Syria and Israel between 859 and 841, could hardly have been unaware that Jehu was not a descendant of Omri. Instead, it appears as if he used “son” to mean “successor.” Therefore it is likely that Nebuchadnezzar is called the “father” of Belshazzar in the historical sense of “predecessor.” The normal formula to indicate a father-son relationship would be “Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar,” but that formula never occurs in Daniel. . . . Since the formal father-son designation is never used, it is quite probable that the term “father” here signifies “predecessor,” and “son” means “successor.”¹³³

Ancient usage of the term “son” often referred to a successor in the same office whether or not there was a blood relationship. Moreover it is a distinct possibility that in this case there was an actual genetic relationship between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. If Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar in order to legitimize his usurpation of the throne back in 556 B.C., it would follow that his son by her would be the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.¹³⁴

The term *father* may also describe the role between a mentor and his disciples or an advisor and those he advises. This meaning is used of the prophets and their followers.¹³⁵ Joseph, in his role of advisor to the Pharaoh, refers to himself as “a father to Pharaoh” (Gen. 45:8).¹³⁶

The unqualified term “son” is also used of adoptive (Gen. 48:5; Ex. 2:10) and in-law relationships (Ru. 4:17).

The fluidity of these terms admits of several possible explanations in an attempt to reconcile the statements of Scripture with the archaeological record concerning *Babylonian Rule after Nebuchadnezzar*.

3.5.2.3 - Nabonidus Married a Daughter of Nebuchadnezzar?

A frequent suggestion among interpreters has Nabonidus as the immediate father of Belshazzar, having married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar prior to the conspiracy that led to his reign. (The name of the daughter is often given as *Nitocris*, but there is disagreement as to whose wife Nitocris was. See the discussion concerning the identity of Nitocris at *Daniel 5:10*.)

Perhaps Nabonidus, *lacking a royal bloodline*, gained entry into the royal family of Nebuchadnezzar¹³⁷ by marriage to one of Nebuchadnezzar’s daughters.¹³⁸

It may well be that Belshazzar . . . was a (grand)son of Nebuchadnezzar. . . . Nothing is yet known of Nabonidus’ wife, so that it is not impossible that she was another daughter of Nebuchadnezzar who married Nabonidus who was already of high rank . . . in Nebuchadnezzar’s eighth year.¹³⁹

Nabonidus was in all probability married to Nitocris, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, at least as early as 585 B.C. [Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 60-68]¹⁴⁰

If the marriage occurred relatively early (585 B.C.), before the conspiracy leading to Nabonidus assuming the throne (556 B.C.), Belshazzar could have been their firstborn and still be old enough (32 years of age) to assumed coregency (553 B.C.) with Nabonidus. This would make Belshazzar the son of Nabonidus by birth, but also a “son” (grandson) of Nebuchadnezzar.

Belshazzar was made co-regent in the third year of Nabonidus’ reign. His early exaltation to kingly rank may be best explained on the assumption that he was Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson through Nitocris, his mother.¹⁴¹

[Josephus] affirms further that Babylon was captured after Baltasar [Belshazzar] had reigned seventeen years, and that this was **the end of the posterity of Nabuchodonosor (Nebuchadnezzar)**, . . . It may be that he means to imply nothing more than that the Neo-Babylonian dynasty came to an end with the fall of Babylon, a result known to classical writers long before his time. In spite of this ambiguity the expression ‘posterity of Nebuchadnezzar’ is in harmony with the view that Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and that Belshazzar was the firstborn son of this union. [emphasis added]¹⁴²

The fact that Belshazzar was mentioned in Daniel 5:18▶ as a “son” of Nebuchadnezzar is in full accord with Semitic usage, which frequently employed the designation “son” as synonymous with “descendant.” Nitocris, mother of Belshazzar, was apparently the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, thus making Belshazzar his grandson by strict lineal reckoning.¹⁴³

Many interpreters suggest this scenario as a way of reconciling the biblical data with archaeological records, including: Archer,¹⁴⁴ Dean,¹⁴⁵ Dougherty,¹⁴⁶ Gaebelien,¹⁴⁷ Harrison,¹⁴⁸ Miller,¹⁴⁹ Showers,¹⁵⁰ Walvoord,¹⁵¹ Whitcomb,¹⁵² and Wiseman.¹⁵³

A variation on this explanation has Nabonidus marrying into the kingly bloodline shortly after the conspiracy leading to his rule.

The queen referred to in this passage [Dan. 5:10▶] may have been the widow of Nebuchadnezzar **whom Nabonidus married when he became king**. In ancient times it was an Oriental custom for a new king to marry widows of former kings in order to make his claim to the throne more legitimate. [Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, p. 116-17.] [emphasis added]¹⁵⁴

If this were the case, it seems to mitigate against Nabonidus being the immediate father of Belshazzar by a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar as Belshazzar would have been born after the conspiracy (556 B.C.) making him a child of 3 at his coregency (553).¹⁵⁵

Marriage, as an action intended to legitimize Nabonidus’s usurpation of the throne, would require Belshazzar to have been a previously-born son of the daughter whom Nabonidus married.¹⁵⁶ In this case, Belshazzar would be in the bloodline of Nebuchadnezzar, but a step-son of Nabonidus (whom Nabonidus may have formally adopted so as to legally call Belshazzar his son).¹⁵⁷

The biblical text requires nothing more than that Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar’s direct descendant, and, as his father was not, this means his mother must have been. There is nothing unprecedented in this, for Nabu-naid seems to have been a high ranking military officer under Nebuchadnezzar and history establishes that another contemporary comrade-at-arms, Negal-shar-usur, was married to one of Nebuchadnezzar’s daughters. [emphasis added]¹⁵⁸

Some interpreters favor this suggestion because it allows Belshazzar to be Nabonidus’ son (according to archaeological records) and remain in the bloodline of Nebuchadnezzar (according to the biblical text).

But what about Jeremiah’s prophecy declaring the last ruler of **Babylon** to be Nebuchadnezzar’s “son and his son’s son” (**grandson**)? Jeremiah’s statement not only sets a time limit on Babylon’s ascendancy (two generations beyond Nebuchadnezzar), it implies the grandson is to be reckoned according to a paternal, rather than maternal, line of descent: “So all nations shall serve him [Nebuchadnezzar] and his **son** and his **son’s** son, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them” [emphasis added] (Jer. 27:7). A straightforward reading of Jeremiah appears to preclude taking Belshazzar’s immediate father as anyone other than an immediate son of Nebuchadnezzar. Perhaps this may be reading too much into Jeremiah’s statement since we’ve seen an example where the unqualified term “son” describes an in-law relation (Ru. 4:17). Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar’s “son” could apply to Nabonidus as a son-in-law such that the passage could read: “so all nations shall serve him [Nebuchadnezzar] and his son-in-law and his son-in-law’s son . . .”

Larkin suggests a variation on the above scheme maintaining a line of descent from Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar along strictly paternal lines:

But as we have seen that his reputed father, Nabonidus, was not a son of Nebuchadnezzar, the only solution seems to be that Belshazzar was a son of a son of Nebuchadnezzar, and was adopted by Nabonidus to conciliate the royal family, and because of his adoption could be legally called the son of Nabonidus.¹⁵⁹

This requires Belshazzar’s father to be an immediate son of Nebuchadnezzar, such as Evil-Merodach.¹⁶⁰ If, following the death of Belshazzar’s father, Belshazzar’s mother married Nabonidus, then Belshazzar would be

both Nebuchadnezzar's grandson by paternal descent and could be called the son of Nabonidus (through legal adoption, even though technically his step-son).¹⁶¹

This solution is not without its own difficulty: Belshazzar is repeatedly described in archaeological records having 'proceeded from the loins' of Nabonidus as his 'firstborn' son.¹⁶² The terminology employed within the archaeological record seems too strong for an adoptive relationship, establishing a blood relationship between Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

3.5.2.4 - Reconciling the Biblical and Secular Record Concerning Nabonidus and Belshazzar

Putting it all together, we must reconcile the following: 1) Jeremiah's description of the intermediary between [Nebuchadnezzar](#) and the grandson as a "son;" 2) indication from the archaeological record that [Nabonidus](#) is not related to Nebuchadnezzar by blood; 3) Nabonidus' references to [Belshazzar](#) as "son of my loins" and "my firstborn."

It seems we are left with several possibilities concerning Belshazzar's parentage:

- **Son of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, adopted by Nabonidus** - If so, Jeremiah's use of "son" must allow for "son-in-law" and Nabonidus' reference to Belshazzar as the "son of my loins . . . my firstborn" is royal hyperbole.
- **Son of Nebuchadnezzar's son, adopted by Nabonidus** - If so, Nabonidus' reference to Belshazzar as the "son of my loins . . . my firstborn" is royal hyperbole.
- **Son of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter and Nabonidus** - If so, Jeremiah's use of "son" must allow for "son-in-law."

Since Belshazzar was unknown to the extra-biblical record prior to about 1860, and relatively little is known of the details of family relations for the period between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, it may be future archaeological finds will clear up the remaining questions. In the meantime, the biblical interpreter is best served by taking the inspired Scriptures at face value and giving them precedence over extra-biblical texts where they differ.¹⁶³

As Steinmann cautions, in lieu of additional information, solutions relying upon the filial relationships within Nebuchadnezzar's royal family should proceed with caution:

Often the wife of Nabonidus is identified as Nitocris, the daughter of an Egyptian princess who married Nebuchadnezzar according to Herodotus. While this theory is attractive because it makes Belshazzar a genetic descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, the theory is based as much on supposition as it is on hard evidence. Much of the information Herodotus gives about Nitocris appears to be legendary, and much of his information about the last years of the Neo-Babylonian kings is inaccurate. We have no reliable source for information about Belshazzar's mother, so any speculation about a genetic relationship with Nebuchadnezzar through Belshazzar's mother remains conjectural.¹⁶⁴

had taken from the temple

The house of the God of Israel no longer existed. But, by God's providence the temple treasures were preserved during the Babylonian captivity within the house of pagan Gods.¹⁶⁵

The vessels would be returned to Jerusalem once Babylon had fallen to Medo-Persia. See commentary on [Daniel 1:2](#).

3.5.3 - Daniel 5:3



they brought the gold vessels

Being the more valuable,¹⁶⁶ only the gold vessels are mentioned even though both gold and silver vessels were requested (Dan. 5:2▶).¹⁶⁷

which had been in Jerusalem

See commentary on [Daniel 5:2](#) and [Daniel 1:2](#).

his wives, and his concubines¹⁶⁸

The wives and concubines may not have been present when the feast began but were brought in as the wine eroded restraint:

The “wives and concubines” were probably not present when the feast began, for it was made for “his lords” Dan. 5:1▶; but when the scenes of revelry had advanced so far that it was proposed to introduce the sacred vessels of the temple, it would not be unnatural to propose also to introduce the females of the court. A similar instance is related in the book of Esther. In the feast which Ahasuerus gave, it is said that “on the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, etc., the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty,” etc. Est. 1:10-11.¹⁶⁹

The feast apparently grew increasingly licentious as the evening progressed.¹⁷⁰

drank from them

In their previous dedication and service of God, some of these vessels were so holy that, on penalty of death, they could not even be handled by Levites. They were reserved for use by the Aaronic priesthood (Num. 18:1-4). Some of them had carried the blood of solemn sacrifices.¹⁷¹

Those who drank from the vessels would be guilty on numerous counts: 1) handling the holy vessels of Israel’s God; 2) using them as props for a licentious party; 3) drinking from them; 4) using them in praise of false gods by way of toasts to their representative idols.

The king must have lost his sense of decency to commit what is to the Oriental view a sacrilege even with the holy things of another religion.¹⁷²

Belshazzar desecrated the holy objects of other nations as well as those of Israel in an attempt to demonstrate the superiority of the gods of Babylon over the deities of the nations. This would have been an act of propaganda intended to bolster the confidence of his citizens in light of the presence of the Medo-Persian armies outside of the city walls.¹⁷³

If mishandling God’s holy things was inherently dangerous (cf. Uzzah and the Ark, 2S. 6:6), how was it [Nebuchadnezzar’s](#) forces were able to apprehend them from the temple in the first place? The answer is found in the sovereign purpose of God: in judging Israel, God *gave* them into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand (Dan. 1:2▶). To accomplish his purposes, God permitted unholy, Gentile hands to seize the vessels, and even to place them in the temple of a foreign god.

Yet, during the lengthy period of the captivity of Israel in [Babylon](#), it appears Nebuchadnezzar had shown a measure of respect to the vessels—exempting them from use. Now, his grandson sought to desecrate the vessels, employing them at a debauched party in praise of Babylonian’s pantheon of gods.

3.5.4 - Daniel 5:4



They drank wine

As they continued to drink¹⁷⁴ they became increasingly inebriated:

“Drank” is a rendering of an Aramaic participle *šātēh* that in this context probably carries the idea of continuous drinking. The king’s actions encouraged those attending the party to participate in consumption of the wine, and it may safely be assumed that within a short period the king and his guests were well on their way to inebriation.¹⁷⁵

See commentary on [Daniel 5:3](#).

praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone¹⁷⁶

The Babylonian’s incorrectly attributed their ascendancy (and assumed invulnerability during the siege) to their false gods instead of the One True God.

For indeed I am raising up the **Chaldeans**, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places *that are* not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle *that* hastens to eat. They all come for violence; Their faces are set *like* the east wind. They gather captives like sand. They scoff at kings, And princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, For they heap up earthen *mounds* and seize it. Then *his* mind changes, and he transgresses; **He commits offense, Ascribing this power to his god.** (Hab. 1:6-11) [emphasis added]

Can there be any doubt they used the sacred vessels of the One True God in toasting the pagan idols, the lifeless representations of various pagan gods whom they now honored? This was a serious sacrilege triggering God’s judgment.

We have here an impressive illustration of the sin of sacrilege Dan. 5:2-3. In all ages, and among all people, this has been regarded as a sin of peculiar enormity, and it is quite evident that God in this solemn scene meant to confirm the general judgment of mankind on the subject. . . . God had borne it patiently when those vessels had been removed from the temple at Jerusalem, and when they had been laid up among the spoils of victory in the temples of Babylon; but when they were profaned for purposes of revelry - when they were brought forth to grace a pagan festival, and to be employed in the midst of scenes of riot and dissipation, it was time for him to interpose, and to show to these profane revellers that there is a God in heaven.¹⁷⁷

The way the holy vessels were employed at the party seems to have been an intentional slight of Israel’s God—placing Him below [Babylon’s](#) gods—who had proved superior at the capture of “His people” and the vessels from “His house.” The Babylonian gods were appealed to in an attempt to turn away the siege by [Cyrus’](#) forces and prove false the rumored predictions of the Jewish prophets concerning Babylonian’s impending downfall.¹⁷⁸ See commentary on [Daniel 5:1](#).

They give these gods credit for their defeat of Israel and for their ability to humiliate Israel’s God by means of their abuse of his temple vessels.¹⁷⁹

They evidently meant it all in the sense that they glorified their own gods and challenged Him whose Temple vessels they were putting to unholy use to prevent this and to punish them if He could.¹⁸⁰

This profanation of the sacred vessels of the temple does not consist in the “placing of Jehovah and the idols of the king upon the same level” (Hävernick), but in the fact, which Daniel mentions with censure in Dan. 5:23, that Belshazzar proudly exalted himself above the God of Israel, and in mockery employed the vessels stolen from His sanctuary to drink wine while singing the praises of the victorious gods of Babylon. It was thus essentially *an exaltation of the idols above Jehovah*, who had succumbed to them in battle, and whom they had despoiled . . .¹⁸¹

Many of the idols were valuable artifacts in and of themselves since they were constructed of silver and gold.¹⁸² Even so, the praise was not directed at the idols themselves, but at the gods they represented.¹⁸³

Scripture reveals idols themselves as lifeless and without power (1Cor. 8:4), but their worship is motivated and energized by powerful evil entities in the service of Satan: *demons* (Deu. 32:17; 2Chr. 11:15; 1Cor. 10:20-21;

1Jn. 5:21; Rev. 9:20▶).

It appears the city was supplied with an abundance of idols at the time of the feast. As Nabonidus retreated before the Medo-Persian forces, out of his religious affections, he may have rescued idols from their temples prior to their capture by advancing forces, relocating them to Babylon.¹⁸⁴ At the time of greatest threat to the city, this multitude of idols was appealed to while Israel's God was denigrated.

Nabonidus was retreating with the army before the oncoming Persian army, he was rescuing all of the idols from all of the temples in each town as he backed up, and so he then took all these idols into Babylon. He figured if he got all the gods and goddesses in Babylon then they could possibly protect Babylon from the oncoming Persian army.¹⁸⁵

The text emphasizes the physical construction of the idols to emphasize their mere human origin and lifeless inability.

While the pagans understand their gods to be more than mere metal, wood, or stone, Daniel heightens the sense of their foolishness by the implicit comparison of their real identity (only lifeless metal, wood, or stone) with the true, living God.¹⁸⁶

The sacred vessels of the *living God* were being desecrated in praise of *dead idols*.¹⁸⁷

Jeremiah underscores the inability of the gods and idols of Babylon to save her in the coming judgment.

Declare among the nations, Proclaim, and set up a standard; Proclaim-do not conceal [it]—Say, 'Babylon is taken, **Bel is shamed. Merodach is broken in pieces; Her idols are humiliated, Her images are broken in pieces.**' (Jer. 50:2) [emphasis added]

See commentary on [Daniel 5:23](#).

It is tempting for us to consider this party and its blatant idolatry an anachronism. But Scripture reveals mankind will not give up its idolatrous practices until God intervenes in judgment. Modern forms of idolatry may be less obvious, but the misplaced praise of false Gods and the productions of men will continue throughout the [Times of the Gentiles](#).¹⁸⁸

The idolatry of this party within the head of gold (Dan. 2:38▶), [typifies](#) behavior throughout the Times of the Gentiles.

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Rev. 9:20-21▶)

This sad pattern will repeat itself until the return of Christ.

If the student of the Word of God has been disappointed in the conduct of world monarchs during the "times of the Gentiles," he has not yet reached the end of this sad tale. Their usual pattern is to first commit idolatry and defy His claims on their individual consciences. Next, they usually become deranged in their pride, and they fail to recognize the authority of God in worldly affairs.¹⁸⁹

This moral condition of the first empire, Babylon, immediately before the judgment came upon it, at the close of the 70-year captivity of the Jews, is thus described in this chapter. It foreshadows the moral conditions of the time of the end, when Israel's long dispersion is almost ended and when God will cut out the ingrafted branches, the Gentiles, and put back Israel upon their own olive tree. May we hear God's call to separation from that which is evil.¹⁹⁰

In his message of judgment to [Belshazzar](#), Daniel underscores the folly of trusting in lifeless idols instead of the living God. See commentary on [Daniel 5:23](#).

3.5.5 - Daniel 5:5



In the same hour

This phrase underscores how quickly judgment fell in response to the actions recorded in the previous verse: ¹⁹¹ The response to **Belshazzar's** blasphemy is akin to the response to **Nebuchadnezzar's** boasting (Dan. 4:31▶). In both cases, the judgment is clearly connected to a “trigger,” a particularly extreme action beyond which God no longer patiently endures sin.

“At that same hour,” just as we earlier read concerning Nebuchadnezzar, “While the saying was yet in the king’s mouth.” This was in order that the offender might recognize that his punishment was not inflicted upon him for any other reason but his blasphemy. ¹⁹²

It’s not just chance, it’s not just happenstance that they’ve just hauled all the goblets and bowls of the temple out of storage and began to use them and profane them, that this occurs... the handwriting appears as soon as they begin to desecrate these bowls and dishes that came out of the temple. ¹⁹³

Holed up within what was believed to be an impenetrable fortress with supplies sufficient for many years, **Babylon's** lords believed themselves secure. Yet, they would find themselves in a similar position as the rich man who trusted in his many goods:

‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:19-21)

Whenever we find ourselves in a time of peace or surplus, there is a tendency to begin to trust in our conditions and to forget how they came to be—by the mercy and grace of God. The longer these conditions prevail, the more likely we misappropriate blessings from God to another cause—attributing them to our own cleverness or prowess—in a vain pattern of self-elevation. But each day we live, each meal we eat, each breath we take, is ultimately a gift from God. We need to remember to retain an understanding of dependency and thankfulness to our Lord. The more we remember God in consideration of our place, the less surprised we will be when and if our condition changes—even if suddenly and radically. The wicked, being mindless of the things of God, are unprepared for their sudden loss (Job 15:20-27). This unpreparedness for coming judgment—continuing in blasphemy and riotous living as it nears—is a characteristic of an ungodly culture. The intrusion of the future Day of the Lord upon a God-rejecting world will make the fall of Belshazzar’s Babylon look insignificant in comparison.

For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1Th. 5:2-3)

fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote

God used this supernatural manifestation to rivet the attention of everyone at the feast. The sight was designed to frighten the celebrants and elicit the sober attention of the king.

It was perfectly manifest to all who were there that this was the work of some one superior to man; that it was designed as a Divine intimation of some kind in regard to the scene that was then occurring. But whether as a rebuke for the sin of revelry and dissipation, or for sacrilege in drinking out of the consecrated vessels, or whether it was an intimation of some approaching fearful calamity, would not at once be apparent. ¹⁹⁴

opposite the lampstand

Lampstand is נְבִרְשָׁתָא [nebraštā] from נְבִרְשָׁה [nebrēšā], a *hapax legomenon* which “corresponds to Hebrew מְנוֹרָה [mēnôrā].”¹⁹⁵ Barnes suggests it may have been the *menorah* from the temple of Jerusalem (Ex. 25:31),¹⁹⁶ but this seems unlikely since the party began before the vessels were fetched and the hall would have already been lit by other means. The use of the temple *menorah* would have also constituted profane use of a temple treasure, but the chapter doesn’t emphasize improper use of the lampstand.

The lampstand is mentioned to underscore the dramatic visibility of the supernatural hand writing in the midst of an otherwise darkened scene:

If the scene can be reconstructed, it is probable that the banquet was illuminated by torches which not only produced smoke but fitful light that would only partially illuminate the great hall. As the writing according to Daniel was written “over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace,” it may have appeared in an area of greater illumination than the rest of the room and thus also have attracted more attention.¹⁹⁷

on the plaster of the wall

Plaster is גִּירָא [gîrā] from גִּיר [gîr]. The Hebrew equivalent of this Aramaic term refers to the powdered stones (chalkstones) of an altar (Isa. 27:9).

Here is a significant detail in the Scriptural record that may seem unimportant: the material the fingers wrote upon, plaster. This detail has *archaeological* and *biblical* significance. The plaster is *archaeologically* significant because the hall where this event likely transpired has been excavated confirming this detail. The walls of the banquet hall included an area opposite the entrance that, like the ruins of palaces at Nineveh,¹⁹⁸ was covered in white plaster:

To the south lies the largest chamber of the Citadel, the throne-room of the Babylonian kings. . . As we have already seen from the east gate [The inner chambers (of the east gate) were covered with a fine plaster of pure gypsum laid on over a thicker coating of gypsum, pp. 88-89], the walls of these chambers were washed over with white gypsum.¹⁹⁹

In the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar’s palace archaeologists have uncovered a large throne room 56 feet wide and 173 feet long which probably was the scene of this banquet. Midway in the long wall opposite the entrance there was a niche in front of which the king may well have been seated. Interestingly, the wall behind the niche was covered with white plaster as described by Daniel, which would make an excellent background for such a writing.²⁰⁰

The plaster is *biblically* significant due to a theme running throughout Scripture: God’s standard of judgment *written on stone* (or materials related to stone, such as dust):²⁰¹

- The Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God upon stone (Ex. 24:12; 31:18; 32:16; 34:1, 28; Deu. 5:22; 9:10; 10:4).
- Judgment against Belshazzar is written in plaster (made of dust from stones, Dan. 5:5▶).
- Jesus appears to have written concerning judgment in the dirt, in response to the accusers of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:6).²⁰²
- Believers are an epistle of God written on the heart rather than stone (2Cor. 3:3-7).
- Believers will receive a new name written on stone (Rev. 2:17▶).

Paul refers to the judging and evaluating function of the law, the very handwriting of God on stone, as “the handwriting of requirements that was against us” (Col. 2:13-14).²⁰³

The writing on the plaster of the wall by the finger of God serves a similar function in this chapter: Belshazzar is evaluated and found wanting—he does not even come close to measuring up to God’s standards, as set forth in

the Ten Commandments and the rest of the law. The common theme among these passage involves: 1) the finger of God; 2) writing on stone-like material; 3) the divine requirements or evaluation of the character of men.

The writing on stone serves as a *witness* against those whom it evaluates (Jos. 4:9, 20; Jos. 8:32). In some passages, *stones themselves* become a witness (Mat. 3:9; Luke 3:8; 19:40). A special irony is found regarding the judgment of Babylon written in plaster. The kings of Babylon had sought to immortalize their glory by writing *on their own stones!*

Written in cuneiform letters on slabs on the walls, and on the very bricks, are found the perpetually recurring recital of titles, victories, and exploits, to remind the spectator at every point of the regal greatness. It is significant, that on the same wall on which the king was accustomed to read the flattering legends of his own magnificence, he beholds the mysterious inscription which foretells his fall (compare Pr. 16:18; Acts 12:21-23).²⁰⁴

the king saw the part of the hand

Saw is **רָאָה** [*hāzēh*], **peal** participle: the king saw the hand as it was in the process of writing. “The king watched the back of the hand while it wrote.”²⁰⁵ The hand (**יָד** [*pas*])²⁰⁶ appeared on its own, as if “hanging in thin air” as it wrote.

3.5.6 - Daniel 5:6



the king's countenance changed

Up to now, the king's demeanor had appeared bold, as if assured of **Babylon's** impregnability. But Jeremiah reveals he feared what might come of the siege. “The king of Babylon has heard the report about them [those laying siege], and his hands grow feeble; anguish has taken hold of him, pangs as of a woman in childbirth” (Jer. 50:43).

Although the king's reaction may simply reflect his astonishment at seeing a detached hand miraculously appear out of nowhere to write on the wall, it seems more likely the change in the expression on the king's face reveals misplaced bravado. While outwardly mocking the God of Israel, he harbored internal trepidation concerning his actions and their possible ramifications.

“Then the king's face grew pale,” instantly all the blood drains out of his face, “and his thoughts alarmed him;” I want you to notice that this is a principle here that's true of every carnal Christian and every non-Christian. When an individual is on negative volition and operating on the sin nature his conscience is always sensitive and will always give testimony to his failures, given the right circumstances. And no matter how skilled you might be at covering up your conscience and hardening your conscience and suppressing it, sooner or later you're going to get into some situation and all of a sudden all those things in your conscience are going to come bubbling to the surface and you're going to become overwhelmed with

Belshazzar's Feast (Rembrandt)



guilt and guilt always comes along with its handmaiden, fear, which is the fear of discovery and the fear of having to pay the consequences for our actions.²⁰⁸

The appearance of the detached hand was disturbing in its own right, but the king also had a growing suspicion that the message had ominous implications. “The Persian army is outside the walls of Babylon, and he suspects, probably, that this miraculously appearing message on the wall has something to do with him and something to do with the army outside the wall.”²⁰⁹

his thoughts troubled him²¹⁰

The king’s troubled thoughts betray a guilty conscience. He already knew of a similar situation involving his grandfather, when [Nebuchadnezzar’s](#) pride and boasting resulted in God’s judgment (Dan. 5:20-22▶ cf. Dan. 4:30-33▶). Might not the appearance of the hand herald God’s judgment of the king’s own arrogance and presumption this very night?

The king needed no intimation from another. His conscience, corroded with depravity, trembled before the hand which traced his doom, though he knew not a word that was written. Instinctively he felt that He whose hand none can stay was dealing with him.²¹¹

Perhaps he might immediately fear it presaged ruin and destruction to him; the sins of his former life might at once come into his thoughts, and those particularly he had now been guilty of; his luxury and intemperance, his idolatry and profanation of the vessels of the sanctuary, which his conscience might accuse him of . . .²¹²

the joints of his hips were loosened

[Belshazzar’s](#) panic was such he lost control of his body. He may have fallen to the ground, “his limbs gave way.”²¹³ He may have even become incontinent.²¹⁴

A prophecy by Isaiah concerning the overthrow of Babylon by [Cyrus](#) may have this event in view:

Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him **And to loose the loins of kings** (וּמְתַנִּי מְלָכִים אֶפְתָּח) [wûmāṭ^enê m^elākîm ’ăpattēah]); To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut . . . (Isa. 45:1, NASU) [emphasis added]

his knees knocked against each other

The king has previously been the focus of the party, full of prideful boasting. Now he collapsed in fear as he considered the implications of the hand and its unknown message. The riotous merriment must have come to a stand-still as puzzlement and apprehension settled upon the crowd.

One might have thought the king was having a heart attack. Barely able to stand, his face was ashen and seized with terror. The raucous laughter turned to deafening silence with all eyes on the king. The king’s eyes were fixed upon the hand as it wrote. As a sense of foreboding and panic fell on the crowd, all eyes turned to the mysterious writing on the wall. The king’s actions alarmed all who were present.²¹⁵

Immediately the revelry was stilled. What on earth did this handwriting mean? In great alarm the drunken [Belshazzar](#) stared at the words, his face ashen and his knees knocking together (Dan. 5:6▶). The musicians put aside their instruments, the dancing girls stood motionless, and the waiters stopped short, as they all gazed at the words on the wall.²¹⁶

The king experienced the special dread of those who meet God’s judgment in the midst of their sinful folly.²¹⁷

*It is an appalling scene when a sinning mortal knows that the great God has come to meet him in the very midst of his sins!—How changed the scene from the glee of his blasphemous revelry to this paleness of cheek, convulsion of frame, remorse of conscience, and dread foreboding of doom! Many a sinner has had a like experience, and other thousands must have it!—Cowles.*²¹⁸

3.5.7 - Daniel 5:7



The king cried aloud

The ominous silence descending upon the gathering at the sight of the hand and the king's startled reaction was shattered by the panicky summons of the king for his advisors.

Laying aside all decency, and forgetting his royal majesty, like a man out of his senses . . .²¹⁹

He was clearly so astonished as to forget his being king, for to cry out at table was not consistent with his dignity. But God expelled all pride from him, by compelling him to burst forth into a cry, like a man completely beside himself.²²⁰

bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers

Like his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:2▶; 4:6▶) and the Pharaoh of Egypt (Gen. 41:8), the king summons his best advisors in his time of need. And, like Nebuchadnezzar and the Pharaoh, the assembled wisdom of those without knowledge of God will prove inadequate.

The terms describing the king's advisors have been variously translated.²²¹ See commentary concerning the identity of the *astrologers* (*Daniel 1:20*, *Daniel 2:2*), *Chaldeans* (*Daniel 1:4*, *Daniel 2:2*), and *soothsayers* (*Daniel 2:27*).

Interestingly, the king did not mention the *magicians* (תַּרְטֻמִּים [ḥartummîm], *Daniel 1:20*), among the classes of wise men summoned. Daniel had served earlier as chief administrator over all the wise men under Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:48▶). Perhaps by this time Daniel no longer served in that role and was considered among the *magi* in his retirement.²²² This may explain why Daniel was not among the wise men initially summoned to interpret the writing. See commentary on *Daniel 5:11*.

Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation

Here we see the futile pattern of secular rule by secular wisdom. Assemble the best of the (secular) best while rejecting those who acknowledge God and have deeper understanding of His revelation. Then rely on these secular "experts" to explain things ultimately originating with God.²²³

So in the present day almost all the world continues in blindness; it is not allowed to wander in darkness, but when light shines upon it, it closes its eyes, rejects God's grace, and purposely desires to cast itself headlong. This conduct is far too common.²²⁴

clothed in purple

Being clothed in purple was a sign of high rank.

[The color purple] formed the distinguishing feature of clothing among the Persian kings (Pollux, vii. 13), and was by them occasionally bestowed on high officials, as a mark of especial favor and exalted dignity; e.g., on Mordecai, Est. 8:15; and on the *purpurati*, i.e., persons who were adorned with the purple χάνθυσ [chanthys], whom Xenophon (*Anab.*, I. 5, 8), Curtius (3:2, 10; 8:3, 15; 13:13, 14), and others mention (cf. Xenophon, *Cyrop.*, 1:3, 2; 2:4, 6; Herodotus, 3:20, etc.). Purple was probably the badge of distinguished rank at the Babylonian as well as at the Persian court, especially as Babylon, like Tyre, was celebrated among the ancients for its manufacture of purple goods.²²⁵

chain of gold around his neck

Chain is from **הַמְּיָנָה** [*hamyānak*] and may denote something more elaborate than a simple chain, possibly including ornamental attachments.²²⁶

Judging from a similar offer by Pharaoh to Joseph, the golden chain may have signified the rank and authority of the wearer.

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, “Bow the knee!” So he set him over all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh also said to Joseph, “I [am] Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” (Gen. 41:41-44)

Daniel reluctantly receives this honor (Dan. 5:29▶), but has little use for it since he already possessed the true riches of God.

The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of knowledge, [But] fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; For they [will be] a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck. (Pr. 1:7-9)

See commentary on [Daniel 2:6](#).

third ruler in the kingdom

This offer of being *third* ruler remained a puzzle for hundreds of years. If [Belshazzar](#) was king, why wouldn’t he offer Daniel the position as *second* ruler, as Pharaoh offered Joseph (Gen. 41:40-44) and Ahasuerus offered Mordecai (Est. 10:3)?

Earlier interpreters, such as Calvin and Gill, suggested that second in rank was held by the heir apparent or queen mother.²²⁸ As mentioned in the commentary on [Daniel 5:1](#), this puzzle was answered by the discovery of archaeological artifacts indicating Belshazzar was coregent with his father [Nabonidus](#).

Archaeological discoveries indicate that Belshazzar was in charge of the northern frontier of the Babylonian empire while his father Nabonidus maintained his headquarters at Teman in North Arabia. Among the discoveries at the site of Ur is an inscription of Nabonidus, dated 530 B.C., containing a prayer for Nabonidus himself followed by a second prayer for his firstborn son, Bel-shar-usur—such prayers being customarily offered only for the reigning monarch.²²⁹

Nabonidus was the king of Babylon and father of Belshazzar. In the ancient historical inscription known as *The Verse Account of Nabonidus*, we read, that when “the third year was about to begin—He [Nabonidus] entrusted the ‘Camp’ to his oldest (son), the firstborn, the troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his command. He let everything go, entrusted the kingship to him” . . . A different ancient inscription known as the Nabonidus Cylinder explains that his firstborn son was Belshazzar. He was entrusted with the army in the third year of Nabonidus’ reign, which most scholars agree was around the year 553 B.C. So the third year of his reign, in which the prophecy of Daniel 8▶ was delivered, was approximately 550 B.C.²³⁰

This cylinder [of Nabonidus], one of four bearing the same text found at the four corners of the ziggurat . . . at Ur, is inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform with an account of its rebuilding by Nabonidus. . . . Nabonidus . . . concludes the inscription with a prayer to the moon god Sin to whom the ziggurat was consecrated. The prayer is of particular interest since it ends . . . with a plea for the piety of . . . ‘Belshazzar the son first (born) the offspring of my heart (body).’ The reference is, of course, to Belshazzar who figures prominently in the

Nabonidus Cylinder



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Book of Daniel, where he is described as ‘king’ of Babylonia (Dan. 5:1▶ etc.). It is clear from other inscriptions that Nabonidus spent several years of his reign in north-west Arabia during which Belshazzar ruled Babylonian in his place, and though he is not included in the king lists he was king in all but name during that time, and the Biblical statement may be understood in that light. The cuneiform texts show that the designation of Daniel as ‘the third ruler in the kingdom’ (Dan. 5:29▶) makes sense, Nabonidus (in Arabia) being first, and Belshazzar (in Babylon) being second.²³¹

Translators and commentators have divided over the question as to whether Daniel was offered authority as *third highest position* (HCSB) or *as one of three* (NET) in the kingdom.

Among those who suggest Daniel would share authority within a trumvirate, we find Josephus,²³² Dean,²³³ Keil,²³⁴ Montgomery,²³⁵ and Zöckler.²³⁶

Others, such as Anderson,²³⁷ Pentecost,²³⁸ and Steinmann²³⁹ suggest Daniel would occupy the position of *third highest* in the Babylonian kingdom—behind Nabonidus and Belshazzar. This view is supported by archaeological evidence placing Belshazzar under Nabonidus—secondary in rank rather than a peer.²⁴⁰

See commentary on [Daniel 5:1](#).

3.5.8 - Daniel 5:8



they could not read the writing

Constable wittily observes, “Scholars have wearied themselves trying to figure out how Daniel got his interpretation from these three apparently Aramaic words. They have been as unsuccessful as Belshazzar’s original wise men were.”²⁴²

The verse mentions two deficiencies of the wise men. They were unable to 1) read the writing; 2) make known its interpretation. Their inability to “read” the writing could mean either the text itself was incomprehensible or it could not be understood.²⁴³

Characters Change with Time

Phoenician	Paleo-Hebrew	Samaritan	Square Hebrew	English name
𐤀	𐤀	𐤀	א	Aleph
𐤁	ב	ב	ב	Bet

Various aspects of the message may have served to conceal its meaning:

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- **Language** - The language the message was written in. Daniel’s interpretation (Dan. 5:25-28▶) implies the message was written in Aramaic.
- **Characters** - The form or style of characters (letters) used to write the message. Were the characters of an unfamiliar or specialized form known to Daniel but not the wise men?
- **Arrangement** - The arrangement of the characters forming the message. Were the letters placed in an unusual order such as an anagram?
- **Encipherment** - Were the characters of the message encoded using a cabalistic method such as [atbash](#)?
- **Additional Revelation** - Was the message sufficient on its own, once decoded, to be understood? Or was additional information needed to make sense of the fragmentary writing? As [mentioned previously](#), by this time Daniel had additional revelation from God regarding aspects of [Babylon’s](#) fall that may not have been known to the wise men.

When considering these issues, we should avoid the mistake of attributing the inability of the wise men to decode the message solely to natural causes such as aspects of language, character formation, and the arrangement of the text. Whatever role these aspects played in contributing to the puzzlement of the wise men—and they likely did—the single biggest advantage Daniel had in decoding the message’s meaning was divine

revelation. Daniel had additional information [provided prior to the events of this night](#) and possibly received additional direct revelation at the very moment he was called upon to interpret its meaning.

Daniel’s explanation of the words making up the message seems to indicate the writing was in Aramaic. If the message was in Aramaic—and assuming it was rendered using characters familiar to readers of that time—the words on their own proved insufficient to give the interpretation. *Special revelation allowed Daniel to go beyond the words themselves and their arrangement to deliver the full meaning of the message.* “A small child could read ‘H₂O’ with no trouble, but he probably could not understand that it signifies water. So it was with these wise men; they could read what the words said, but they could not explain what they meant.”²⁴⁴

Perhaps the wise men were unable to identify the words comprising the message. If this was the case, they could not even attempt an interpretation since there would have been no information for doing so.

Perhaps the message was written in an unfamiliar language²⁴⁵ or using unfamiliar characters,²⁴⁶ or as consonants lacking vowel points.²⁴⁷ Perhaps the words were rendered using an anagram or special encoding.²⁴⁸

The failure of the wise men to read—much less interpret—the writing has led to speculation as to why they could not decipher what was written. From Daniel’s interpretation (Dan. 5:25-28▶), it seems that the inscription was in Aramaic, a language with which the wise men would have been familiar. Over the centuries, interpreters have proposed a number of explanations for the wise men’s failure, including these: 1) The words were written vertically in columns instead of horizontally. This interpretation was adopted by Rembrandt in his [famous painting of this scene](#); 2) The words were written in code, perhaps *atbash* [*Talmud*, Sanhedrin, 22a. Atbash means that the first letter of the alphabet is replaced by the last letter (Hebrew/Aramaic aleph is replaced by tav, hence “at-”), the second letter of the alphabet is replaced by the second-to-last letter (Hebrew/Aramaic beth is replaced by shin, hence “-bash”), and so on.]; 3) The words were written in cuneiform marks signifying weights. Daniel’s interpretation of the meaning is based on the equivalent Aramaic words; 4) The wise men could read the words, but they could not interpret their meaning. However, this explanation is contrary to the plain words in Dan. 5:8▶. As ingenious as these suggestions are, there is a simpler explanation for the wise men’s difficulty. While longer Aramaic inscriptions were usually written with word dividers (spaces, dots, or lines that indicated which consonants go together to form the individual words), short inscriptions were often written without these dividers. Moreover, ancient Aramaic was not written with vowels. (The vowels in modern printed editions of the biblical Aramaic text, like those of the biblical Hebrew text, were added by the Masoretic scribes in the sixth–ninth centuries AD.) From Daniel’s interpretation (Dan. 5:25-28▶), it appears as if the three words are written together as follows:

מנאתקלפרס [*mn̄tql̄prs*].²⁴⁹

or make known . . . its interpretation

As mentioned above, if the wise men were strictly unable to read the message (unable to identify the letters or words), then an interpretation would have been impossible since there would essentially be nothing to interpret: as if the hand hadn’t written anything. This may have been the situation.

Even if the wise men were able to read the individual letters and identify the words, the words themselves convey a fragmentary idea—not the full meaning Daniel is able to attribute to them.

One might wonder why these counselors, or for that matter the king and his nobles, could not read the writing. The message was written in Aramaic, as Dan. 5:25-28▶ make clear, and that language was well-known in Babylon. According to Jewish tradition, the letters were not comprehensible because they were written vertically instead of horizontally. Wood suggests that these were unusually shaped characters. Of course, vowels were not written with the consonants in Aramaic so that even if the letters were understood the meaning of the terms could still have been ambiguous. Most likely the words were understood, but they “simply did not convey any intelligible meaning.”²⁵⁰

The words of the message appear to use a play on the relative value of coins.

The first two words are nouns, MENE, MENE, and they mean the same thing, they refer to a mina, a mina was a coin, a piece of money. And TEKEL refers to the shekel, which was smaller in weight than the MENE, and then the UPHARSIN was even smaller yet, and that was a half a mina. But each of these nouns has a related verb, and so the meaning, the real meaning of the sentence comes from the verb that's related to it. MENE, MENE, that word relates to a verb which means to be numbered. TEKEL which in the noun form means a shekel, and the verb form means to be weighed out. And UPHARSIN, the "U" is the Hebrew Vav, which is the "and," it's the Aramaic PHARSIN, which refers to the half mina, and because it was half a mina the verb meant divided. So the significance of the saying was not in its literal meaning, MENE, MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN, Mina, mina, shekel and a half mina, but number, numbered, weighed and divided. And so then Daniel understands that and he is going to apply that to the situation. . . . And the words, though they weren't difficult to understand because they were written in a noun form instead of the verb confused the cabinet department and they weren't able to understand or interpret exactly what it meant.²⁵¹

The connection between the coin values and the message of judgment could be made by Daniel because of his knowledge of the predicted transition from Babylon to Medo-Persia that God had previously revealed.²⁵²

Or perhaps the eyes of the wise men were judicially blinded by God (Job 12:17-25; Isa. 19:3, 12-13; 29:10-12; 44:25; Jer. 50:35-36; Rom. 1:21; 1Cor. 1:20):

Just as God denounced against the Jews a stupor of this kind. We see what he pronounces, by Isaiah, (Isaiah 29:11,) . . . Whatever God threatened against the Jews we know was fulfilled, and is fulfilled to this day, since a veil is put before their eyes, as Paul says. (2 Corinthians 3:14.) Hence they were blind in the midst of the brightest light. What wonder then if the same thing happened to the Chaldeans, so flint they could not read the writing? There is no necessity to conjecture any transposition of letters, or any inversion of their, order, or any change of one into another.²⁵³

Whatever the case, the words of Isaiah were fulfilled in the inability of the wise men to provide the answers the king of Babylon sought that night:

Stand now with your enchantments And the multitude of your sorceries, In which you have labored from your youth-Perhaps you will be able to profit, Perhaps you will prevail. You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, [And] the monthly prognosticators Stand up and save you From what shall come upon you. (Isa. 47:12-13)

See commentary on [Daniel 5:25](#).

3.5.9 - Daniel 5:9



King Belshazzar

See commentary on [Daniel 5:1](#).

was greatly troubled

Like [Nebuchadnezzar](#) in previous chapters, [Belshazzar](#) knew the writing was in response to his irresponsible actions and suspected its meaning was against him.

See commentary on [Daniel 5:6](#).

his lords were astonished

Astonished is מִשְׁתַּבְּשִׁין [mištabbešîn], to “be bewildered, be baffled, be perplexed . . . there may be an implication of fear.”²⁵⁴

None retained their places; a general uproar ensued; groups were formed; and the people talked, and ran hither and thither to no purpose.²⁵⁵

Normally confident in their own abilities and the resources of their counselors, these gifted and powerful secular men have come to the end of their resources.

3.5.10 - Daniel 5:10



The queen

Queen is מַלְכָּתָא [malkəṯā] from מַלְכָּה [malkā]. Unlike our English term, the Aramaic (and Hebrew term) is not restricted to the wife of the king. It may also denote the chief woman among the royal harem²⁵⁶ or the mother of the king: the “queen mother.”²⁵⁷

Some take the queen of Daniel 5 as the Babylonian queen Nitocris.²⁵⁸ But there is a lack of consensus as to whose queen Nitocris was. She has been variously identified as: the wife of Nebuchadnezzar,²⁵⁹ the wife of Evil-Merodach,²⁶⁰ the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and wife of Nabonidus,²⁶¹ and the mother of Nabonidus.²⁶² It seems that all that can be said with certainty concerning Nitocris is she was a Babylonian queen whose identity remains uncertain:

Calvin doubts whether this was the wife or grandmother of Belshazzar. But there is another possible solution. *Prideaux* supposes she was the mother of the king, following the narrative of Herodotus, though *Grotius* and *Josephus* represent her as the widow of Nebuchadnezzar. The author of “The Times of Daniel” differs from the received view of the times of Nitocris; she reigned, he concludes, “in the generation before Nebuchadnezzar’s father.” Her name is not found in the *Astronomical Canon*, and consequently either Herodotus or the *Canon* must be mistaken. Nitocris, says Herodotus, lived five generations after Semiramis, but then, according to *Bryant*, eight different periods have been assigned for his reign, between A.C. 2177 and 713. Notwithstanding the celebrity which Herodotus has conferred upon his name, it is impossible now to ascertain whether she was the queen-mother alluded to in the text, but it is equally injudicious to pronounce positively that she was not. *Hengstenberg* has discussed this question with his usual sagacity. *Heeren* makes her the contemporary of Nebuchadnezzar, and probably his wife; but *Hengstenberg* inclines to the view of her being the queen-mother. “We may then justly compare what Herodotus says of Nitocris with that which occurs here of the queen, and it only need be quoted to shew a perfect agreement.” [See *Prideaux*, 1. p. 227; *Eichhorn*, 1 p. 79; *Jahn Archaeol.*, 2 1 p. 217.] . . . *Rosenmuller* agrees with Jerome in thinking her the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, and *Oecolampadius* adopts the same view, when commenting with great spirit and animation on this point.²⁶³

In view of the varied testimony concerning the identity of Nitocris, it would be unwise to dogmatically assert she is the queen mentioned in this passage. Whether Nitocris or not, this queen is likely either the *wife*, *mother*, or *grandmother* of Belshazzar. If she is the mother of Belshazzar,²⁶⁴ she may also be the wife of Nabonidus.

It seems unlikely the queen was Belshazzar’s wife: “It is hardly likely that the Queen mentioned was the wife of Belshazzar. If he was married his wife’s place was with him at the Feast.”²⁶⁵ “Her not attending the banquet suggests that she was elderly and was the queen mother rather than the consort.”²⁶⁶

Perhaps the queen was Belshazzar’s mother, wife of Nabonidus and daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. While her husband was absent from the nation’s capital, she may have remained with her son, the crown prince.²⁶⁷ This identity is suggested by Dougherty,²⁶⁸ Goldingay,²⁶⁹ Larkin,²⁷⁰ Mills,²⁷¹ Montgomery,²⁷² Shea,²⁷³ Unger,²⁷⁴ Zöckler,²⁷⁵ and the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*.²⁷⁶

As mother of the king, perhaps she could enter the royal banquet uninvited without fear of reprisal for violating protocol:

Presumably the queen mother, often a significant political figure in an ancient court. In the OT, cf. 1K. 15:13; 2K. 11:1-3; 24:12; Jer. 13:18; as “senior counsellor to king and people,” she could “provide a stabilizing, moderating influence in the political system” and “could circumscribe royal power to some extent and could represent the interests of people or court before the king” (N.-E. A. Andreasen, “The Role of the Queen

Mother in Israelite Society,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 [1983] 191, 194 . . . The queen mother could take the initiative in coming into the king’s presence, unlike his consort (Est. 4:11).²⁷⁷

If the queen was the mother of Belshazzar, she may have been the prominent relation to the king mentioned by the [Nabonidus Chronicle](#) as having died following [Babylon’s](#) fall and Belshazzar’s death.

The joyful acclamation of Cyrus by the Babylonians was followed quickly by the death of a prominent personage and a period of mourning: . . . *In the month of Marchesvan on the night of the eleventh, Ugbaru (Gobryas) died. In the month . . . [omission] of the king died. From the twenty-eighth day of the month Adar to the third day of the month Nisan there was weeping in the land of Akkad. . . . All the people prostrated their heads. . . . several circumstances favor the view that the text records the death of the wife of the king. The fifth chapter of Daniel and Xenophon agree that the death of Belshazzar occurred in connection with the actual capture of Babylon. . . . That being the case, it is not hard to believe that ‘the wife of the king,’ Belshazzar’s mother, died after the entrance of Cyrus into Babylonian. Grief on account of the death of her son and the passing of Babylonian into foreign hands may have hastened the death of Nabonidus’ queen. Like him, she was probably advanced in years.*²⁷⁸

Other lines of evidence suggest the queen may have been the aged wife of Nebuchadnezzar: the queen’s description of Daniel is reminiscent of that of Nebuchadnezzar;²⁸⁰ the queen is unlikely to be Belshazzar’s mother since her husband, Nabonidus, had been away from Babylon for many years;²⁸¹ and the queen is probably not the mother of Nabonidus who had died earlier.²⁸² This identity is suggested by Boutflower,²⁸³ Clarke,²⁸⁴ Feinberg,²⁸⁵ Gaebelein,²⁸⁶ Gill,²⁸⁷ [Josephus](#),²⁸⁸ Keil,²⁸⁹ Whitcomb,²⁹⁰ and the *Jewish Study Bible*.²⁹¹ However, there is some question as to whether Nebuchadnezzar’s aged widow was still alive when Babylon fell.²⁹²

came to the banquet hall

The queen had not been present at the beginning of the festivities. Nor was she among the king’s wives or concubines when they arrived (Dan. 5:3▶). This suggests she was not the king’s consort,²⁹³ but more than likely his mother or grandmother (see above).²⁹⁴

The queen’s authority in the situation is notable. She appears to have entered the banquet uninvited and proceeded to address the king inferring she possessed an elevated level of authority and respect (cf. Est. 4:11). This was likely due to being the queen mother or surviving queen of Nebuchadnezzar.

She must have been a highly prestigious individual to enter the banquet hall uninvited, and when she arrived, she seemed to take charge. For these reasons most commentators since the time of Josephus (first century a.d.) have identified her as the queen-mother, either the wife of Nebuchadnezzar or the wife of Nabonidus.²⁹⁵

Such queen mothers enjoyed rare authority which exceeded even that of the chief wife or queen of the reigning monarch.²⁹⁶

because of the words of the king and his lords²⁹⁷

Perhaps her residence was near the banquet hall and she heard the commotion due to the handwriting on the wall,²⁹⁸ or a servant or noble in attendance at the banquet rushed to inform her of the situation and resulting consternation of the king.

O king, live forever!

This was a standard means of addressing royalty (Ne. 2:3; Dan. 2:4▶; 3:9▶; 6:6▶, 21▶). Although royalty herself, the queen was still subject to the king’s approval. Such was the case with Bathsheba before David (1K. 1:31). See commentary on [Daniel 2:4](#).

Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change

Here we see a frequent theme in Scripture: when leading men are out-of-step with God resulting in troublesome circumstances, a woman brings a stabilizing perspective.

Several times in Scripture we can think of women, such as Deborah in the book of Judges, women in the Scripture who focus on doctrine when the men around them are falling apart and so she is a model of what all the great women in the Bible are pictured to be. She is stable and she brings to the table something that causes the men to focus on something that goes beyond the situation and beyond the problem at hand.²⁹⁹

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3.5.11 - Daniel 5:11



There is a man in your kingdom

In the midst of the circumstances, [Belshazzar](#) had forgotten about Daniel.

Numerous commentators, such as Barnes,³⁰¹ Fausset,³⁰² Jeremiah,³⁰³ Keil,³⁰⁴ Miller,³⁰⁵ and Steinmann,³⁰⁶ suggest Daniel was deprived of his previous position upon the death of [Nebuchadnezzar](#) and change of administration. But Scripture has Daniel serving in the administration in the third year of King Belshazzar (Dan. 8:1▶, 27▶), in 551 B.C. Since the events of this chapter occur in 539 B.C. (the night [Babylon](#) falls to Medo-Persia), Daniel had been in the king's service 12 years earlier.³⁰⁷ Perhaps he had retired soon thereafter due to poor health or advancing age.³⁰⁸ See *Chronological Structure of the Book of Daniel*.

Even if Daniel was now in retirement,³⁰⁹ Belshazzar would have known of him: not only from his previous service to the king, but also from the role Daniel played in the events befalling Nebuchadnezzar—events familiar to Belshazzar (Dan. 5:22▶).³¹⁰ The king was undoubtedly acquainted with Daniel, but he may not have fully appreciated Daniel's capabilities and skills.³¹¹ Judging from the king's character, he may not have been well-acquainted with those serving under him—leaving them to manage the essential affairs of state while he ruled as an aloof playboy. Or perhaps the king's memory was hindered this night by wine. Whatever the reason, Daniel did not immediately come to mind as a possible resource to interpret the mysterious writing.

Spirit of the Holy God³¹²

God is אֱלֹהִים [ʾēlāhîm]. Translators differ on whether this phrase should be understood as referring to the One True God (singular) or pagan deities (plural).³¹³ See commentary on [Daniel 4:8](#).

your father

See commentary on [Daniel 5:2](#).

light and understanding and wisdom³¹⁴

See commentary on [Daniel 5:14](#).

like the wisdom of the gods

The words of the queen fall short of acknowledging the God of Israel praised by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:37▶).³¹⁵ After witnessing the results of divine intervention, unbelievers generally interpret the hand of God within the confines of their pagan world view.

It is not surprising that the profane use this language, since they cannot discern between the one God and angels. Hence they promiscuously call anything divine and celestial, *a god*. Thus also the queen calls angels, *holy gods*, and places the true God among them.³¹⁶

Such was the experience of Paul and Barnabas upon healing a lame man in Lystra.

Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian [language], “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” (Acts 14:11)

chief of the magicians, astrologers, **Chaldeans** and soothsayers

See commentary concerning the identity of the *magicians* ([Daniel 1:20](#)), *astrologers* ([Daniel 1:20](#), [Daniel 2:2](#)), *Chaldeans* ([Daniel 1:4](#), [Daniel 2:2](#)), and *soothsayers* ([Daniel 2:27](#)).

3.5.12 - Daniel 5:12



an excellent spirit

Daniel’s abilities, gifts, and character made him stand out from among the other wise men and counselors. Following the events of this night, his character and gifting would be recognized in service to the Medo-Persian administration.

Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. (Dan. 6:3▶)

knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel

Daniel’s abilities are similar to that of the [Antichrist](#), although derived from a different spiritual source.

In this passage [Dan. 8:23-25▶] it is emphasized that the *king of fierce countenance*, or the Antichrist, will have the understanding of *dark sentences*. This means that he will have the same supernatural abilities to solve riddles that Daniel had in Daniel 5:12▶. Daniel’s source was God, but the source for the Antichrist will be Satan. The Antichrist will have the power of the occult behind him.³¹⁷

See commentary on [Daniel 5:14](#).

he will give the interpretation

The queen’s freedom to give advice to the king implies she was his mother or grandmother rather than his wife.

“The tone in which this last clause is spoken betokens that the speaker herself is conscious of an elevated rank and a kind of authority, or, at least, a right to give advice; a tone which only such a woman as stood in the relation of a *mother* (not a wife) could assume in the East before a king” (Stuart).³¹⁸

See commentary on [Daniel 5:10](#).

Daniel’s wisdom and ability to answer difficult questions was similar to that of Solomon.

Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions. She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels that bore spices, very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart. So Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain [it] to her. (1K. 10:1-3)

See commentary on [Daniel 1:17](#).

3.5.13 - Daniel 5:13



Then Daniel was brought in before the king

Daniel would have been an octogenarian by this time, and was undoubtedly asleep at this late hour.

He was doubtless aroused from his slumbers, for it was far in the night. This would be no light matter, for he was now an old gray-haired man. Sixty-five years had passed by since he had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's Dream, and if he was twenty years old when taken to Babylon, counting the three years in the "Palace School," he was now eighty-eight years of age.³¹⁹

See *Chronological Structure of the Book of Daniel*.

Are you that Daniel

The king may be asking a question, "Are you . . . ," (HCSB, KJV, NASU, NET, NIV84, NKJV) or making a statement, "You are . . . ," (ESV, TNK). One would think the king would have some familiarity with Daniel who had served under him **just over a decade earlier**. But profligate rulers can be woefully out-of-touch with those who run their administration.

Though Daniel was one of the chief ministers of state, who did "the king's business" in the palace (Dan. 8:27▶) yet Belshazzar seems to have known nothing of him. This shews that he was a weak and vicious prince, who minded pleasure more than business, according to the character given him by historians. He appears to have left the care of public affairs to his mother, Nitocris, a lady celebrated for her wisdom, who evidently knew Daniel well, and probably constantly employed him in the government of the kingdom.³²⁰

The king may not have used Daniel's Babylonian name to emphasize his captive status as a Jew or to avoid using a name so similar to his own (Belteshazzar).³²¹

See commentary on *Daniel 5:11*.

captives from Judah . . . whom my father . . . brought from Judah?

If the king was asking a question rather than making a statement (see above), then his interest in whether Daniel was a Jew may reflect his concern for having desecrated the temple vessels of the God of the Jews.³²²

See *Deportations* and commentary on *Daniel 1:3* and *Daniel 2:25*.

3.5.14 - Daniel 5:14



Spirit of God³²³

See commentary on *Daniel 4:8*.

light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you³²⁴

True wisdom, insight, and revelation find their source in God.³²⁵ The secular world believes deep wisdom and insight can be attained independently of God. Though academic attainments and understanding can be pursued apart from acknowledging God, it is God's purpose to conceal certain things from those who reject Him while revealing them to those who appear to be more simplistic, but acknowledge Him (Mat. 11:25; 16:17). Those who reject God have no means of understanding spiritual things because they remain disconnected from God's Spirit (John 3:12; Eph. 2:1; 5:14; Col. 2:13). It is God's Spirit that reveals deep spiritual matters (John 14:26; 1Cor. 2:10-13).

Some truths of God are "mysteries"—unknowable apart from God's special revelation (in the Bible).³²⁶ Unless God reveals these mysteries, they remain completely and permanently beyond the reach of man.³²⁷ Those who don't know God cannot benefit from His special revelation. Even worse, sometimes God *actively* frustrates those who attempt to attain wisdom apart from Him (Job 12:17-25; Isa. 19:12-13; 44:25; Rom. 1:21-22, 28; 1Cor. 1:20).

All the positive aspects of a relationship with God helped Daniel whereas the negative aspects hampered the wise men of Belshazzar's court. Daniel's education and wisdom had grown during his schooling in Babylon, but it was his relationship with God that refined and amplified his natural ability and insight. See commentary on [Daniel 1:17](#).

3.5.15 - Daniel 5:15



the wise men, the astrologers

See commentary on [Daniel 5:7](#).

they could not give the interpretation

See commentary on [Daniel 5:8](#).

3.5.16 - Daniel 5:16



I have heard . . . that you can give interpretations

Having failed to honor or even remember Daniel, who had previously served in his administration, the impious king now turns to the man of God for answers.

Too often the world, like Belshazzar, is not willing to seek the wisdom of God until its own bankruptcy becomes evident. Then help is sought too late, as in the case of Belshazzar, and the cumulative sin and unbelief which precipitated the crisis in the first place becomes the occasion of downfall.³²⁸

I am the more led to this from the fact that when troubles come upon the wicked they generally betake themselves to those whose warnings and good counsels they have despised. The coarse blasphemer, when taken down in his impieties, is most likely to send for the very minister whom he most hated and cursed before. . . .³²⁹

An English preacher by the name of Joseph Parker had a good word for all of us preachers on this passage. He said: *Preachers of the Word, you will be wanted someday by Belshazzar. You were not at the beginning of the feast. You will be there before the banquet hour is closed. The king will not ask you to drink wine, but he will ask you to tell the secret of his pain, and heal the malady of his heart. Just wait your time, preachers. You are nobody now. Who cares for preachers and teachers and seers, men of insight, while the wine goes around and the beast is unfolding its tempting luxuries. But the preacher will have his opportunity. They will send for him when all other friends have failed. May he then come fearlessly, independently, asking only to be a channel through which divine communication can be addressed. Then may he speak to the listening trouble of the world.* [Joseph Parker, *Preaching Through the Bible*]³³⁰

Thus did Pharaoh turn to Joseph in similar circumstances (Gen. [41:15](#)).

if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation

The statement by the king implies an interpretation could not even be attempted since the writing—however enigmatic its words or message might be—could not even be read. First there was a need to read the writing and then, perhaps, its meaning could be discerned. See commentary on [Daniel 5:8](#).

third ruler in the kingdom

See commentary on [Daniel 5:7](#).

chain of gold around your neck

See commentary on [Daniel 5:7](#).

Daniel receives this honor, if only for a few hours, in [Daniel 5:29](#).

3.5.17 - Daniel 5:17



Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another

Unlike Balaam in the service of Balak (Num. [22:7](#)),³³² but like Ahijah before the wife of Jeroboam (1K. [14:6-16](#)) and Peter before Simon (Acts [8:18-20](#)), Daniel's service could not be purchased.³³³

One measure of a true man or woman of God is whether he or she can be swayed by bribery or reward (Mat. [6:24](#); Luke [16:13](#)). "He was like Abraham who told the king of Sodom that he wouldn't even take a shoelace from him (Gen. [14:22-23](#)). The apostle Paul said, 'I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing' (Acts [20:33](#))."³³⁴ This was the stance of Elisha before Namaan, the king of Syria—after his leprosy had been healed by God (2K. [5:15-16](#)). Unfortunately, Elisha's servant Gehazi had not learned this important lesson from his master (2K. [5:25-27](#)).

Daniel Interprets the Writing on the Wall



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In fact, it is foolish for those seeking to understand a message from God to make such an offer as it can only serve to tempt God's messenger to shy away from telling the hard, unvarnished truth. This may also explain why Daniel refused the offer prior to the interpretation, but accepted it afterwards (Dan. [5:29](#)); for it guaranteed the interpretation was not influenced by the potential of reward. For the faithful minister, the Word of God must be given the same before both kings and paupers.

This refusal of the royal presents was designed merely to decisively reject, at the outset, and in a manner becoming the prophet of Jehovah, any influence that might be brought to bear on him. It is not, therefore, a pert expression, which the king might justly punish, nor is it inconsistent with the fact that Daniel ultimately accepted the reward offered for the interpretation, Dan. [5:29](#), since he regarded it as a recognition of his God.³³⁵

Besides the matter of guarding the integrity of the interpretation, Daniel was likely incensed by the reputation of the king and his offensive performance desecrating God's temple vessels.³³⁶ Nor was Daniel about to use the gifts of God for his own personal benefit. And Daniel already understood the mysterious message—meaning that the king's rule and ability to bestow lavish rewards would only last another hour or two.³³⁷

yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation

Daniel consented to interpret the message because he understood it was a message of judgment from God intended for [Belshazzar](#). Depending on Belshazzar's spiritual condition, the message would either lead to his *bona fide* repentance and salvation, or serve to confirm his hardened heart in judgment. It was not Daniel's job to know the result, but only to faithfully deliver the message.³³⁸

3.5.18 - Daniel 5:18



the Most High God

See commentary on [Daniel 3:26](#).

gave Nebuchadnezzar . . . a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor

The kingdom, majesty, glory and honor [Belshazzar](#) enjoyed were passed down to him. Belshazzar was a descendant of [Nebuchadnezzar](#), but he lacked the character and leadership qualities of Nebuchadnezzar.

The brilliant description of Nebuchadnezzar's power in vv. 18 and 19 has undeniably the object of impressing it on the mind of Belshazzar that he did not equal his father in power and majesty.³³⁹

See commentary on [Daniel 2:37](#).

your father

See commentary on [Daniel 5:2](#).

3.5.19 - Daniel 5:19



because of the majesty He gave him

[Nebuchadnezzar's](#) rise to power was not through his own ability and effort. His power and influence was ultimately according to God's design ([Jer. 25:9](#); [27:5-7](#)). See commentary on [Daniel 2:1](#), [Daniel 2:21](#), [Daniel 2:38](#), and [Daniel 4:17](#).

Whoever he wished, he executed

As a governing authority established by God, Nebuchadnezzar exercised the power of capital punishment ([Gen. 9:5-6](#); [John 19:11](#); [Rom. 13:1-4](#)).

Some think the abuse of kingly power is here described; but I had rather take it simply, for Nebuchadnezzar being able to cast down some, and to raise others at his will, since it was in his power to give life to some and to slay others. I, therefore, do not refer these words to tyrannical lust, as if Nebuchadnezzar had put many innocent persons to death, and poured forth human blood without any reason; or as if he had despoiled many of their fortunes, and enriched others and adorned them with honor and wealth. I do not take it so. I think it refers to his arbitrary power over life and death, and over the rise of some and the ruin of others.³⁴⁰

Even so, there were times when Nebuchadnezzar's use of capital punishment had been arbitrary and self-serving, constituting an abuse of his God-given authority. In [chapter 2](#), Nebuchadnezzar threatened to destroy the wise men of [Babylon](#) ([Dan. 2:5](#)▶, [13](#)▶). In [chapter 3](#), Nebuchadnezzar required worship of the golden image at the threat of being "cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" ([Dan. 3:6](#)▶, [20-21](#)▶, [29](#)▶).

He had the absolute power of life and death over them There was no such instrument as we call a "constitution" to control the sovereign as well as the people; there was no tribunal to which he was responsible, and no law by which he was bound; there were no judges to determine on the question of life and death in regard to those who were accused of crime, whom he did not appoint, and whom he might not remove, and whose judgments he might not set aside if he pleased; there were no "juries" of "peers" to

determine on the question of fact whether an accused man was guilty or not. There were none of those safeguards which have been originated to protect the accused in modern times, and which enter so essentially into the notions of liberty now. In an absolute despotism all power is in the hands of one man, and this was in fact the case in Babylon.³⁴¹

Nebuchadnezzar had also executed the chief men of Jerusalem at the overthrow and final deportation of the Jews (Jer. 52:24-27).

3.5.20 - Daniel 5:20



his spirit was hardened in pride³⁴²

See commentary on [Daniel 4:30](#).

he was deposed from his kingly throne

God, through Daniel, had warned [Nebuchadnezzar](#) of impending judgment, but the king's heart was hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13). Failing to repent, he continued on in his prideful ways, triggering God's judgment. See commentary on [Daniel 4:31](#).

they took his glory from him

Calvin takes the plural pronoun *they* to be indefinite:

The change of number which afterwards occurs from singular to plural, some refer to the angels, as if they deprived him by God's command; but I rather think these words are taken indefinitely, implying merely his being deprived of his glory, as we have formerly observed similar forms of speech.³⁴³

For additional views, see commentary on [Daniel 4:25](#).

3.5.21 - Daniel 5:21



he was driven from the sons of men

See commentary on [Daniel 4:25](#).

his heart was made like the beasts

See commentary on [Daniel 4:16](#).

his dwelling was with the wild donkeys

“Chapter 4 describes Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation, but only in this verse does it divulge that Nebuchadnezzar lived with the ‘wild donkeys.’ ”³⁴⁴

See commentary on [Daniel 4:25](#).

They fed him with grass like oxen

See commentary on [Daniel 4:25](#).

his body was wet with the dew of heaven

See commentary on [Daniel 4:15](#).

till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men

See commentary on [Daniel 4:17](#) and [Daniel 4:25](#).

3.5.22 - Daniel 5:22



you his son, Belshazzar

See commentary on [Daniel 5:2](#).

have not humbled your heart

Humility is generally lacking in those of high position and influence. *“The perpetual incense of flattery, coupled with the daily experience of being dependent on no one, and of having every one dependent upon himself, tempts an absolute monarch to feel himself almost a god.—Cowles.”*³⁴⁵ [Nebuchadnezzar](#) had started out on the same arrogant and prideful path. But when God brought judgment, Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard lesson and repented before it was too late. Daniel pronounces God’s judgment and [Belshazzar](#) could repent up to the very end, yet he would not. *“Let grace be shown to the wicked, [Yet] he will not learn righteousness; In the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, And will not behold the majesty of the LORD”* (Isa. [26:10](#)).

When men refuse to repent and do not respond to the promptings of God to turn to him, then eventually because of His holiness and justice, He will act in judgment. Nebuchadnezzar had sinned in many ways but had eventually turned to the Lord and experienced His mercy and grace. But that would not be the case with king Belshazzar, . . .³⁴⁶

Daniel’s bold pronouncement reflects his God-given authority as a prophet: he did not soften the harsh message of coming judgment.³⁴⁷

Daniel, God’s faithful prophet, did not tremble before the king. He had no fear; he had but one duty and responsibility: To be faithful to the Word of God written on the wall, and to tell the king exactly what God had spoken. That is the responsibility of every minister, evangelist, and Bible teacher. We are responsible only to God. A minister called and ordained of God to preach the Gospel, owes his first allegiance to God, regardless of the age or dispensation. He must fear no one save God—and that includes kings, governors, and rulers. He must reprove, rebut, and exhort. A minister need never apologize for preaching *“Thus saith the Lord.”*³⁴⁸

Daniel’s interpretation must have greatly disturbed Belshazzar, for it spelled his imminent doom. His natural response would have been to have the prophet executed on the spot for his bold condemnation of the king in front of the court. But perhaps the God-given authority Daniel spoke with awed Belshazzar, and he was afraid of incurring still greater wrath if he laid a hand on God’s spokesman.³⁴⁹

Scripture bears testimony to powerful leaders who failed to humble themselves before the Almighty. Leaders such as Pharaoh (Ex. [10:3](#)), King Amon (2Chr. [33:23](#)), and King [Zedekiah](#) (2Chr. [36:12](#)). The decline and eventual captivity of the northern kingdom by Assyria, (see [Fall of Israel \(Northern Kingdom\)](#)) followed by the decline and captivity of the southern kingdom by [Babylon](#) (see [Twilight of Judah \(Southern Kingdom\)](#)), testify to the lack of humility by the majority of kings of Israel and Judah in their continued refusal of God’s correction. It is rare for those in power to heed God and turn from their wicked ways (2Chr. [12:6-7](#); [30:11](#); [33:19](#); 1Cor. [1:26](#)).

Like Belshazzar, an unwillingness to repent in the face of clear evidence of God’s judgment will characterize the final generation prior to the return of Jesus Christ (Rev. [16:9](#)▶).

In contrast with the ungodly, the lives of believers should evidence humility and a willingness to submit to God and to fellow man (Eph. [5:21](#), [22](#); Col. [3:18](#); 1Ti. [3:4](#); Heb. [13:17](#); Jas. [4:6-7](#); 1Pe. [3:1-5](#); [5:5-6](#)).

Not only was Belshazzar prideful and unrepentant, history records his cruel and impulsive character:

Even the heathen historian Xenophon pronounces him an “impious” man, and instances his passionate cruelty in slaying one of his nobles for anticipating him in striking down the game in a hunt, and in mutilating a courtier at a banquet because one of the women said he was handsome.³⁵⁰

Xenophon does not mention the last native king of Babylon by name. He describes him as the impious son of a noble-minded king, also not named [Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, IV, 6. The last Neo-Babylonian king is designated ὁ ἀνόσιος [*ho anosios*], [“the ungodly”]. *Ibid.*, IV, 6, 4.].³⁵¹

Meanwhile Belshazzar’s rule had proved a disaster and once fertile Babylonia suffered the very real threat of starvation in 546 b.c. Misrule and graft were rampant, the peasants were oppressed, and commerce and the economy were in a shambles. This apparently precipitated the defection of Gobryas, one of Nebuchadnezzar’s outstanding generals, to Cyrus with a large part of the Babylonian army. In defecting, Gobryas (Gubaru) took with him the province of Elam and its capital, Susa;³⁵²

See commentary on [Daniel 4:29](#), [Daniel 4:30](#), [Daniel 5:27](#), and [Daniel 5:31](#).

although you knew all this

Belshazzar was probably in his teen years when Nebuchadnezzar’s affliction with madness came to an end.³⁵³ Belshazzar assumed his coregency with [Nabonidus](#) about a decade after the death Nebuchadnezzar so would have been old enough to remember what had befallen Nebuchadnezzar.³⁵⁴

How would Belshazzar have been aware of Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation? Certainly the story would have been known, but evidence exists that indicates that Belshazzar may have seen these events firsthand. Belshazzar served as chief officer during the administration of King Neriglissar in 560 b.c. according to Babylonian historical texts. This means that the king was old enough to fill a high position in government only two years after Nebuchadnezzar’s death (562 b.c.). Since Nabonidus was an official in Nebuchadnezzar’s administration, Belshazzar would have lived in Babylon and would have observed personally the last years of the great king’s reign. Thus Daniel’s rebuke is even more understandable. Belshazzar had seen with his own eyes what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, and yet he had refused to humble himself before the Most High God.³⁵⁵

Belshazzar’s familiarity with Nebuchadnezzar’s madness should have engendered a measure of humility leading to a circumspect use of authority motivated by respect for the God of Israel. Instead, he brazenly mocked God through his flagrant desecration of the temple vessels at the riotous party.³⁵⁶

Here is a frequent pattern of history: the excellence and character of a predecessor degenerates in the descendant. In the same way that great nations, having experienced God’s blessings, tend to abandon His ways and degenerate with time, so too many family lines. It is a rare and precious result when the character and godliness of a father or mother is successfully passed on to a son or grandson.

Belshazzar, as leader of Neo-Babylon at its downfall, [typifies](#) the attitude and arrogance of [Antichrist](#), leader of Babylon at the time of the end.³⁵⁷

Like many of the wicked, Belshazzar wouldn’t submit to God or retain him in his thoughts (Job [15:20-25](#); Ps. [10:4](#); Pr. [18:12](#)).

Woe to those who rise early in the morning, [That] they may follow intoxicating drink; Who continue until night, [till] wine inflames them! The harp and the strings, The tambourine and flute, And wine are in their feasts; But they do not regard the work of the LORD, Nor consider the operation of His hands. (Isa. [5:11-12](#))

See commentary on [Daniel 4:29](#) and [Daniel 4:30](#).

3.5.23 - Daniel 5:23  

you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven.

Instead of trusting in the God of the Jews, **Belshazzar** trusted in the ability of the city to withstand any siege. He was so confident in this he had called for the vessels from the Jewish God's temple for use in toasting the gods of **Babylon**, whose protection he no doubt trusted in.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had made a similar mistake—exhibiting extreme pride and mocking God. “Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised [your] voice, And lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel” (Isa. 37:23). Jeremiah had predicted Babylon's eventual fall from pride exhibited against the Holy One of Israel.

Call together the archers against Babylon. All you who bend the bow, encamp against it all around; Let none of them escape. Repay her according to her work; According to all she has done, do to her; **For she has been proud against the LORD, Against the Holy One of Israel.** (Jer. 50:29) [emphasis added]

The judgment of Belshazzar's Babylon prefigures God's judgment of the prideful works of man on a global scale in the ultimate day of the Lord.

The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts [Shall come] upon everything proud and lofty, Upon everything lifted up—And it shall be brought low— . . . The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, And the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; The LORD alone will be exalted in that day, . . . (Isa. 2:11-12, 17)

Nebuchadnezzar had ascended to the throne with a similar attitude to Belshazzar, but God's chastisement cured him of his pride such that he came to “praise and extol and honor the King of heaven” (Dan. 4:37). Belshazzar exhibited no such repentance.

See commentary on [Daniel 5:1](#) and [Daniel 5:2](#).

vessels of His house

See commentary on [Daniel 5:2](#).

you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them.

See commentary on [Daniel 5:4](#).

praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone

See commentary on [Daniel 5:4](#).

which do not see or hear or know

Scripture provides a sad testimony to the continuing blindness of mankind.

They shall be turned back, They shall be greatly ashamed, Who trust in carved images, Who say to the molded images, ‘You are our gods.’ “Hear, you deaf; And look, you blind, that you may see. (Isa. 42:17-18)

Men refuse to acknowledge the “living God” as the source of all life, turning to dead idols in His stead.³⁵⁸

On numerous occasions, God has intervened to point man to the truth, but the message fails to penetrate the hardened heart of unbelief where pagan proclivities eclipse hunger for the true God. When Dagon's idol fell on its face before the ark of the Lord, the people merely set Dagon back up again: no thought was given concerning the *message* this incident conveyed (1S. 5:3).

The same could be said regarding Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal. Even though the prophets of Baal entreated their god with great zeal and diligence, “there was no voice, no one answered” (1K. 18:26). God, in a dramatic response, sent fire to consume Elijah's drenched sacrifice and the people reacted with excitement, but

the revival and reforms that should have followed never materialized, leaving Elijah despondent (1K. 19:10). The majority of the people continued to trust in false gods and their related idols, though the idols remained lifeless and unresponsive (Ps. 115:4-8; 135:15-18; Isa. 37:18-19; 46:6-7; Hab. 2:18-19). Even worse, the idols gave the erroneous impression that *if* there was a supreme God, then he was probably a larger, more powerful entity with similar attributes (Isa. 40:18-20; Acts 17:29-30).

The living God offers to carry men, but men would rather carry the burden of their lifeless idols than acknowledge Him (Isa. 46:3-7; Jer. 10:2-5, 8-11). Unlike the lifeless idols, “There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things [are] naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we [must give] account” (Heb. 4:13).

This lesson was lost on the last king of Babylon, but it would be learned by the upcoming king of Medo-Persia. Unlike Belshazzar, **Darius** the Mede would come to know Daniel’s “living God” (Dan. 6:20, 26-27).

the God who *holds* your breath in His hand . . . you have not glorified.

“But you have not glorified the God who has in his control your very breath.”³⁵⁹

The same *hand* writing the mysterious message also *held* Belshazzar’s life.³⁶⁰ God holds the life of every living thing in his hand (Job 12:10; Isa. 42:5; Acts 17:25-28). If he were to withdraw His Spirit and breath, all flesh would perish (Job 34:14-15; Ps. 104:29).

Refusal to glorify the living God continues in our own day, both in the spiritual realm (appealing to demonic sources such as tarot cards and palm readers) and material realm (attributing the material universe and life itself to blind chance and unguided processes).³⁶¹ The very breath and heartbeat of those who mock God originates in the One Whom they reject, ridicule, and refuse to glorify. “[Van Til] regularly satirized the pretensions of unbelief . . . The unbeliever, he said, is like a child slapping her daddy while she is supported by his lap.”³⁶²

owns all your ways

Owns all your ways is וְכָל-אַרְחֵתְךָ לֵיהּ [wəḵāl-’ōrəḥātāk lēh], “and all your way of living [is] for Him.”

Life is not meant to be independent from God. Consider the first question of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*: “Q. 1. What is the chief end [primary purpose] of man? A. Man’s chief end is to glorify God (Ps. 86:9; Isa. 60:21; Rom. 11:36; 1Cor. 6:20; 10:31; Rev. 4:11), and to enjoy him for ever (Ps. 16:5-11; 144:15; Isa. 12:2; Luke 2:10; Php. 4:4; Rev. 21:3-4).” The unbeliever considers as his “chief end” to live according to his own ambitions and predilections. He rarely considers whether life might be granted from a Giver to Whom he might be accountable. Yet, God counts all his steps (Job 31:4), is acquainted with all his ways (Ps. 139:3), and even orders his steps (Pr. 20:24; Jer. 10:23). Ultimately, he cannot escape the sovereignty of God: even those who reject God wind up ultimately serving His purpose (Ex. 9:16; 14:4; Jer. 51:7; Eze. 38:4; 38:10; 39:2; Rom. 9:17-18). How much better to serve Him knowingly, willingly, and joyfully as a participant within His divine purpose!

you have not glorified

Frequently we hear the skeptic claim neutrality, saying if God would only reveal Himself, *then* the skeptic would believe and give God glory (Mat. 12:38; 16:1). In reality, there is no neutrality and the problem is not want of evidence, but hardness of heart (Luke 16:30-31). Consider how Pharaoh, with overwhelming evidence of God’s power and magnificence in ten horrific plagues, steadfastly refused to glorify God (Ex. 14:5-9). As the events of the book of Revelation unfold, mankind is given enormous evidence of God’s existence and impending judgment, but this proves insufficient to turn the hearts of men to give Him glory.

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. (Rev. 9:20)

3.5.24 - Daniel 5:24**the fingers of the hand**See commentary on [Daniel 5:5](#).**this writing was written.**The LXX describes the message as having been formally “posted,” “ordered,” or “registered.”³⁶³**3.5.25 - Daniel 5:25****MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN**³⁶⁴The Aramaic reads, מְנֵא מְנֵא תְקֵל וּפְרָסִין [m^enē m^enē t^eqēl wūpārsîn].

Daniel’s describes the written message as consisting of three words (מְנֵא [m^enē], תְקֵל [t^eqēl], וּפְרָסִין [wūpārsîn]), the first of which (מְנֵא [m^enē]) is repeated. Some have questioned whether the first word was written twice, as depicted by [Rembrandt](#), or whether Daniel only repeated the first word during his explanation.³⁶⁵

Many commentators assume that its repetition is an indication of dittography. When Daniel quotes and explains this first part of the inscription in Dan. 5:26, he quotes only one מְנֵא [m^enē]. However, Dan. 5:25 represents the way Daniel initially read the inscription to the king. The inscription itself likely was unpointed and lacked word dividers, and so probably read, מְנֵא תְקֵל פְרָסִין [mn²tlp̄rs]. However, when reading it aloud Daniel probably read the first word, paused, and repeated it before moving to the second and third words. He may have paused and repeated the first word to reinforce to the king how the unpointed consonants in the inscription were to be divided and vocalized to form the first word. He may have repeated the first word for emphasis, since the first word, מְנֵא [m^enē], a three-consonant word in the Aramaic qêṭêl pattern signifying a weight (a mina), set the pattern for how the rest of the inscription was to be read: also as weights.³⁶⁶

Regardless of whether the first word was written twice, Daniel gives it twice in his explanation. The first word, מְנֵא [m^enē], may have been repeated to emphasize the certainty of God bringing the kingdom to an end, similar to how the phrase “verily, verily” is used in the New Testament.³⁶⁷ Perhaps the repetition of the first word conveys two related, but different meanings: “numbered,” and “a mina” (coin value).³⁶⁸ Another possibility is the first word, meaning “numbered,” is applied once for the king and again for the kingdom (although no indication of this is given in Daniel’s elaboration in Dan. 5:26).

Since Daniel is reading the message aloud as part of the interpretation, his statement may not correspond verbatim with what was written.

His repetition of the first word shows that he is reading aloud somewhat freely; he is orally reading the entire inscription with a hint of its interpretation. That explains why, when reading the third word aloud, he converts the singular p̄rē to the plural ūpharīn, to signal that it will have a double play on words in his interpretation.³⁶⁹

The last word, וּפְרָסִין [wūpārsîn], begins with a waw-consecutive (וּ, and) followed by pārsin, the plural form of peres.³⁷⁰ The plural form hints of two meanings: 1) the kingdom will be *divided*, and 2) the division of the

kingdom will be at the hands of the *Persians*.

The word “upharsin” (v. 25), that is, “and *parsin*,” the plural of “peres,” is a wordplay on *Paras* (“Persia or Persians”).³⁷¹

Daniel interpreted וּפְרָסִין [wûpērēsîn] as the plural of פָּרָס [pērēs], as if the word פָּרָס [p̄rs] were written twice. The first פָּרָס [p̄rs] is a verb meaning “break up” or “divide”; the second, the name of the nation פָּרָס [pārēs], “Persia.”³⁷²

The individual words comprising this phrase were written on the wall without vowels.³⁷³

Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin

Consonants	Pointed (Vowels Added) <i>Coin</i>	Interpretation ³⁷⁴
מנא [mnʾ]	מִנָּא [m ^e nā] <i>mina</i>	מְנָה [m ^e nā] “numbered” (Dan. 5:26▶)
תקל [tql]	תִּקְלָל [tiqqal] <i>shekel</i> ³⁷⁵	תִּקְלֵתָהּ [t ^e qīl ^e ttā] “weighed” (Dan. 5:27▶)
פרס [p̄rs]	פָּרָס [p ^e rēs] <i>half-mina</i>	פְּרִיסַת [p ^e rīsāt] “divided” [in two: Medes and Persians] (Dan. 5:28▶)

Daniel’s interpretation of the meaning of the individual words expands their consonantal forms with vowels. Some suggest the cryptic message utilizes a play on words involving coins of relative value.

Another interpretation of these oracular words finds much favor in our day, an interpretation that adds a new element of perplexity to the first impression that the words might have conveyed. This interpretation is built on the observation that the letters of the first word are the same as the letters of the words for the Babylonian and Hebrew coin, the “*mina*” or “*maneh*,” worth about \$34, if it is of silver, and containing fifty shekels. Of course, *tekel* has the consonants for the word “shekel”—worth roughly about 75 cents. What brought this approach particularly into favor was the discovery of an inscription which *K. W.* calls the “Sendschirli—Panammu Inscription,” on which the consonants of *peres* occurred apparently in the sense of a “half-mina.” The three terms would then seem to bear the names of three coins, a fact that would, indeed, add to the perplexity of the reader: a mina, a half-mina, a shekel. *K. W.*, however, seems to be well justified in counseling caution, for he points out that the meaning only of “mina” is supported and justified by inscriptions. The one instance of *peres* as “half-mina” is not yet substantiated as correct; and for *tekel* used as “shekel” no support is offered by Babylonian inscriptions. Consequently this new interpretation is still two-thirds a guess.³⁷⁶

Legal or financial terms could be well-suited to convey the concepts of being weighed (in a balance) and found wanting (owing, coming up short, needing to pay).³⁷⁷

Some suggest the terms may convey the relative merit of the various kings of Neo-Babylonia:

[Some suggest] that Nebuchadnezzar weighed a mina; Neriglissar, his successor, a mina; his successor, Labashi-Marduk, a shekel; and Nabonidus and Belshazzar, half a mina each.³⁷⁸

Young in his discussion on this point gives J. Dymeley Prince the credit for the suggestion that the maneh refers to Nebuchadnezzar, the shekel (of much less value) to Belshazzar, and the half-minas refers to the Medes and the Persians. Daniel’s explanation, however, is far more cogent and reasonable, and does not give any indication that the words mean other than he indicates.³⁷⁹

Others find this suggestion unlikely. The words are in the form of past participles rather than substantives.³⁸⁰ If the words convey relative value, then they are given out of order.³⁸¹ (On the other hand, the coin values could be given out-of-order intentionally to increase the difficulty of interpretation apart from divine assistance.³⁸²)

Even assuming relative coin values are intended, this would not obviate the need for divine assistance to provide the correct interpretation.³⁸³

Daniel divided these consonants into three words of three letters each, מנא [mnʾ] תקל [tql] פרס [p̄rs], which are vocalized (supplied with vowels) . . . However, there are many other ways in which the inscription could have been read, depending on the word division and the vocalization . . . “Who caused Persia to stumble?” . . . “What shall I weigh, a half mina?” . . . Still another possible division into words would be this: “Whoever you are, Persia is insignificant.” There are still other possibilities.³⁸⁴

Thus Daniel’s inspired interpretation involves an elaborate wordplay with a three-part interpretation of each of the three words, each of which consists of three consonants . . . This masterful, complex interpretation with its multiple plays on words expressed concisely in the original Aramaic could only have been given to Daniel by divine inspiration.³⁸⁵

The final word, פרס [p̄rs], provides evidence against the view a Median kingdom intervened between Babylonian and Persian rule.

Furthermore *p-r-s* also points to the word for “Persian,” *Pārās*. This means that the author of this Book of Daniel believed that the kingdom that followed right after the Babylonian (over which Belshazzar reigned) was the Persian, without any intervening, independent Median Empire. Nothing could be plainer, in the light of this triple wordplay, than that the author understood the Persians to be the dominant element in empire number two, with the Medians being associated with them as a federated nation.³⁸⁶

See the discussion regarding *The Medo-Persian Empire*.

The Jewish historian Josephus summarizes the meaning:³⁸⁷

And he explained the writing thus: —“MANEH. This, if it be expounded in the Greek language, may signify a Number, because God hath numbered so long a time for thy life, and for thy government, and that there remains but a small portion.—THEKEL. This signifies a Weight, and means that God hath weighed thy kingdom in a balance, and finds it going down already.—PHARES. This also, in the Greek tongue, denotes a fragment; God will therefore break thy kingdom in pieces, and divide it among the Medes and Persians.”³⁸⁸

See commentary on *Daniel 5:8*, *Daniel 5:26*, *Daniel 5:27*, and *Daniel 5:28*.

3.5.26 - Daniel 5:26



MENE: God has numbered your kingdom

“There is a kind of double meaning in the verb ‘to number.’ It means not only, ‘to count’ but ‘to fix the limit of’ as is also the case in our common expression that a man’s days are ‘numbered.’ ”³⁸⁹ “A Divine sentence of destruction upon the king and his people, that was called forth by the insolent presumption of the present ruler . . .”³⁹⁰ “One wonders how long it might be before the Lord God places our own country on His scales.”³⁹¹

Not only had Belshazzar’s kingdom been numbered, the days of the *king himself* have been numbered—he will be slain this very night.³⁹²

and finished it³⁹³

Finished it is from **שָׁלַם** [*š'elim*], meaning, “bring to an end, cease, stop a state of reigning” and includes the notion of closing out an overdue account, to “take possession, formally, settle accounts.”³⁹⁴

God used Babylonia as a tool of judgment upon Israel, but both the king and country of Babylonian were guilty of their own iniquity meriting this judgment.

‘Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, [that] I will punish **the king of Babylon and that nation**, the land of the **Chaldeans, for their iniquity**,’ says the LORD; ‘and I will make it a perpetual desolation.’ (Jer. 25:12) [emphasis added]

The end of Neo-Babylonia was in accord with the prediction of Jeremiah that it would last only two generations beyond **Nebuchadnezzar**.

So all nations shall serve him and his son and his son’s son, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them. (Jer. 27:7)

See commentary on [Daniel 5:2](#), [Daniel 5:25](#), and [Daniel 5:28](#).

3.5.27 - Daniel 5:27

TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting

Not only the Babylonian kingdom, but the king *himself* had been evaluated by God and come up short.

Xenophon relates two different incidents illustrating the vanity and cruelty of **Belshazzar**.

While on a royal hunt, in a fit of jealousy, Belshazzar murdered the son of Gobryas:

And when my boy went hunting with [Belshazzar] as his friend, and when a bear came out, they both gave chase and the present ruler [Belshazzar] let fly his javelin but missed. . . . Then my son threw . . . and brought down the bear. And then that man was vexed, to be sure, as it proved, but covered his jealousy in darkness. But when again a lion appeared, he missed again. . . . but again a second time my son hit his mark and killed the lion and cried, ‘Have I not thrown twice in succession and brought an animal down each time!’ Then that villain no longer restrained his jealous wrath but, snatching a spear from one of the attendants, smote him in the breast—my son, my only, well-loved son—and took away his life. . . . If, therefore, you [Cyrus] will receive me and I may find some hope of getting with your help some vengeance for my dear son, I think that I should find my youth again . . .³⁹⁵

At a royal banquet, Belshazzar castrated a man named Gadatas, merely because his concubine found the man attractive:

“But, Gobryas,” said Cyrus, when he heard this, “do you not accuse this young fellow who has just come to the throne [Belshazzar] of cruel insolence of character?” “That judgment, I think,” said Gobryas, “is warranted by my experience with him. . . . For once when he and the son of a man much more powerful than I were drinking together, a young man [Gadatas] who, like my son, was his comrade, he had him seized and castrated; and the occasion, so some people said, was simply because his concubine had praised his friend, remarking how handsome he was and felicitating the woman who should be his wife; but the king himself now maintains that it was because the man had made advances toward his concubine. . . .”³⁹⁶

The king would reap the rewards of his viciousness.³⁹⁷ The father of the man he had slain and the individual he had castrated joined with the forces of **Cyrus** to bring the downfall of Belshazzar this very night.³⁹⁸ See commentary on [Daniel 5:30](#).

Belshazzar was also “found wanting” because of his desecration of the vessels from the Jewish temple.

For it was because of the desecration of the “Sacred Vessels” that the “Handwriting” appeared on the wall, and the doom of Belshazzar pronounced, for if he continued on the throne there was little hope of the return of the Jews and the sacred vessels to Jerusalem two years later, as the prophets had foretold.³⁹⁹

Scripture warns of God’s evaluation of mankind and our inability, apart from Christ, to measure up. God sees all our ways and counts all our steps (Job 31:4-6). All our actions are weighed (1S. 2:3). Both men of low degree and high degree will be evaluated on God’s scales of justice (Ps. 62:9-10). We are blind to our sin, unable to assess our true condition. “All the ways of a man [are] pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits” (Pr. 16:2).

No man can stand before the all-seeing gaze of a Holy God unless clothed in the righteousness of Christ (Job 29:14; Ps. 132:9; Isa. 59:17; 61:10; Jer. 23:6; Mat. 22:11-12; Rom. 3:21-26; 10:3; 2Cor. 5:21; Php. 3:9). Even those who trust in Jesus Christ, obtaining eternal life and escaping hell, will have their works judged for reward (1Cor. 3:13; Rev. 3:2▶).

The Scriptures everywhere assure us that “the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed.” Solomon writes : “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirit.” He puts every Belshazzar and every other in His balances, weighs every soul, marks every folly, and records every good and every deficiency. Every opportunity misimproved, every admonition disregarded, every ungrateful feeling indulged, every impulse of pride entertained, every instance of power abused or talents squandered, every word and act of profanity, every neglect and slight of Jehovah’s messengers, every effort to get away from duty, every attempt to drown serious thoughts by sensual excesses, every sending away of God’s servants to wait for a more convenient season, every contempt for the Bible and for those who believe and follow it, every thought and passion, or idle word that men speak,—all of them, singly and together, are surveyed and weighed, and written down in heaven against the day of final account.⁴⁰⁰

Without Christ, the condition of every person before our God is akin to that of Belshazzar: *weighed and found wanting*. A time is coming when all the unrighteous dead will undergo God’s just evaluation:

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is [the Book] of Life. And the dead were **judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books**. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were **judged, each one according to his works**. . . . And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:12-15▶) [emphasis added]

All those throughout history, who have rejected the perfect righteousness obtained by faith in Christ, will stand in judgment to receive what they expect and justly deserve: *an impartial evaluation of their works*. Having rejected the freely-available merits of Christ on their behalf (Isa. 55:1-3; Rev. 22:17▶), they stand before a Holy God for evaluation. Too late, they realize God does not grade on a relative curve as they expected. Instead, *absolute perfection* is the requirement for entry into heaven—to remain in God’s presence.

Different books are used during their court session. First, a set of books records each lifetime in deed and thought (Mat. 5:20, 27-28). Each one is judged, “by the things which were written in the books.” In every case, the books bear a record of *imperfection*.

The Scriptures of truth, the word of God, contained in the books of the Old and New Testament, are the balances of the sanctuary, in which persons, principles, and practices, are to be weighed; and sad it is where they are found light and wanting: men, both of high and low degree, when put here, are lighter than vanity.⁴⁰¹

On the basis of their own merit they will be found to have fallen short. Next, a check will be made to see if they have been written in the Book of Life—recording the names of all those throughout history who trusted in God’s provision for redemption in Jesus Christ (Ps. 69:29; Dan. 12:1▶; Luke 10:20; Heb. 12:23; Php. 4:3; Rev. 3:5▶; 21:27▶). Having verified they are “not found written in the Book of Life,” their sentence is justified: condemnation to the lake of fire.

You “art weighted in the balances, and art found wanting.” That’s the sad destiny of every unbeliever. At the Great White Throne judgment a person who has not trusted in Jesus Christ must stand before Jesus.⁴⁰²

Dear reader, “behold, now is the day of salvation” (2Cor. 6:2). When that day of evaluation comes, do you think you will fare better than Belshazzar in avoiding the lake of fire? Think again! The smallest sin will seal your shared destiny: spending eternity with Belshazzar in the lake of fire. The only escape is through the narrow gate of Jesus Christ, accepting His sacrifice on the cross for your sin (Isa. 53:4-5), thereby gaining His merit as the perfect and righteous Son of God (Rom. 3:21-25). In a moment, you can exchange a destiny of eternal condemnation for eternal life (John 11:25-26)!

See commentary on [Daniel 5:25](#).

3.5.28 - Daniel 5:28



PERES: Your kingdom has been divided⁴⁰³

Three words in this verse form a *paranomasia*, a type of play on words.⁴⁰⁴ *PERES* (פֶּרֶס [pērēs]), *divided* (פֶּרִיסַת [pērīsaṭ]), and *Persians* (פָּרְסִים [pārās]) share the same root consonants: פֶּרֶס [prs].

The whole point of the wordplay is that the Persians were about to take over the kingdom directly from the Babylonians: “Peres: Your kingdom is divided [perisat, from the verb peras, “separate”] and given to the Medes and Persians [paras]” (Dan. 5:28▶). It is quite apparent that only the Persians fit into this wordplay (P-R-S are the three consonants involved in all three: *PeReS*, *PeRiSat*, *PaRaS*).⁴⁰⁵

Some commentators suggest the *division* of the kingdom indicates how jurisdiction over [Babylon](#) will be separated under [Cyrus](#) between the Medes and Persians.⁴⁰⁶ More probably, it merely refers to the dissolution of the kingdom, as in “broken to pieces.”⁴⁰⁷

The verbs for *numbering*, *finishing*, *weighing*, and *dividing* the kingdom are all in the perfect tense, as if these actions had already taken place.⁴⁰⁸ Although the celebrants at the royal party were unaware of it, Babylon’s doom was already sealed. It seems likely that by the time Daniel uttered these words the city had already been penetrated by Cyrus’ forces.

And then, note, Daniel says, Peres, “*divided*,” a form of the same word Upharsin which he read from the wall, but implying that the division had already taken place; for instead of saying, “God is dividing thy kingdom,” he declares, “Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” It was as much as to say the blow had already fallen: it was not that God was about to do this, but it had already been accomplished. While Daniel was interpreting, the kingdom had passed to other hands.⁴⁰⁹

It was already night. For the handwriting had been seen some time before, written where the light of the chandelier fell on it. The Medes and Persians must have been already in motion. The city, buried in its revelry, was virtually already in their hands. They were all-but-marching along the half-dried bed of the Euphrates, to take possession of what God had given into their hands.⁴¹⁰

See commentary on [Daniel 5:31](#).

The king had lived his life according to his own designs. He had enjoyed power, prestige, and unbridled living. Still relatively young, he undoubtedly expected many more years of enjoyment ahead. How quickly did his situation change! In the midst of merriment, he fell under divine judgment as his last hours unexpectedly drew to a close.

Your “mene” may very soon be written on the wall—your days *numbered*—your life *finished*! “tekel,” for you, may even now be true—*weighed*, and found wanting!

“Weighed in the balance, and wanting,
Weighed, but no Saviour is there,
Weighed, but thy soul has been trifling,
Weighed, and found lighter than air.”

And then “peres” shall seal your doom, and your opportunities of mercy be forever gone; your body a corpse, and your soul in hell! Divided—separated from all that is good, from all that is holy—to be lost forever, shut up to a Christless eternity. O heed now the word of warning, I entreat you, and flee for your life to the city of refuge, which is Christ Jesus Himself, who says, “Him that cometh unto Me, I will in nowise cast out.”⁴¹¹

See commentary on [Daniel 5:25](#) and [Daniel 5:27](#).

given to the Medes and Persians

Here marks the end of the first kingdom and the rise of the second kingdom as portrayed by [Nebuchadnezzar’s](#) dream in [chapter 2](#) and Daniel’s vision in [chapter 7](#).⁴¹³ (Both [Nebuchadnezzar’s](#) dream and Daniel’s vision took place prior to this night. See commentary on [Daniel 5:1](#).)

But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ([Dan. 2:39](#)) [emphasis added]

And suddenly **another beast, a second, like a bear.** It was raised up on one side, and [had] three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: ‘Arise, devour much flesh!’ ([Dan. 7:5](#)) [emphasis added]

See commentary on [Daniel 2:39](#) and [Daniel 7:5](#).

Daniel informs [Belshazzar](#) that the demise of his kingdom will be at the hands of both Media and Persia in a unified alliance.

Babylon would not fall to the Medes first, who would then subsequently fall to the Persians: the position of some who incorrectly identify the *Sequence of Kingdoms* in [Nebuchadnezzar’s](#) dream ([Daniel 2](#)) as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece rather than Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.⁴¹⁴ [Darius the Mede](#) is the initial representative of the Medo-Persian kingdom ([Dan. 5:31](#)) and subsequent mention is made of [Cyrus the Persian](#) ([Dan. 6:28](#)), there is no record of an intervening fall of Media and rise of Persia. See [The Medo-Persian Empire](#).

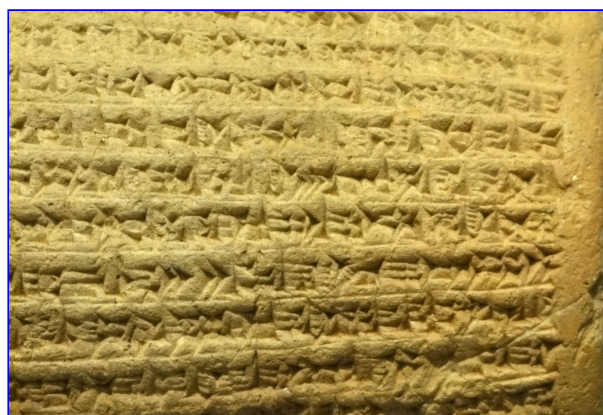
The mention of Medes prior to Persians conveys an historical detail unlikely to have been known if Daniel was written late, [during the Maccabean era](#).

In the naming of the Median before the Persian there [[Dan. 5:28](#)] lies . . . a notable proof of the genuineness of this narrative, and with it of the whole book; for the hegemony of the Medes was of a very short duration, and after its overthrow by the Persians the form of expression used is always “*Persians and Medes*,” as is found in the book of Esther.⁴¹⁵

This sequence: “Medes” first, then “Persians,” [[Dan. 5:28](#)] indicates a point of historical accuracy that fits in beautifully with the idea of Daniel’s authorship of the book. The supremacy in this dual kingdom remained but a short time with the Medes and that while Daniel was still on the scene, and then passed permanently to the Persians, a fine point that a writer who lived in the Maccabean age would hardly have thought of recording.⁴¹⁶

The handwriting on the wall presents a *dual* monarchy (“the Medes and the Persians,” [Dan 5:28](#)) as the divine instrument of Babylon’s destruction. Even more important, the emphasis is clearly upon the *Persians*

Cyrus Cylinder Detail



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rather than the Medes, for the word *PERES* that appeared on the wall was identical to the word *PARAS* (the vowels did not appear), thus providing the double meaning of “Persians” and “divided.” Thus, the book of Daniel does *not* endorse the erroneous idea that it was the Medes that conquered Babylon.⁴¹⁷

For additional evidence against a Maccabean date for the composition of Daniel, see *Historical Details in Daniel* and commentary on *Daniel 5:1*.

Many other passages indicate the Medo-Persian empire followed upon the fall of Neo-Babylonia (Isa. 13:1, 17-19; 21:2; 44:28; 45:1, 3; Jer. 51:24, 28; Dan. 5:31▶; 8:3▶, 20▶; 9:1▶; Ezra 1:2; 6:14; Est. 1:3).⁴¹⁸

3.5.29 - Daniel 5:29



[put] a chain of gold around his neck

Here is evidence of the failure of the ungodly to respond in the face of divine judgment. The king should have been terrified by the message of judgment interpreted by Daniel. Instead of repenting and entreating Daniel to intercede on his behalf, *Belshazzar* assumes the continuation of his position of authority and bestows rewards to Daniel.

The end of his reign was now close at hand, and yet in security he offers this dignity to Daniel. This shews how rapidly the terror which God had occasioned him had vanished away.⁴¹⁹

In accepting the chain of gold, Daniel knew *Belshazzar*'s reward would be short-lived since the king was about to be killed.⁴²⁰ See commentary on *Daniel 5:7*.

third ruler in the kingdom

For a discussion of the reasons why Daniel was offered the position of *third* and not *second* in the kingdom, see commentary on *Daniel 5:7*.

The king's proclamation would soon elevate Daniel to the position of *first* ruler—since the king's father was in exile and the king would be assassinated later that night.

The fact that Daniel was made the third ruler in the land is noteworthy for, as *Nabu-naid* was in exile, when *Belshazzar* was killed later that night, that left Daniel as the ranking ruler in Babylon. Now, the Persian policy of conquest was to continue, as far as possible, the government of any conquered people. So this move left Daniel as the likely head of the Persian province or satrapy of Babylon, and that is just what Dan. 6:2▶ presents! So God caused this drunken pagan king in his last regal act to ensure that His representative was placed in the court of the next world power!⁴²¹

Given the upcoming change in regime, this could have been a dangerous reward. Incoming regimes generally arrest or dispatch the leaders of the previous regime.⁴²² But Daniel's position of safety and favor with the incoming Medo-Persian regime was guaranteed by his God—Who bestowed upon him an “excellent spirit” (Dan. 6:1-3▶).⁴²³

Besides being divinely protected, Daniel's role in interpreting the mysterious writing predicting the downfall of *Belshazzar* would have certainly become known to the forces of *Cyrus*.⁴²⁴ It would have been evident Daniel was not sympathetic to *Belshazzar* and had talents and abilities of potential benefit to the incoming administration.⁴²⁵

Whether *Belshazzar*'s successor recognised the promotion granted to Daniel in the last hours of his reign . . . the successor would be inclined toward its recognition by the reflection, that by Daniel's interpretation of the mysterious writing from God the putting of *Belshazzar* to death appeared to have a higher sanction, presenting itself as if it were something determined in the councils of the gods, whereby the successor might claim before the people that his usurpation of the throne was rendered legitimate. Such a reflection might

move him to confirm Daniel's elevation to the office to which Belshazzar had raised him. This supposition appears to be supported by Dan. 6:2▶⁴²⁶

Daniel's stellar behavior is noteworthy in the midst of this dangerous situation: 1) Daniel did not pander to or flatter the sinful king to gain favor; instead 2) Daniel unapologetically delivered the unvarnished message of God's judgment to the king; 3) Daniel trusted God for protection in the midst of the dangerous regime change. Let us learn this valuable lesson from Daniel: our job is simply to walk in integrity and devotion to God and trust Him for the results.⁴²⁷

It is ironic that the very empire that destroyed Jerusalem and carried the Hebrews into captivity would have as its last official act the exaltation of the very people that it once dominated.⁴²⁸

See commentary on [Daniel 2:48](#).

3.5.30 - Daniel 5:30



That very night

By daybreak, the prediction of the mysterious writing had come to pass: the king and kingdom⁴²⁹ of [Babylon](#) had both come to their end.⁴³⁰

The day is October 12 and the year is 539 B.C. We know exactly the day, we know exactly the month, and we know exactly the year because there were other people watching what happened on this fateful day . . .⁴³¹

Like the rich man in a parable of Jesus, [Belshazzar's](#) life ended unexpectedly.

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, [and] be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So [is] he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:16-21)

Sudden intervention by God's judgment will be the experience of a sleeping world when the future Day of the Lord arrives.⁴³²

Like Belshazzar, we live each day assuming on tomorrow, but only God knows when our time is up. Accidents occur in our fallen world and may cut our life short at any moment. Jesus spoke of the need to be reconciled to God while there is still time, else we share the fate of those taken when the Tower of Siloam unexpectedly collapsed. "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5). What motivation this should be to secure our eternal destiny *today* by trusting in God's provision (John 3:16)!

Belshazzar

"An inscription from Harran assigned a ten-year period for the Arabian exile of Nabonidus, and this, along with other sources, would imply that the royal personage (Dan. 5:30▶) who was killed in 539 B.C. was in fact Belshazzar."⁴³³

See commentary on [Daniel 5:1](#).

king of the Chaldeans

Chaldeans is here used ethnically and does not follow the later use of the term where it came to mean a class of astrologers. This is evidence for the early date for the composition of Daniel.⁴³⁴ See the discussion of the *Date* when the book of Daniel was written and commentary on [Daniel 5:1](#).

was slain

Historical records bear witness to the assassination of the king:

As the noise and tumult ensued, those within heard the uproar, and at the king's command to see what the matter was, some of them opened the gates and ran out. And when Gadatas and his men saw the gates open they dashed in in pursuit of the others as they fled back into the palace, and dealing blows right and left they came into the presence of the king; and they found him already risen with his dagger in his hand. And Gadatas and Gobryas and their followers overpowered him; and those about the king perished also, one where he had sought some shelter, another while running away, another while actually trying to defend himself with whatever he could. . . . And when day dawned and those in possession of the citadels discovered that the city was taken and the king slain, they surrendered the citadels too.⁴³⁵

The principle record here . . . is "the Annalistic table of Cyrus," an inscription of which the transparent design is to represent his conquest of Babylon as the fulfilment of a divine mission, . . . According to this tablet, "Sippara was taken without fighting, and Nabonidus fled." This was on the 14th day of Tammuz (June-July); and on the 16th, "Gobryas and the soldiers of Cyrus entered Babylon without fighting." On the 3rd day of Marchesvan, that is, four months later (October-November), Cyrus himself arrived. Following this comes the significant statement: "The 11th day of Marchesvan, during the night, Gobryas was on the bank of the river. *The son of the king died*" ; or, as Professor Driver reads it, "Gubaru *made an assault, and slew the king's son.*" . . . But who was this personage whose death was the occasion of a great national mourning and a State funeral? As the context shows clearly that "the king" referred to was not Cyrus, he can have been no other than Nabonidus; and as "the king's son," so frequently mentioned in the earlier fragments of the inscription and in the contract tablets, is admittedly Belshazzar, there is no reason whatever to doubt that it was he whose death and obsequies are here recorded.⁴³⁶

According to the Babylonian Chronicle, in the last year of Nabonidus's reign the New Year Festival was properly observed and the gods of other cities were brought into Babylon. "In the month of Teshrit, while Cyrus was attacking the Babylonian army at Opis on the Tigris, the people of Babylonia revolted, but he [Nabonidus] slew some of the people. On the fourteenth day, Sippar was taken without a battle. Nabonidus fled. On the sixteenth day [12 October] Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium, and the troops of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle. Afterwards Nabonidus was arrested when he returned to Babylon." Religious ceremonies were not interrupted. "On the third of Marcheswan [29 October], Cyrus entered Babylon and they waved branches before him. Peace settled on the city and Cyrus proclaimed peace to Babylon. Gubaru, his governor, appointed local governors in Babylon . . . On the night of the eleventh of Marcheswan [6 November] Ugbaru died. On the . . . the . . . of the king died." (See *Ancient Near East Texts* 306; *Documents from Old Testament Times* 81-83; Grayson, *Chronicles*, 7; **according to one reading [cf. Driver], the king's son was killed.**) [emphasis added]⁴³⁷

Two key individuals helped overthrow the city and assassinate the king: Gadatas and Gobryas, both of whom had suffered from wicked acts of the king.⁴³⁸ See commentary on [Daniel 5:27](#).

Vision of Belshazzar

by

George Gordon Byron⁴³⁹

I.

The King was on his throne,
The Satraps thronged the hall:
A thousand bright lamps shone
O'er that high festival.
A thousand cups of gold,
In Judah deemed divine—
Jehovah's vessels hold
The godless Heathen's wine!

II.

In that same hour and hall,
 The fingers of a hand
 Came forth against the wall,
 And wrote as if on sand:
 The fingers of a man;—
 A solitary hand
 Along the letters ran,
 And traced them like a wand.

III.

The monarch saw, and shook,
 And bade no more rejoice;
 All bloodless waxed his look,
 And tremulous his voice.
 “Let the men of lore appear,
 The wisest of the earth,
 And expound the words of fear,
 Which mar our royal mirth.”

IV.

Chaldea’s seers are good,
 But here they have no skill;
 And the unknown letters stood
 Untold and awful still.
 And Babel’s men of age
 Are wise and deep in lore;
 But now they were not sage,
 They saw—but knew no more.

V.

A captive in the land,
 A stranger and a youth,
 He heard the King’s command,
 He saw that writing’s truth.
 The lamps around were bright,
 The prophecy in view;
 He read it on that night,—
 The morrow proved it true.

VI.

“Belshazzar’s grave is made,
 His kingdom passed away,
 He, in the balance weighed,
 Is light and worthless clay;
 The shroud, his robe of state,
 His canopy the stone;
 The Mede is at his gate!
 The Persian on his throne!”

Belshazzar had been killed, but his father [Nabonidus](#) remained alive. [Josephus](#) cites [Berosus](#) who indicates Nabonidus fled to Borsippus where he was subsequently captured by [Cyrus](#).⁴⁴⁰ The [Nabonidus Chronicle](#) indicates, after the fall of Babylon, Nabonidus returned to Babylon where he was taken captive.⁴⁴¹ Cyrus allowed Nabonidus to remain alive in exile.⁴⁴²

3.5.31 - Daniel 5:31

This is one of several verses providing clear chronological indicators within the book of Daniel (Dan. 1:1▶, 21▶; 2:1▶; 5:31▶; 7:1▶; 8:1▶; 9:1▶; 10:1▶). This occurred in 539 B.C. See *Chronology of Daniel*.

Darius the Mede⁴⁴³

For a discussion of the identity of Darius, see *Darius the Mede*. Concerning the relationship of the Medes and Persians, see commentary on *Daniel 5:28*.

Several prophets had predicted it would be the *Medes* who would overthrow *Babylon*. About a century and a half earlier,⁴⁴⁴ Isaiah had predicted that *Cyrus*, the Persian king now allied with the Medes, would be God's instrument allowing Jerusalem to be rebuilt (Isa. 44:28; 45:1).⁴⁴⁵ About 50 years earlier, Jeremiah had identified the Medes as the ones who would overthrow Babylon (Jer. 51:28).⁴⁴⁶ About 12 years earlier, in the *third year of Belshazzar (551 B.C.)*, Daniel received revelation that Medo-Persia would overthrow Greece (Dan. 8:20-21▶), implying the kingdom following Babylon in the predicted *sequence of kingdoms* would be Medo-Persia.

Make the arrows bright! Gather the shields! The LORD has raised up the spirit of **the kings of the Medes**. For His plan [is] **against Babylon to destroy it**, Because it [is] the vengeance of the LORD, The vengeance for His temple. Set up the standard on the walls of Babylon; Make the guard strong, Set up the watchmen, Prepare the ambushes. For the LORD has both devised and done What He spoke against the inhabitants of Babylon. O you who dwell by many waters, Abundant in treasures, Your end has come, The measure of your covetousness. (Jer. 51:11-13) [emphasis added]

Already in Jeremiah God had prophesied that the captivity of his people in Babylon would last seventy years (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10). Babylon's fall to the Persians some sixty-six years after Jerusalem was first given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC (Dan. 1:1-2▶) and the first captives (including Daniel) were taken to Babylon was the first step in keeping this promise. Jeremiah had promised that the Medes would be God's instrument for punishing Babylon (Jer. 51:11, 28), and Daniel dutifully records the fall of the city and kingdom to the Medes and Persians (Dan. 5:28▶), who were led by "Darius the Mede" (Dan. 5:31▶).⁴⁴⁷

Babylon had fallen to Medo-Persia and the Jews would soon be released to *return and rebuild Jerusalem*, yet Israel would never have a descendant of David ruling as king upon the throne of David for the remainder of the Old Testament era. Following the rejection of Messiah Jesus, the Davidic throne still remains vacant until the *Times of the Gentiles* draws to a close at the return of Jesus.⁴⁴⁸

See commentary on *Daniel 5:28*.

received the kingdom

Darius the Mede received the kingdom, but it was forces under *Cyrus*, a *Persian*, that captured the city, leading to the release of the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem—as predicted by Isaiah.

Who says of Cyrus, '[He is] My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." ' 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: 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call [you] by your name, [Am] the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.' (Isa. 44:28; 45:1-4)

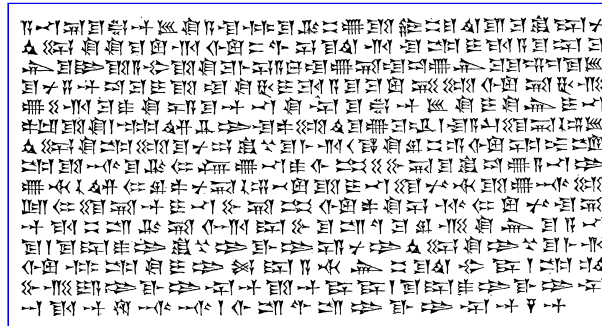
When Cyrus led forces against Babylon, he was a commander under the authority of Darius the Mede. Soon thereafter, he revolted against Darius and assumed the position of prominence from which he issued the decree releasing the Jews.⁴⁵⁰

Cyrus Cylinder Text

According to [Josephus](#), after the fall of Babylon, Isaiah’s prediction was read to Cyrus and played a part in his subsequent [decree](#) allowing the Jews to [return to Jerusalem](#).⁴⁵¹

This fateful night was foreseen by the prophets who predicted that Babylon would fall under God’s judgment.⁴⁵²

Prophets who predicted the fall of Babylon by name include: Isaiah (Isa. 13:1, 17, 19; 14:3-4),⁴⁵³ Jeremiah (Jer. 25:26; 27:6-7; 50:1-1, 9-10, 14, 16, 18, 21, 23-25, 28-29, 35, 42-43, 45-46, 51:1-2, 4, 6-9, 11-12, 24, 39-31, 33-35, 37, 41-42, 44, 47-49, 53-54, 55-56, 58, 60-62),⁴⁵⁴ and Daniel (Dan. 2:39; 7:5; 8:3, 20).⁴⁵⁵



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Jeremiah’s predictions included information about the timing of Babylon’s fall that came to pass in the events before us:⁴⁵⁶

‘Then it will come to pass, **when seventy years are completed**, [that] I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the **Chaldeans**, for their iniquity,’ says the LORD; ‘and I will make it a perpetual desolation. So I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the nations.’ (Jer. 25:12-13) [emphasis added]

And now I have given all these lands into the hand of **Nebuchadnezzar** the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him. So all nations shall serve **him and his son and his son’s son, until the time of his land comes**; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them. (Jer. 27:6-7) [emphasis added]

The fall of Babylon to Medo-Persia may also fulfill a much earlier prophecy that God would “enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem” (Gen. 9:27).

This event thus marks the change of world domination prophesied in Gen 9:27—when Japheth would take over the tent of Shem and dwell therein, for the Neo-Babylonian Empire is the last Semitic empire to have held world dominance and the Medo-Persian Empire the first Japhite empire to come to world prominence.⁴⁵⁷

See commentary on [Daniel 5:2](#) and [Seventy Years of Judgment](#).

Besides the inspired Scriptures, we have historical accounts of this night’s events by the Greek historians [Herodotus](#) and [Xenophon](#):

[190] [1] Then at the beginning of the following spring, when Cyrus had punished the Gyndes by dividing it among the three hundred and sixty canals, he marched against Babylon at last. The Babylonians sallied out and awaited him; and when he came near their city in his march, they engaged him, but they were beaten and driven inside the city. [2] There they had stored provisions enough for very many years, because they knew already that Cyrus was not a man of no ambition, and saw that he attacked all nations alike; so now they were indifferent to the siege; and Cyrus did not know what to do, being so long delayed and gaining no advantage. [191] [1] Whether someone advised him in his difficulty, or whether he perceived for himself what to do, I do not know, but he did the following. [2] He posted his army at the place where the river goes into the city, and another part of it behind the city, where the river comes out of the city, and told his men to enter the city by the channel of the Euphrates when they saw it to be fordable. Having disposed them and given this command, he himself marched away with those of his army who could not fight; [3] and when he came to the lake, Cyrus dealt with it and with the river just as had the Babylonian queen: drawing off the river by a canal into the lake, which was a marsh, he made the stream sink until its former channel could be forded. [4] When this happened, the Persians who were posted with this objective made their way into Babylon by the channel of the Euphrates, which had now sunk to a depth of about the middle of a man’s thigh. [5] Now if the Babylonians had known beforehand or learned what Cyrus was up to, they would have let the Persians enter the city and have destroyed them utterly; for then they would have shut all the gates

that opened on the river and mounted the walls that ran along the river banks, and so caught their enemies in a trap. [6] But as it was, the Persians took them unawares, and because of the great size of the city (those who dwell there say) those in the outer parts of it were overcome, but the inhabitants of the middle part knew nothing of it; all this time they were dancing and celebrating a holiday which happened to fall then, until they learned the truth only too well. [192] [1] And Babylon, then for the first time, was taken in this way.⁴⁵⁸

[9] . . . Cyrus answered . . . “dig a ditch as wide and as deep as possible” . . . [13] Thus, then his men were employed, while the enemy upon the walls laughed his siege-works to scorn, in the belief they had provision enough for more than twenty years. . . . [15] . . . Then, when he heard that a certain festival had come round in Babylon, during which all Babylon was accustomed to drink and revel all night long, Cyrus took a large number of men, just as soon as it was dark, and opened up the heads of the trenches at the river. [16] As soon as that was done, the water flowed down through the ditches in the night, and the bed of the river, where it traversed the city became passable for men. . . . [26] . . . they advanced. And of those they met on the way, some fell by their swords, some fled back into their houses, some shouted to them; and Gobryas and his men shouted back to them as if they were fellow-revellers. . . . [27] And Gobryas and Gadatas and their troops found the gates leading to the palace locked, and those who had been appointed to attack the guard fell upon them as they were drinking by a by a blazing fire . . . [28] But, as a noise and tumult ensued, those within heard the uproar, and at the king’s command to see what the matter was, some of them opened the gates and ran out. [29] And when Gadatas and his men saw the gates open they dashed in in pursuit of the others as they fled back into the palace, and dealing blows right and left they came into the presence of the king; and they found him already risen with his dagger in his hand. [30] And Gadatas and Gobryas and their followers overpowered him . . . [31] Cyrus then sent the companies of cavalry around through the streets and gave them orders to cut down all whom they found out of doors, while he directed those who understood Assyrian to proclaim to those in their houses that they should stay there, for if any one should be caught outside, he would be put to death. . . . [33] And when the day dawned and those in possession of the citadels discovered that the city was taken and the king slain, they surrendered . . . [35] When all this was finished, [Cyrus] first called the magi and requested them, inasmuch as the city had been taken by the sword, to select sanctuaries and the first fruits of the booty for the gods. . . . [36] He ordered the Babylonians, moreover, to go on tilling their lands, to pay their tribute, and to serve those to whom they had severally been assigned . . . [69] And since he considered that all Babylon, too, stood in need of adequate protection . . . he stationed there also an adequate garrison, and he arranged that the Babylonians should furnish the money for their wages, for it was his aim that this people should be as destitute of resources as possible, so that they might be submissive and as easily restrained as possible. [70] This guard that he then established about himself and in the city of Babylon is maintained on that same footing even to this day.⁴⁵⁹

The record of Herodotus and Xenophon agree with this passage. Where Herodotus and Xenophon differ from Scripture is in relation to the catastrophic overthrow of the city, which awaits [future fulfillment](#).

History Records the Fall of Babylon

Situation	Scripture	Herodotus	Xenophon
Celebration underway	Yes (Jer. 51:37-39 , 56-57 ; Dan. 5:2 ▶)	Yes	Yes
City considered impregnable	Yes ⁴⁶⁰	Yes	Yes
River diverted	Yes (Isa. 44:27 ; Jer. 51:36)	Yes	Yes
Majority unaware of capture	No ⁴⁶¹	Yes	Yes
Limited bloodshed	No ⁴⁶²	Yes	Yes
City preserved	No ⁴⁶³	Yes	Yes

Reducing the river’s depth allowing men to wade their way into the city was the key strategy the overconfident Babylonians had not considered. Xenophon gives the depth of the river as greater than the height of two men.⁴⁶⁴ Since the invasion occurred in the fall (Tishri, October), the level of the river may have been at an annual minimum.⁴⁶⁵ Cyrus may have been aware of the previous construction project by the Queen of Babylon where

the river was routed into a lake to permit tiling the river banks within the city.⁴⁶⁶ Cyrus could have used the artificial lake from the Queen's project or he may have constructed a new channel.⁴⁶⁷ The distance from the northernmost defense wall to where the river was diverted appears to have been great enough the lookouts in the city would not have been aware of the plan in progress.⁴⁶⁸ As Xenophon mentions, the river level only began to fall under the cover of darkness.

Several passages in the prophets, that may have seemed to employ symbolism, actually describe the literal strategy of Cyrus:⁴⁶⁹

Who [Cyrus] says to the deep, **'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers'** (Isa. 44:27) [emphasis added]

Therefore thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will plead your case and take vengeance for you. **I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry.**" (Jer. 51:36) [emphasis added]

Not only had the prophets predicted Babylon's rivers would be dried up, Isaiah had predicted God would make sure "the gates will not be shut" for Cyrus:⁴⁷⁰

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:** 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron.' (Isa. 45:1-2) [emphasis added]

Xenophon stated, "Gobryas and Gadatas and their troops found the gates leading to the palace unlocked." As Gobryas and Gadatas approached the palace itself, "those within heard the uproar, and at the king's command . . . opened the gates." "One of Cyrus' own clay cylinders tells that the priests of Babylon opened the gates of the impregnable city and let him come in."⁴⁷¹ "Gobryas in the camp of Cyrus, when the command for making the furtive assault was given, said, 'I should not be surprised if the doors of the palace are now open, for *the whole city seems to-night to be given up to revelry.*' "⁴⁷² These "fortuitous" developments are in accord with the word of God pronounced over 150 years earlier through Isaiah.

Through the carelessness of the guards, the brazen gates in the walls that lined the banks of the river inside the city were left unbolted, thus giving easy entrance to the soldiers of Cyrus, who quickly took the city. If it had been otherwise Cyrus' soldiers would have been trapped, or had to march out again. But the Hand of God was in it. God had said that Cyrus should take the city, and as its time was come, the plan of Cyrus was doubtless inspired of God, and He saw to it that the gates on the river's banks were not closed. If the guards of the river gates had been on duty, and had noticed the subsidence of the water of the river, they could have given the alarm, and probably saved the city. But God had ordered otherwise.⁴⁷³

As Herodotus and Xenophon relate, the capture of Babylon by the forces of Cyrus was generally peaceful, with only limited bloodshed. This accords with other archaeological records such as the *Nabonidus Chronicle* and *Cyrus Cylinder*:⁴⁷⁴

Cyrus entered Babylon, green twigs were spread in front of him—the state of "Peace" (*šulmu*) was imposed upon the city. Cyrus sent greetings to all Babylon. . . . From the month of Kislimu to the month of Addaru, the gods of Akkad which Nabonidus has made come down to Babylon . . . returned to their sacred cities.⁴⁷⁵

Cyrus' widespread troops . . . strolled along—their weapons packed away. Without any battle, he [Marduk] made him [Cyrus] enter his town Babylon . . . sparing Babylon . . . any calamity. He delivered into his (i.e., Cyrus') hands Nabonidus, the king who did not worship him (i.e., Marduk). All the inhabitants of Babylon . . . as well as of the entire country of Sumer and Akkad, princes and governors (included), bowed to him (Cyrus) and kissed his feet, jubilant that he (had received) the kingship, and with shining faces. . . . I am Cyrus . . . When I entered Babylon . . . as a friend and (when) I established a seat of government in the palace of the ruler under jubilation and rejoicing, Marduk, the great lord, [induced] the magnanimous inhabitants of Babylon . . . [to love me], and I was daily endeavouring to worship him. . . . I strove for peace in Babylon . . .⁴⁷⁶

The only significant battle of the campaign was at Opis, on the way to Babylon.⁴⁷⁷

As is often the case with wicked men, their sin ultimately returns on their own heads. This was the case for both [Belshazzar](#) and his father Nabonidus (see below). Two men, whom Xenophon records as being instrumental in Babylon's downfall, had suffered grievously at the hands of Belshazzar.

One man, named Gobryas, was motivated to help Cyrus partly out of revenge for the murder of his son by Belshazzar:

“These treasures, Cyrus, I [Gobryas] present to you, and this my daughter I entrust to you to make what disposal of her you may see fit. But we make our prayer to you, I, as I have done already, that you avenge my son, and she that you be the avenger of her brother.”⁴⁷⁸

The other man, named Gadatas, was made a eunuch by the command of Belshazzar:

When the eunuch saw him [Gobryas], he gladly concurred in all the plans and settled with him the things they were to do. . . . on the day following Cyrus made his attack and Gadatas his defence. . . . when Cyrus came, he [Gadatas] made himself master of the place When this was accomplished, the eunuch after setting things in order within the fort, came out and did him obeisance according to the custom and said: “Joy be with you, Cyrus!”⁴⁷⁹

For additional background on the mistreatment of Gobryas and Gadatas by Belshazzar, see commentary on [Daniel 5:27](#).

Like his son, Nabonidus had made his own enemies: the priests and populous of Babylon. As mentioned in the commentary on [Daniel 5:1](#), Nabonidus was absent from Babylon for many years. It seems he wanted to change the religious practices in Babylon and, as a result, had earned the ire of the priests and populous. His lack of respect for Babylon's patron god, [Marduk](#), and his practice of moving various idols into Babylon are the subject of a passage found on the [Cyrus Cylinder](#):

A weakling has been installed as the *enû* of his country; . . . the correct images of the gods he removed from their thrones The worship of Marduk, the king of the gods, he [chang]ed into an abomination, daily he used to do evil against his (i.e., Marduk's) city . . . the lord of the gods became terribly angry and [he departed from] their region, (also) the (other) gods living among them left their mansions, wroth that he had brought (them) into Babylon . . .⁴⁸⁰

Adding to his unpopularity, when the Persian forces attacked Opis, the *Nabonidus Chronicle* indicates Nabonidus killed his own subjects.⁴⁸¹

When Cyrus attacked the army of Akkad in Opis on the Tigris, the inhabitants of Akkad revolted, but he (*Nabonidus*) massacred the confused inhabitants. The 14th day, Sippar was seized without battle. Nabonidus fled. . . . Afterwards Nabonidus was arrested in Babylon when he returned (there).⁴⁸²

Since Belshazzar and Nabonidus were so unpopular, Cyrus was seen as a restorer of proper worship and a deliverer from their oppressive rule:

This clay cylinder [the Cyrus Cylinder] is inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform with an account by Cyrus, king of Persia 549-530 B.C., of his conquest of Babylonia in [539 B.C.](#) and capture of Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king He then describes measures of relief which he brought to the inhabitants of the city, and tells how he returned a number of god-images which Nabonidus had collected in Babylonian, to their proper temples through Babylonia, Assyria and western Iran.⁴⁸³

As Cyrus the Persian marched through southern Mesopotamia, most of the cities greeted him as a liberator. They were tired of Belshazzar and his negligent father, and they had heard positive reports of the way Cyrus respected people in his territories. Cyrus was a master of propaganda; he cast himself as a just man to those he ruled, as a ruler with happy subjects . . .⁴⁸⁴

After Cyrus captured Babylon, he appointed a representative of the Medes over the city, “Darius the Mede received the kingdom.” Received is קָבַל [qabbēl], “formally, receive a kingdom,”⁴⁸⁵ implying the kingdom

was conferred upon Darius subject to a higher authority (Cyrus).⁴⁸⁶ This meaning is supported by the statement concerning Darius in Daniel 9, “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who **was made king** over the realm of the Chaldeans” [emphasis added] (Dan. 9:1). *Was made king* is **הָמַלַךְ** [*hām^elak*], a **hophal** (passive) perfect verb— the subject of the verb (Darius) was made king by another agent of greater authority. The same root word describes the reception of the Messiah’s kingdom by his saints: “But the saints of the Most High shall *receive* the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever” (Dan. 7:18). Here again, a higher authority (the Ancient of Days) conferred the kingdom into the hands of a lesser authority (the saints).

It was seen, we are told, in the first year of the Median Darius, who “was *made king* over the real of the Chaldeans” [Dan. 9:1]. Made king by God? What a needless statement! All kings are made kings by God. But if we take the words to mean *made king by man*, then at once they become intelligible; for the tell us that the date is reckoned, not according to the years of an independent sovereign, such, for instance as the later Darius, but of a sub-king set over the realm of the Chaldeans, a Babylonian as distinguished from an imperial ruler. The Darius of Dan. 5 is, then, a sub-king, and not an independent monarch . . .⁴⁸⁷

Daniel 9:1 states that Darius the Mede was made king **הָמַלַךְ** [*hām^elak*] [hophal] over the Chaldeans—a term which strongly suggests that it was some higher authority that put him in power. The earlier statement in Daniel 5:31 (Heb. 6:1) that Darius received **קָבַל** [*qabbēl*] the kingdom clearly points in the same direction, for a conqueror does not receive authority (as from a higher sovereign who entrusts it to him) but he wins it by force and claims it as his own by right of conquest. . . . Quite evidently Cyrus found it expedient to turn Babylon over to a trusted lieutenant while he took care of more urgent business along his northern frontier . . .⁴⁸⁸

Cyrus may have entrusted the government to Darius as a concession to the Median faction within his alliance or because Cyrus did not plan to remain in Babylon.⁴⁸⁹

Unknown to secular historians such as Herodotus and Xenophon, behind-the-scenes, angelic powers were involved in the struggle associated with the city’s overthrow and the establishment of Medo-Persia under Darius.⁴⁹⁰

being about sixty-two years old

Here is evidence of God’s sovereignty. The man who would rule following Babylon’s overthrow was born only a few years after Daniel was taken in the [first deportation to Babylon](#).

Darius would have been born about 601 BC, at the height of Babylonian power and just after Daniel was taken into captivity with the first wave of exiles from Judah in 605 BC. Thus Daniel signals that even at the beginning of Israel’s captivity, God had already begun to implement his plan to bring it to an end, as he promised through his prophets (e.g., Isa. 44:24-28; 45:1-8; Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10; Eze. 34:11-16).⁴⁹¹

God had said, concerning Cyrus, “[He is] My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, **Saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ And to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’**” [emphasis added] (Isa. 44:28). Since the Jews had been taken captive by Babylon, the overthrow of Babylon by Medo-Persia laid the groundwork for fulfillment of Isaiah’s prediction. In 536 B.C. Cyrus issued the decree allowing the Jews to return and rebuild.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also [put it] in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which [is] in Judah. Who [is] among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which [is] in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He [is] God), which [is] in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:1-3 cf. 2Chr. 36:22-23)

This proclamation of Cyrus triggered opposition in the demonic realm in an attempt to thwart God's plans. See commentary on [Daniel 11:1](#).

Following the earlier [Deportations](#) to Babylon, decrees by [Cyrus](#) and [Artaxerxes I Longimanus](#) enabled the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. Not all the Jews returned. Those that did returned in stages.

This statement concerning Darius' age may also infer his relatively short reign until Cyrus of Persia rises to prominence.⁴⁹²

Return to Jerusalem

Return	B.C. ⁴⁹³	Gentile Ruler	Jewish Leader	Number of Captives	Passage	Purpose
1 st	536-535 ⁴⁹⁴	Cyrus	Zerubbabel	49,847	Ezra 2	To rebuild the temple (2Chr. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4).
2 nd	458 ⁴⁹⁵	Artaxerxes I Longimanus	Ezra	4,000 - 5,000	Ezra 7-10	Additional work on the temple and spiritual reformation of the people.
3 rd	444 B.C.	Artaxerxes I Longimanus ⁴⁹⁶	Nehemiah	?	Ne. 1-13	Rebuild the city and its walls (Ne. 1:3; 2:3-5; 7:4).

3.5.32 - Lessons from Chapter 5

The fifth chapter of Daniel contains numerous lessons we can apply in our own lives.

Lessons for Living

- Blinding Power of Idolatry** - Evidence of the living God is all around us (Ps. 19:1-4; Rom. 1:20), yet throughout history men have suppressed the knowledge of God and followed after dead idols (Ps. 115:4-8; 135:15-18; Isa. 40:18-20; 42:17-18; 46:3-7; Jer. 10:2-11; Hab. 2:18-19; Acts 17:29-30; 19:24-28; Rev. 9:20-21▶). [Belshazzar](#) mocked God yet praised idols. This blindness continues in our day. As Paul told the people of Athens almost two thousand years ago, “[God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said . . . “For we are also His offspring.” Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.” (Acts 17:26-29).
- Failure to Learn** - After recounting how [Belshazzar's](#) grandfather, King [Nebuchadnezzar](#), had been judged by God for his pride, Daniel states, “But you his son, [Belshazzar](#), have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.” (Dan. 5:22▶). This is the real “power of pride:” it interferes with our ability to learn. “The idea is, that we ought to derive valuable lessons from what has taken place in past times; that, from the events which have occurred in history, we should learn what God approves and what he disapproves; that we should avoid the course which has subjected others to his displeasure, and which has brought his judgments upon them.”⁴⁹⁸ “Hence we must diligently consider the example of the King of Babylon when we see him full of anxiety, and yet not seeking God as he ought. And why so? He wanders about in great hesitation; he sees himself constrained, and yet he cannot fly from the judgment of God, but seeks consolation in magi, Chaldeans, and other impostors; for, as we have seen, they had been once or twice proved so, and this ought to have been sufficiently celebrated and notorious to all men.”⁴⁹⁹ “This time was, as I have said, a preparation for repentance; but he failed in the midst of his course, as we see too many do who tremble at the voice of God and at the signs of his vengeance, as soon as he admonishes



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them; but these feelings are but evanescent; thus proving how little they have learnt of the necessary lesson.”⁵⁰⁰

- **Liability of Guilt** - When the hand appeared and began writing on the wall, the King was greatly alarmed. His fear, no doubt, was partly due to the miraculous sight itself. But it seems he also had a sense of foreboding: his guilt and licentious lifestyle had placed him in a position of moral liability. Those who mock God and live like there is no tomorrow may *appear* bold and worry-free, but deep down inside, their conscience is keeping a ledger they cannot escape (Rom. 2:14-15). They *know* they have a sin debt—though they go to enormous lengths to suppress this truth. How much better to live life with a clear conscience, where one can walk in a position of peace and rejoice in God’s grace and reconciliation! See commentary on [Daniel 5:6](#).
- **Desecrating the Holy Things of God** - Belshazzar’s abuse of the temple vessels of the God of Israel at his drunken party illustrates the ignorant disregard of the important things of God by the godless of every age. “When the precious things of God’s holy Church are seized and appropriated to gild and glorify a party or a sect or to satisfy the narrow whims of some modern Diotrefes, what is it but a desecration of holy things? When Baptism, a profession of religion, or the sacred Supper of our Lord is used as a passport to citizenship, a qualification for secular office, a means of gratifying friends, securing favors or gaining credit and standing in society, what is it but a misappropriation of holy vessels to an unholy use? When the Christian pulpit and the honors and sanctities of the holy office are laid hold of for mere personal display, the securing of notoriety, the building up of a reputation or the putting forth of doctrines contrary to the Gospel, what is it else than a profanation of what is sacred to the Lord? . . . When the facts and expressions of God’s Word, its pure and glorious truths, its sublime and awful doctrines, are taken to point a pun, to edge a jest, to sharpen a sarcasm, to excite a laugh, to raise a sneer, what is it but Belshazzar over again profanely taking hold of the sacred vessels to add to the zest of an impious carousal? . . . We fault Belshazzar for his profanations, but in these things his sin still lives.”⁵⁰¹
- **Need of Discernment in Ministry** - We need to carefully consider to *whom* we are ministering, *what* is their relationship to God, and *why* God has us involved? What is the purpose of our ministry in each particular setting? We hope and pray our purpose is to minister God’s reconciliation (2Cor. 5:18-20). At other times and places our role may be to speak God’s unvarnished judgment. In those situations, we dare not align ourselves with or seek reward from those we minister to. Like Daniel before Belshazzar, we must not fear the face of man and stand resolute in our purpose before God. See commentary on [Daniel 5:17](#).
- **Perspective When the Ungodly Rule** - Job asks the age-old question: “Why do the wicked live [and] become old, Yes, become mighty in power?” (Job 21:7). While the ungodly, like Belshazzar, are in power, great patience is required by the people of God. Our world view must be informed by Scripture so we are convinced God’s justice *will* ultimately prevail. “Hence we may seek consolation, when we see tyrants rushing on so impetuously, and indulging their lust and cruelty without moderation. When, therefore, they rush on, as if they would mingle heaven and earth, let us remember this instruction, Their years are numbered! God knows how long they are to rage; He is not deceived; He knows whether it is useful to the Church and his elect, for tyrants to prevail for a time. By and bye he will surely restrain them, but since he determined the number of their days from the beginning, the time of his vengeance is not yet quite at hand, while he allows them a little longer to abuse without restraint the power and the sway which he had divinely granted them.”⁵⁰² “A record of these events would encourage the exiles by reminding them that all of the oppressive forces that the nation would experience during the times of the Gentiles would only be allowed to assert themselves for a limited duration. Each oppressive empire would only be allowed to stay in power for a specific amount of time.”⁵⁰³
- **Destiny of Godly vs. Ungodly** - “Only two letters are different in the names Belshazzar (the king) and Belteshazzar (Daniel). The life of the king was cut short, while the life of the prophet was extended, so that he outlived several Babylonian kings and served in the Medio-Persian court as well as the Babylonian court. But the difference between Belshazzar and Belteshazzar is not in the spelling of their names; the difference is in their relationship to God. Belshazzar resisted and rejected the grace of God and the revelation which he was given through history and the prophet Daniel. Belshazzar reaped the wrath of God. Belteshazzar, Daniel, trusted in God and served Him faithfully. Daniel believed, obeyed, and

proclaimed God's Word, and lived on. Not only did Daniel live long in this world, but he will live forever in the kingdom of God. May you not be like Belshazzar but like Belteshazzar."⁵⁰⁴

- **God Provides Revelation and Understanding to Believers** - "Daniel 5▶ reinforces and brings to a climax a theme from Daniel 2▶ and 4▶: God reveals mysteries to his people that unbelievers cannot understand."⁵⁰⁵ As believers, we have an understanding of spiritual realities—how circumstances and events form part of God's plan as revealed within the Scriptures. Non-believers don't understand these things. Even if they do happen to read the Bible, without a change of heart, their minds remain blinded to what God has revealed (Job 12:24; Mat. 11:20, 25; John 9:39-41; Rom. 11:7-8; 2Cor. 3:14; 2Cor. 4:4).

For a list of New Testament passages containing references, allusions, and themes found in this chapter, see *Daniel 5 in the New Testament*.





Notes

- ¹"If the final events of Daniel 4▶ occurred during the last year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, then Daniel 5▶ begins twenty-three years later, in 539 B.C. If Nebuchadnezzar's insanity ended about 570 BC, then about thirty years has passed between the end of Daniel 4▶ and the events in Daniel 5▶."—Andrew E Steinmann, *Daniel* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 259.
- ²"Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC; this event is taking place in 539 B.C., that's a difference of 23 years. So 23 years has gone by since chapter 4 began."—Robert Dean, *Lessons on Daniel* (Spokane, WA: Ellen Kelso [transcriber], 2006), 21.249.
- ³"After the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562 B.C., a drastic deterioration of the qualities of the kingdom occurred under the rule of his son Evil-Merodach, two usurpers of the throne (Neriglissar and Nabonidus), and finally his daughter's son Belshazzar."—John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1985), 45.
- ⁴The associated table is based upon numerous extra-biblical sources: "The following tabulations enables a comparison of the different Neo-Babylonian king-lists which are known at the present time. . . . according to Cuneiform Texts [Babylonian Chronicle], . . . Megasthenes . . . Berossus . . . Polyhistor . . . Ptolemy . . . Saint Jerome . . . Syncellus . . . *Juxta ecclesiasticum computum*."—Raymond Philip Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1929, 2008), 7-10.
- ⁵The relationship of Belshazzar to Nebuchadnezzar is discussed in the commentary on *Daniel 5:2*. This image was produced by www.spiritandtruth.org and is hereby placed in the public domain.
- ⁶Chronologists differ regarding the exact starting and ending dates of the reign of the Babylonian kings. This table utilizes the dates from Steinmann: [Andrew E Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2011)], [Steinmann, *Daniel*]. See *Timeline*.
- ⁷"It is clear that it was not uncommon for the same prince to have more names than one. This has not been unusual, especially among Oriental princes, who seem to have often prided themselves on the number of epithets which they could use as designating their royal state. Since this was the case, it would not be strange if the names of the same king should be so used by writers, or in tradition, as to leave the impression that there were several; or if one writer should designate a king by one name, and another by another. . . . Dr. Hales remarks in connection with this, 'Nothing can exceed the various and perplexed accounts of the names and reigns of the princes of this dynasty (the Babylonian) in sacred and profane history.'"—Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1884-85), Dan. 5:1. Consider the varied names of Babylonian kings given by several sources: "But now, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach his son succeeded in the kingdom, who immediately set Jeconiah at liberty, and esteemed him amongst his most intimate friends. He also gave him many presents, and made him honorable above the rest of the kings that were in Babylon; for his father had not kept his faith with Jeconiah, when he voluntarily delivered up himself to him with his wives and children, and his whole kindred, for the sake of his country, that it might not be taken by siege, and utterly destroyed, as we said before. When Evil-merodach was dead, after a reign of eighteen years, Neglissar his son took the government, and retained it forty years, and then ended his life; and after him the succession in the kingdom came to his son Labosordacus, who continued in it in all but nine months; and when he was dead, it came to Baltasar, who by the Babylonians was called Naboandelus: against him did Cyrus, the king of Persia, and Darius, the king of Media, make war; . . ."—Flavius Josephus, "The Antiquities of the Jews," in Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus : Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996, c1987), 10.229-232. "Berosus adds farther upon that head; for thus he says

in his third book: —“Nabuchodonosor, after he had begun to build the forementioned wall, fell sick, and departed this life, when he had reigned forty-three years; whereupon his son Evil-merodach obtained the kingdom. He governed public affairs after an illegal and impure manner, and had a plot laid against him by Neriglissor, his sister’s husband, and was slain by him when he had reigned but two years. After he was slain, Neriglissor, the person who plotted against him, succeeded him in the kingdom, and reigned four years; his son Laborosoarchod obtained the kingdom, though he was but a child, and kept it nine months; but by reason of the very ill temper and ill practices he exhibited to the world, a plot was laid against him also by his friends, and he was tormented to death. After his death, the conspirators got together, and by common consent put the crown upon the head of Nabonnedus, a man of Babylon, and one who belonged to that insurrection.”—Flavius Josephus, “Against Apion,” in Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus : Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996, c1987), 1.20.145-149. “Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded in his kingdom by his son Iloarudam, according to Ptolemy, who is the Evil-Merodach of Jeremiah. After the death of Evil-Merodach, who reigned two years, Niricassolassar, or Neriglissar, who seems to have been the chief of the conspirators against the last king, succeeded him. He had married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and in the course of his reign made a great stand against the growing power of the Medes and Persians; but at length, after a reign of four years, was killed in a battle with them under the command of Cyrus. His son Laborosoarchod succeeded him, and having reigned only nine months, and not reaching a Thoth, or beginning of an Egyptian year, he is not mentioned by Ptolemy; but he is said to have been quite the reverse of his father, and to have exercised many acts of wanton cruelty, and was murdered by his own subjects, and succeeded by his son Nabonadius, or Belshazzar. - Wintle.”—Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, Dan. 4:37.

⁸ Charles Clough, *Lessons on Daniel* (Spokane, WA: Ellen Kelso, [transcriber], 2006), 15.191-192.

⁹ “Neriglissar . . . seized the throne, and after reigning for about four years was killed in battle in B. C. 556.”—Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Daniel* (Glenside, PA: Clarence Larkin Estate, 1929), Dan. 2:45.

¹⁰ “Because *LâbâshîMarduk* exhibited evil tendencies he was conspired against and tortured to death by his friends after he had reigned only nine months.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 78.

¹¹ Nabonidus does not appear to have been of royal blood. “Inscription 13 provides vital information on the lineage of Nabonidus and the surroundings of his promotion to kingship: ‘I am Nabonidus, the only son, who has nobody. In my mind there was no thought of kingship’ (Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 67). This brief declaration indicates that Nabonidus had no siblings and no aspirations of kingship.”—John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglans Magnum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder, eds., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: LexhamPress, 2016), s.v. “Nabonidus.” “[Nabonidus] does not seem to have been related to the royal house by blood but apparently married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar in order to legitimize his seizure of the throne.”—Gleason Leonard Archer, “Daniel,” vol. 7 in Frank E. Gaebelien, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), Dan. 5:1-4. Although Nabonidus was not of royal blood, he appears to have been from a notable family. “The descriptive titles applied to [Nabonidus’ father] *Nabû-balâtsûiqbi* follow his name in the inscriptions . . . These appellations throw light upon the station and dignity of Nabonidus’ father. They may be summarized as follows: ‘Wise prince.’ . . . ‘Perfect prince.’ . . . ‘Courageous minister.’ . . . ‘Reverer of the great gods.’ . . . ‘Reverer of the gods and goddesses.’ Such titles justify us in assuming that *Nabû-balâtsûiqbi*, the father of Nabonidus, had noble connection, political importance, and religious piety.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 18. “The character of the immediate ancestry of Nabonidus may now be estimated. *Nabû-balâtsûiqbi*, his father, ranked as a prince known for his wisdom and excellent attainments. In religion he did not attach himself exclusively to the cult of one deity, but seems to have worshipped all the gods and goddesses with equal devotion. His mother, if available cuneiform evidence may be recorded as final testimony, was *Shumûâdamqa*. As a woman of unusual personality and influence her piety and loyalty were expended upon the moon god at Harran, where she performed faithful service as a famed high priestess in the temple which became one of the beneficiaries of the religious zeal of her son.”—Ibid., 27. Her tomb inscription indicates the high placement of Nabonidus within Babylonian service prior to his kingship: “I have made Nabonidus, the son whom I bore, serve Nebuchadrezzar, son of Nabopolassar, and Neriglissar, king of Babylon, and he performed his duty for them day and night by doing always what was their pleasure.”—James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 277. See commentary on *Daniel 5:2*.

¹² LXX, Daniel 5:1▶.

¹³ Jer. 27:6-7

¹⁴ See commentary on *Daniel 5:2*.

¹⁵ “In the quarter of a century which elapsed between chapter 4 and chapter 5, the further revelations given to Daniel in chapters 7 and 8 occurred. Chapter 7 was revealed to Daniel ‘in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon’ (Dan 7:1▶) and the vision of the ram and he-goat in chapter 8▶ occurred ‘in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar’ (Dan 8:1▶).

The information embodied in these two visions, insofar as Daniel understood it, therefore was known to Daniel before the event of chapter 5 which chronologically came after chapters 7 and 8.”—John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1971), Dan. 5:1. “Daniel received the revelation in chapter 7 in the first year of Belshazzar (553 B.C., 7:1) and the revelation in chapter 8 in Belshazzar’s third year (551 B.C., 8:1). Thus chapter 5 follows chapters 7 and 8 chronologically by 14 and 12 years respectively.”—Thomas Constable, *Notes on Daniel* (Garland, TX: Sonic Light, 2009), Dan. 5:1.

- ¹⁶ Additional divine revelation during the events of this chapter would be needed by Daniel to boldly proclaim details communicated in the message of judgment.
- ¹⁷ “Isaiah, in that wonderful prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, ch. xxi, a prophecy acknowledged even by unbelievers to have been prior to the event, assigns to Persia the first place, but to Media, the second; *Go up, O Elam; besiege, O Media.*” —Edward B. Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet* (Oxford, England: James Parker & Co, 1868), 127.
- ¹⁸ 2 Chronicles 36:21 and Daniel 9:24 were not yet written.
- ¹⁹ Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 21.250-251.
- ²⁰ H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, 2nd ed (New York, NY: Loizeaux Brothers, 1953), 81-82.
- ²¹ Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:4.
- ²² Thomas A Howe, *Daniel in the Preterist’s Den* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 157.
- ²³ “The story is devoid of reference to Antiochus; it is doubtless far more ancient than the 2d cent. B.C.”—James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1927, 1959), 249.
- ²⁴ John E. Goldingay, “Daniel,” vol. 30 in Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker, eds., *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas, TX: Word Books), 103-105.
- ²⁵ Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 200.
- ²⁶ Stephen R. Miller, “Daniel,” in E. Ray Clendenen, Kenneth A. Mathews, and David S. Dockery, eds., *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 150.
- ²⁷ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 260.
- ²⁸ A. R. Fausset, “The Book of Daniel,” in Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, 1877), Dan. 5:2.
- ²⁹ William H. Shea, “Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and the Book of Daniel: An Update,” in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, vol. 20 no. 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, Summer 1982), 146.
- ³⁰ Whitcomb, *Daniel*, 71.
- ³¹ “Belshazzar’s name means ‘Bel (another name for the god Marduk) has protected the king.’ ”—J. Dwight Pentecost, “Daniel,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983), Dan. 5:1.
- ³² “The name means ‘Bel guard the king.’ ”—H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1949, 1969), 212.
- ³³ “He had his name Belshazzar from the idol Bel, and may be rendered, ‘Bel’s treasurer’: though, according to Saadiah, the word signifies ‘a searcher of treasures’, of his ancestors, or of the house of God. Hillerus translates it, ‘Bel hath hidden’.” —John Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (Broken Arrow, OK: StudyLamp Software, 1746-1763), Dan. 5:1. “The splendor of brightness; lord of whose treasure.”—Jerome Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), Dan. 5:1.
- ³⁴ “Another interesting note to consider is that the name ‘Belshazzar’ probably means ‘O Bel [Marduk], protect the king.’ Not only does Belshazzar fail as a leader, but Bel fails as a protector.”—Howe, *Daniel in the Preterist’s Den*, 157.
- ³⁵ E.g., Josephus: “When Evil-merodach was dead, after a reign of eighteen years, Neglissar his son took the government, and retained it forty years, and then ended his life; and after him the succession in the kingdom came to his son Labosordacus, who continued in it in all but nine months; and when he was dead, it came to Baltasar, who by the Babylonians was called Naboandelus: (against him did Cyrus, the king of Persia, and Darius, the king of Media, make war; and when he was besieged in Babylon, there happened a wonderful and prodigious vision.”—Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 10.231-232. “Now after a little while, both himself and the city were taken by Cyrus, the king of Persia, who fought against him; for it was Baltasar, under whom Babylon was taken, when he had reigned seventeen years.”—Ibid., 10.247.
- ³⁶ “But Berosus, a heathen historian, who lived about 250 years after Daniel, in his list of the kings of Babylon, omits the name of Belshazzar, and gives the name of Nabonaid (Nabonidus) as the last king of Babylon.”—Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:4.

³⁷ Xenophon does not name Belshazzar, but in a passage where Gobryas relates the murder of his son by the last king of Babylon, a distinction is made between a ruler and his son, both of whom are said to be kings: “This present king . . . the old king, the father of the present ruler, . . . the man who is now king . . .”—Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* (New York, NY: The MacMillan Co., 1914), IV.6.3.. This may refer to the coregency of Belshazzar and Nabonidus. “Although Xenophon does not name either Nabonidus or Belshazzar, he refers to ‘the king who then was, the father of the one who now is’ . . . not only recognizing the existence of a son of Nabonidus, but also calling this son ‘king’ in agreement with the book of Daniel [Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 4.6.3].”—Stephen Anderson, *Darius the Mede: A Reappraisal* (PhD diss., TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 2014), 42.

³⁸ “Since, then, the extra-biblical authorities contradict one another in this, that the Chaldean historians describe Nabonnedus, the last king of the Chaldean kingdom, as a Babylonian not of royal descent who, after putting to death the last descendant of the royal family, usurped the throne, which, according to their account, he occupied till Babylon was destroyed by Cyrus, when he was banished to Carmania, where he died a natural death; while, on the other hand, Herodotus and Xenophon represent the last Babylonian king, whom Herodotus calls Labynetus = Nabonedos [= Nabonned = Nabonid], as of royal descent, and the successor of his father on the throne, and connect the taking of Babylon with a riotous festival held in the palace and in the city generally, during which, Xenophon says, the king was put to death;—therefore the determination regarding the historical contents of Dan. 5 hinges on this point: whether Belshazzar is to be identified, on the authority of Greek authors, with Nabonnedus; or, on the authority of the Chaldean historians, is to be regarded as different from him, and is identical with one of the two Babylonian kings who were dethroned by a conspiracy.”—Carl Friedrich Keil, “Daniel,” in Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 9:601. “Herodotus and Xenophon appear, then, to agree in this, that both of them connect the destruction of Babylon and the downfall of the Chaldea kingdom by Cyrus with a riotous festival of the Babylonians, and both describe the last king as of royal descent. They agree with the narrative of Daniel as to the death of Belshazzar, that it took place during or immediately after a festival, and regarding the transference of the Chaldean kingdom to the Medes and Persians; and they confirm the prevalent interpretation of this chapter, that Belshazzar was the last Chaldean king, and was put to death on the occasion of the taking of Babylon. But in their statements concerning the last king of Babylon they both stand in opposition to the accounts of Berosus and Abydenus.”—Ibid., 9:600.

³⁹ “*Belshazzar* is said by Josephus (Ant. 1. x. c. 11) to be the same as *Naboandelus*, the *Nabonadius* of Ptolemy, and the *Labynetus* of Herodotus (1. i.). He reigned seven years, during which time he was engaged in unsuccessful wars with the Medes and Persians; and at this very time was besieged by Cyrus. Modern authorities identify Belshazzar as the eldest son of Nabonidus, and served as coregent while his father was away from the capital.”—Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, Dan. 5:2.

⁴⁰ “there is no doubt of any importance in opposition to the view that Belshazzar was identical with Evilmerodach, the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar.”—Keil, *Daniel*, 9:606.

⁴¹ “Nebuchadnezzar, and Nabonnedus was not at all related to him, nor of royal descent. Of these kings, only Evilmerodach and Laborosoarchod were put to death, while on the contrary Neriglissar and Nabonnedus died a natural death, and the Babylonian dominion passed by conquest to the Medes, without Nabonnedus thereby losing his life. Hence it follows, (1) that Belshazzar cannot be the last king of Babylon, nor is identical with Nabonnedus, who was neither a son nor descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, and was not put to death by Cyrus at the destruction of Babylon and the overthrow of the Chaldean kingdom; (2) that Belshazzar could neither be Evilmerodach nor Laborosoarchod, since only these two were put to death—the former after he had reigned only two years, and the latter after he had reigned only nine months, while the third year of Belshazzar’s reign is mentioned in Dan. 8:1; and (3) that the death of Belshazzar cannot have been at the same time as the destruction of Babylon by the Medes and Persians.”—Ibid., 9:599.

⁴² “Before the discovery and decipherment of cuneiform documents mentioning Nabonidus and Belshazzar scholars endeavored to explain the [various] non=cuneiform references to them in various ways, . . . The following suppositions have been advanced: (1) The name Belshazzar was a pure invention on the part of the writer of the fifth chapter of Daniel. (2) Belshazzar was Evil-Merodach (*Amêl-Marduk*), and hence a son of Nebuchadnezzar. (3) Belshazzar was a brother of Evil-Merodach, and hence a son of Nebuchadnezzar. (4) Belshazzar was a son of Evil-Merodach, and hence a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 13.

⁴³ “Until the discovery of the Nabonidus Cylinder, no mention of Belshazzar, whom Daniel declares to be king of Babylon, had been found in extrabiblical literature. Critics of the authenticity and historicity of Daniel accordingly were free to question whether any such person as Belshazzar existed.”—Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:1.

⁴⁴ Whitcomb, *Daniel*, 70-71.

⁴⁵ Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1971), 125.

- ⁴⁶R. H. Sack, “Belshazzar (Person),” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, c1992, 1996), 1:661.
- ⁴⁷“According to P.-A. Beaulieu, thirty-seven archival texts dated from the first to the fourteenth year of Nabonidus now attest to Belshazzar’s historicity.”—Miller, *Daniel*, 147.
- ⁴⁸The *modus operandi* of critics is generally: 1) carp on a specific point of disagreement with the biblical text. 2) When the point is adequately addressed, find a *different* point of disagreement. 3) Rinse and repeat. Apologists mistakenly assume critics reject the biblical record due to their points of disagreement—as if answering each point will satisfy the critics. But this represents the minority of cases. Generally, critics are resolute in their opposition to the Bible and have no intention of giving it a fair hearing. This explains why apologetics can be a frustrating endeavor: people who are hardened in their opposition of God are not open to factual persuasion, even though they represent themselves as neutral truth-seekers.
- ⁴⁹“Another problem of Babylonian history concerns Belshazzar. Inscriptions discovered in the 19th century show that Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus, not of Nebuchadnezzar. He was in command in Babylon while his father was absent in Tema, but he was never actually king and could not take the place of the king at the New Year Festival.”—John J. Collins, “DANIEL, BOOK OF,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, c1992, 1996), 2:30.
- ⁵⁰“There are six lines of proof, representing cross-sections of Babylonian society, which show that Belshazzar was associated with Nabonidus in the administration of affairs during the closing reign of the Neo-Babylonian empire . . . 1. Belshazzar Associated with Nabonidus in a Prayer . . . 2. Belshazzar Associated with Nabonidus in Oaths . . . 3. Belshazzar Associated with Nabonidus in an Astrological Report . . . 4. Belshazzar Associated with Nabonidus in the Salutation of a Letter . . . 5. Belshazzar Associated with Nabonidus in the Delivery of Royal Tribute . . . 6. Belshazzar Placed on an Equality with Nabonidus in the Title of an Official.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 93-101.
- ⁵¹Concerning Belshazzar’s age: “We have supposed Nabonidus born about 614 B.C., when his father Nabubalatsu-ikbi was aged thirty-nine. If we make a similar supposition with regard to his son Belshazzar, then his birth-year would be 575 B.C. This would make him fourteen years old at the end of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and nearly twenty at the time of his father’s accession. Such suppositions agree with facts gleaned from the contract tablets. For instance, in the first year of Nabonidus, Belshazzar has a house of his own in Babylon, in the fifth year of Nabonidus mention is made of his secretary, and in the seventh year of his steward and secretaries. Most significant of all is the fact that in this latter year, when according to the above scheme Belshazzar would be twenty-six years old, we find him acting in northern Babylonia as commander-in-chief of the army.”—Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel* (London, England: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1923), 114.
- ⁵²“Belshazzar was Nabonidus’ eldest son and was appointed by his father as his coregent.”—Pentecost, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:1-4.
- ⁵³“He [Nabonidus] was absent from Babylon for 10 of his 17 years, from 554 through 545.”—Ibid. “And the author of the *Ancient Monarchies*, our best historical authority here, tells us that Nabonidus (Nabunahid) ‘had associated with him in the government his son Belshazzar or Bel-shar-usur, the grandson of the great Nebuchadnezzar,’ and ‘in his father’s absence Belshazzar took the direction of affairs within the city’ [Rawlinson’s *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. iii. p. 70.]”—Robert Anderson, *Daniel in the Critic’s Den* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1909, 1990), 23.
- ⁵⁴“Boutflower observes that Cambyses was called ‘king of Babylon’ while his father, Cyrus, still lived.”—Miller, *Daniel*, 148.
- ⁵⁵“It must at the same time be observed that the unmodified title ‘King Belshazzar’ by no means implies that he was king of the empire of Babylon but merely king of Babylonia, the district, and perhaps of a few adjoining districts. The *Hebrew* and the *Aramaic* do not have a word for ‘emperor,’ who is over kings. One word, ‘king,’ covers all such and similar relationships; and to this day kings function under other kings, especially when their father happens to be monarch over several countries.”—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 211.
- ⁵⁶“T. G. Pinches has deciphered a cuneiform tablet found at Erech, which says: ‘Ishi-Amurru, son of Nuranu, has sworn by Bel, Nebo, the lady of Erech, and Nana, the oath of Nabonidus king of Babylon and of Belshazzar the king’s son, that on the 7th day of the month Adar of the twelfth year of Nabonidus king of Babylon I will go to Erech.’ Concerning the tablet Pinches observes: ‘The importance of this inscription is that it places Belshazzar practically on the same plane as Nabonidus his father . . . We now see that not only for the Hebrews, but also for the Babylonians, Belshazzar held a practically royal position.’ ”—Josh McDowell, *Daniel in the Critics’ Den* (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life Publishers, 1979), 64.
- ⁵⁷“Cuneiform temple receipts from Sippar attest that Belshazzar presented sheep and oxen there as ‘an offering of the king.’ ”—Gleason Leonard Archer, “Modern Rationalism and the Book of Daniel,” in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 136 no. 542 (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, April-June 1979), 135.

- ⁵⁸ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1949, 1998), 116-117.
- ⁵⁹ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 263-264.
- ⁶⁰ “On the night of that fatal feast the person of Nabonidus had been in the hands of the enemy for well-nigh four months, so that during that interval in the eyes of the world at large Belshazzar would appear as the actual ruler.”—Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, 118.
- ⁶¹ Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 186.
- ⁶² “Nabonidus did not proceed to *Têṁâ* upon a peaceful mission. That he subdued the city by force of arms is indicated by definite cuneiform statements. The military power of Babylon accompanied him.”—Ibid., 143.
- ⁶³ “How are we to explain this course of conduct on the part of Nabonidus? It may be that it was due to some extent to his age. If we supposed him to have been born in 614 B.C. when his father was aged thirty-nine, he would be fifty-eight years old at his accession, sixty-five in the seventh year of his reign, and seventy-five at the time of the capture of Babylon. Thus his age, taken along with his antiquarian tastes, would account for his not taking any active part in public affairs, at least in military matters, during the last ten years of his reign.”—Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, 109. “During the last ten years of his life, [Nabonidus] seems to have spent most of his time in Teima, an important Edomite or North Arabian capital (possibly for reasons of health), and left the central administration to the charge of his son Belshazzar in Babylon itself—the situation still obtaining during this final year of the Chaldean Empire, 539 B.C.”—Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:1-4.
- ⁶⁴ “Nabonidus had brought the gods from various temples in the land to the city of Babylon, a move which seems not to have been received with favor. . . . Sidney Smith [concluded] that Nabonidus claimed that his reforms in worship were really restorations of old ceremonies, but that the priestly orders resented them and so were willing to welcome Cyrus as a champion of the religious system in which they were interested.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 156.
- ⁶⁵ “Nabonidus’ mother, Adad-guppi, was a prominent priestess in Haran in northern Mesopotamia. Modern scholarship has found indications that Adad-guppi dedicated her son to the moon-god Sin (Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, 79). Her religious influence could explain Nabonidus’ dependency on the priesthood of Haran and the supremacy he gave to the moon-god Sin during his reign.”—Barry, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Nabonidus.” “His mother, if available cuneiform evidence may be regarded as final testimony was *Shumûâdamqa*. As a woman of unusual personality and influence her piety and loyalty were expended upon the moon god at Harran, where she performed faithful service as a famed high priestess in the temple which became one of the beneficiaries of the religious zeal of her son.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 27. “Let me entrust to you, Sin, my lord, my son Nabonidus, king of Babylon . . . may he always be in awe of your great godhead.”—Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, 277.
- ⁶⁶ “He [Nabonidus] proved to be singularly unpopular in Babylon because of his devotion to the god Sin instead of the patron god of Babylon, Marduk (also called Bel). In response to this unpopularity, Nabonidus installed his son Belshazzar as coregent and voluntarily exiled himself to Tema in the Arabian Desert for some ten years.”—Steinmann, *Daniel*, 259.
- ⁶⁷ Paul Benware, *Daniel’s Prophecy of Things to Come* (Clifton, TX: Scofield Ministries, 2007), 99, 102.
- ⁶⁸ “The historical setting for the demise of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and thus for our narrative, starts with Nabu-naid’s accession. He was the son of Nabu-balutsu-iqbi, a priest of Sin, the moon god, but himself appears to have been a military man. Nabu-naid was obsessed with restoring Babylon’s pagan pantheon, and particularly the temple to Sin in Harran.”—Monty S. Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel* (Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries, 1988, 1999), Dan. 5:1. Dougherty discounts the idea that Nabonidus went to Teima primarily out of antiquarian motives: “According to the former estimate of Nabonidus, *an impulse arising from antiquarian tastes* was the leading factor in his life. He was pictured as a king who exhibited no concern for the political and military welfare of his empire. Digging down to old foundations and reading the inscriptions of his predecessors were regarded as his principle occupations. It is true that the ruins of *Têṁâ* are very alluring to the modern archaeologist, but that there was anything at *Têṁâ* in the sixth century B.C. capable of gratifying the antiquarian proclivities of a Babylonian king is doubtful. . . . What is now known concerning his career shows that much more important matters absorbed his attention. Hence it is highly improbable that he was attracted to *Têṁâ* by an interest in monumental remains.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 158-159. Nabonidus’ religious affections are mentioned in the tomb inscription of his mother: “Nabonidus, the only son whom I [his mother] bore, performed indeed all the forgotten rites of Sin, Ningal, Nusku, and Sadarnunna, he completed the rebuilding of the temple Ehulhul, led Sin, Ningal, Nusku, and Sadarnunna in procession from Babylon (Shuanna), his royal city, installed (them again) in gladness and happiness into Harran, the seat which pleases them.”—Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, 276.

⁶⁹“At midnight he (Sin) made me have a dream and said (in the dream) as follows: ‘Rebuild speedily Ehulhul, the temple of Sin in Harran, and I will hand over to you all the countries.’ But the citizens of Babylon, Borsippa, Nippur, Urk, Uruk (and) Larsa, . . . acted evil, careless and even sinned against his great divine power, having not (yet) experienced the awfulness of the wrath of the Divine Crescent, the king of all gods; . . . He (Sin) . . . made me leave my city Babylon on the road to Tema, . . . I built anew the Ehulhul, the temple of Sin, and completed this work. I (then) led a procession Sin, Ningal, Nusku, and Sadarnunna, from Shuanna (in Babylon), my royal city, and brought (them) in joy and happiness (into the temple), installing them on a permanent dias. . . . I fulfilled the command of Sin, the king of gods, the lord of lords who dwells in heaven, whose name surpasses that of (all) the (other) gods in heaven . . .”—Ibid., 278.

⁷⁰*Rendition by John Martin in 1820.* Image courtesy of [Charles Matthews](#). This image is in the public domain.

⁷¹“Concerning the historicity of this feast, both the Greek historians, Herodotus and Xenophon, testified that a banquet was in progress on the night Babylon fell . . . The date would have been October 12, 539 B.C., about thirty years after the events of chap. 4.”—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:1.

⁷²Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, VII.5.25.

⁷³A. D. Herodotus and Godley, ed., *The Histories (English)* (Medford, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 1.190.1-6.

⁷⁴Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:1.

⁷⁵Constable and Archer claim that prior to Cyrus, Babylon had not fallen in 1,000 years. “Babylon had not fallen to an invading army for 1,000 years because of its strong fortifications.”—Constable, *Notes on Daniel*, Dan. 5:1. “The city had not been stormed by invaders in over a thousand years.”—Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:1-4. These claims seem difficult to reconcile with other sources. “Isaiah’s account of the fate of the city (Isa. 13) is very similarly worded to the account by Sargon II of Assyria of his sack of the place. . . . Sennacherib sacked the city in 689 B.C. and removed the sacred status. . . . In the subsequent war of 652-648 B.C. Babylon was severely damaged by fire, . . .”—Donald J. Wiseman, “Babylon, In the Old Testament,” in J. D. Douglas, ed., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1980), 1:159-160. “When Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727) took Babylon he gave it the status of an independent kingdom united to Assyria only by a personal union. . . . The Chaldean Merodach-Baladan proclaimed an independent kingdom on Shalmaneser’s death, but Sargon II (722-705) overthrew him in 710; and, . . . made it his residence for the years 710, 709, and 708 . . . On his death Merodach-Baladan returned and Babylon became a center of resistance, allowing Sennacherib no other alternative but to destroy the city in 689. Esarhaddon (680-669) rebuilt the city and toward the end of his life he divided his kingdom between his two sons, making Shamash-shumukin his heir in Babylon and Ashurbanipal in Assyria. The latter had to besiege and reconquer Babylon, when Shamash-shum-ukin tried to establish the independence of southern Mesopotamia.”—Geoffrey Wigoder, ed., *Encyclopedia Judaica CDROM Edition, Version 1.0* (Keter Publishing House, Ltd., 1997), s.v. “Babylon.” “Babylonia’s great metropolis succumbed five times to foreign invasion during a period of about two centuries, extending from the latter part of Assyrian overlordship to the fourth Persian king. When Sennacherib captured it in 689 B.C., he devastated much of its area. Ashurbanipal caused the city to surrender in 648 B.C. Cyrus added it to his kingdom in 539 B.C. Darius I subdued the rebellious capital in 521 B.C. Xerxes I turned much of it into ruins in 483 B.C. All these events are described in any good history of Babylonia.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 167.

⁷⁶Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:1.

⁷⁷Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, VII.5.13.

⁷⁸Benware, *Daniel’s Prophecy of Things to Come*, 99, 102.

⁷⁹“According to rabbinic tradition (*b. Megillah* 11b-12a), Belshazzar was celebrating because he thought that the prediction of the demise of the Babylonian kingdom after seventy years (Jer. 25:11; cf. Dan. 9▸) had been proven wrong. He had miscalculated, however, by one year.”—Marc Berlin and Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985, 2004), 1651. “The Hebrews hand down some such story as this: that up until the seventieth year, on which Jeremiah had said that the captivity of the Jewish people would be released . . . Belshazzar had esteemed God’s promise to be of none effect; therefore he turned the failure of the promise into an occasion of joy and arranged a great banquet . . .”—Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus, *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel (Translated by Gleason L. Archer Jr.)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 407, 1958), Dan. 5:2. “Saadiah says, this day the seventy years’ captivity ended; and so, in contempt of the promise and prophecy of it, he ordered the vessels to be brought out and drank in, to show that in vain the Jews expected redemption from it.”—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:2.

⁸⁰Renald E. Showers, *The Most High God: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1982), Dan. 5:1-4.

⁸¹Perhaps Belshazzar had this idea in the back of his mind and the wine brought it into action. But it seems uncertain that he would have called for the temple vessels if he had not become intoxicated.

⁸²Treating expensive and sacred items in a cavalier manner might have been a ploy to elevate the king’s status above them.

- ⁸³ The LXX reads, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐγκαινισμοῦ τῶν βασιλείων αὐτοῦ [*en hēmera enkainismou tōn basileiōn autou*], in the day of the consecration/dedication of the kingdom of him (Dan. 5:1)▶
- ⁸⁴ Perhaps Belshazzar was only officially installed as king at the departure of Nabonidus to face the armies of Cyrus. It seems less likely that Belshazzar could have appointed himself king upon hearing of the subsequent defeat and flight of Nebuchadnezzar. If this were the case, why wouldn't Belshazzar have offered Daniel the position of *second* in the kingdom rather than *third*? The offer to Daniel implies Belshazzar still considered himself as coregent with Nabonidus as primary ruler.
- ⁸⁵ Shea, *Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and the Book of Daniel: An Update*, 140-143.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.
- ⁸⁷ Shea suggests that references to the 1st and 3rd years of Belshazzar *as king* (Dan. 7:1▶; 8:1▶) were proleptic in nature. See commentary on *Daniel 7:1*.
- ⁸⁸ “Wonderful indeed was the stupidity which prepared a splendid banquet filled with delicacies, while the city was besieged. For Cyrus had begun to besiege the city for a long time with a large army. The wretched king was already half a captive; and yet, as if in spite of God, he provided a rich banquet, and invited a thousand guests.”—John Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998, 1561), Dan. 5:1.
- ⁸⁹ Plan of the central part of the Southern Citadel showing the throne room (yellow) and the probable location occupied by Belshazzar (red) during the feast recorded in Daniel 5▶. Adapted from figure 63 of [Robert Koldewey and Agnes S. Johns, *The Excavations at Babylon* (Liverpool, England: MacMillan and Co., 1914), 101]. This image is in the public domain.
- ⁹⁰ “Under the auspices of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft (German Orient Association), Koldewey excavated Babylon (part of modern Baghdad) from 1899-1918.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, xii. See [Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*].
- ⁹¹ “A wider doorway gave access to a third court (66 by 55 m., 218 by 180 ft.); to its south lay the Throne Room, the external wall of which was decorated in blue glazed bricks bearing white and yellow palmettes, pillars with a dado of rosettes and lions. This large hall (52 by 17 m., 170 by 57 ft., partially restored in 1968) could have been that used for state occasions, such as Belshazzar’s feast for a thousand persons (Dan. 5▶).”—Donald J. Wiseman, “Babylon,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979, 1915), 1:387.
- ⁹² Koldewey, *The Excavations at Babylon*, 103-104.
- ⁹³ “The invitation to a thousand officers of state corresponds to the magnificence of Oriental kings. According to Ctesias (*Athen. Deipnos.* iv. 146), 15,000 men dined daily from the table of the Persian king (cf. Est. 1:4).”—Keil, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:1-4.
- ⁹⁴ “Alexander the Great invited ten thousand to a wedding feast; and that Ptolemy Dionysius (according to Pliny, *H. N.*, XXXIII. 10) supported a thousand soldiers of the army of Pompey the Great from his kitchen.”—Otto Zöckler, “The Book of the Prophet Daniel,” in John Peter Lange, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1880), Dan. 5:1-4.
- ⁹⁵ “That cannot strike us as being unusual when we recognize that Persian and Babylonian courts were proverbially large establishments. Commentators refer to the report of a historian Ktesias who informs us that the Persian monarch provided food for 15,000 persons daily in his royal menage.”—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 214.
- ⁹⁶ “The Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II entertained 69,574 guests at the dedication of his new capital city of Calah (Nimrud) in 879 B.C. (M. E. L. Mallowan, *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, p. 62).”—Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 1630.
- ⁹⁷ “And Pliny reports [Ut supra. (*Nat. Hist.* 1. 33. c. 10.)] of one Pythius Bythinus, who entertained the whole army of Xerxes with a feast, even seven hundred and eighty eight thousand men.”—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:1.
- ⁹⁸ [*New English Translation : NET Bible*, 1st ed (Dallas, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 1998, 2006), Dan. 5:1] [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Dan. 5:1]
- ⁹⁹ Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:1-4.
- ¹⁰⁰ Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 250.
- ¹⁰¹ The OG attributes his request for the vessels to his pride: “καί ἀνυψώθη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ [*kai anypsōthē hē kardia autou*], And [as] his heart was raised up [puffed up] . . .”—Anonymous, “Daniel (Old Greek Version),” in Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta: With Morphology* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996, c1979.), Dan. 5:2.

- ¹⁰² [Scherman, ed., *Tanach* (New York, NY: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2001), Dan. 5:2], [*New English Translation : NET Bible*, Dan. 5:2].
- ¹⁰³ Keil, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:1-4.
- ¹⁰⁴ Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 214-215.
- ¹⁰⁵ “When impiety exists in the heart, intemperance becomes an additional stimulus.”—Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:2.
- ¹⁰⁶ “No doubt Nebuchadnezzar’s treasury was filled with vessels of gold and silver that had been seized by him during his many campaigns. Yet Belshazzar specifically requests that the ones from the temple of Jerusalem be brought out.”—Howe, *Daniel in the Preterist’s Den*, 158.
- ¹⁰⁷ “Nabonidus, Belshazzar’s father, had attempted to strengthen the Babylonian religion. In keeping with that, this act by his son may have been an attempt to undo the influence of Nebuchadnezzar’s honoring the God of Israel (Dan. 4:34-35).” — Pentecost, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:2-4.
- ¹⁰⁸ Clough, *Lessons on Daniel*, 15.204.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.213.
- ¹¹⁰ Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:2.
- ¹¹¹ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 260-261.
- ¹¹² “The following passage explicitly states that before Nabonidus started on his expedition to Tema in Arabia he entrusted actual kingship to Belshazzar: ‘He entrusted a campaign to his eldest, firstborn son; the troops of the land he sent with him. He freed his hand, he entrusted the kingship to him. Then he himself undertook a distant campaign...’ ”—Merrill Frederick Unger, R. K. Harrison, Frederic F Vos, and Cyril J. Barber, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988), s.v. “Belshazzar.”
- ¹¹³ “The words: *forasmuch as thou* [Dan. 5:22▶], i.e., since thou truly knowest all this, place it beyond a doubt that *Belshazzar* knew these incidents in the life of Nebuchadnezzar, and thus that he was his son, since his grandson (daughter’s son) could scarcely at that time have been so old as that the forgetfulness of that divine judgment could have been charged against him as a sin.”—Keil, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:22-24.
- ¹¹⁴ Keil, writing before archaeological evidence for Belshazzar came to light, is misled in identifying Belshazzar as Nebuchadnezzar’s son Evil-Merodach.
- ¹¹⁵ Both Nitocris and Amyitis (Amyite) are identified as wives of Nebuchadnezzar by various sources. “Berosus states that Nebuchadnezzar built a hanging garden on arches, because his wife was a Mede and delighted in the mountainous scenery of Media but not in the plains of Babylonia. She was Amyite, the daughter of Astyages, and the sister of Cyaxeres, both kings of the Medes. Nebuchadnezzar married here for an alliance between the two families against the king of Assyria. Nitocris might be another woman, who in the reign of her son Labynitus [Belshazzar], a voluptuous and vicious king, took care of his affairs. . . . This is the queen mentioned in Daniel (Dan. 5:10▶).” —Isaac Newton, Larry Pierce, and Marion Pierce, eds., *Newton’s Revised History of Ancient Kingdoms* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1728, 2009), 106.
- ¹¹⁶ Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:1.
- ¹¹⁷ Clough, *Lessons on Daniel*, 16.211-212.
- ¹¹⁸ Miller, *Daniel*, 149.
- ¹¹⁹ “Nabonidus could easily have married . . . one view is that he married a young woman who was in Nebuchadnezzar’s harem, who was the actual mother of Belshazzar, that would mean that Belshazzar was literally the son of Nebuchadnezzar.”—Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 21.250.
- ¹²⁰ “*Serve him shall all nations, and his son, and the son of his son.* The greater part think that Nebuchadnezzar had only two successors of his own posterity, Evil-merodach and Belshazar; others name five, and two of them between Evil-merodach and Belshazar. Those who think that there were no more than three, quote this testimony of the Prophet, for he names only the king’s son and his grandson; but this would be no sufficient reason. I am, however, disposed to follow what has been more commonly received, that Belshazar, the last king of Babylon, who was slain by Cyrus, was the third from Nebuchadnezzar.”—John Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Jeremiah* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998, 1561), Jer. 27:7.
- ¹²¹ “And all nations shall serve him (Nebuchadnezzar), and his son, (Evil-merodach Jer. 52: 1), and his son’s son, (Belshazzar, Dan. 5:11▶.) All which was literally fulfilled.”—Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible - Daniel* (Broken Arrow, OK: StudyLamp Software, 1832), Jer. 27:7.
- ¹²² Fausset takes the passage as a timing text and attempts a solution. “Nebuchadnezzar had *four* successors—Evil-merodach, his *son*; Neriglissar, husband of Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter; his son, Labosodarchod; and Naboned (with whom his son,

Belshazzar, was joint king), *son* of Evil-merodach. But Neriglissar and Labosodarchod were not in the *direct male line*; so that the prophecy held good to ‘his son and his son’s son,’ and the intermediate two are omitted.”—Fausset, *The Book of Daniel*, Jer. 27:7. However, the extra-biblical record of Babylonian kings does not identify Evil-Merodach as the father of Nabonidus.

- ¹²³ “Nabannidochus, in whose times Cyrus took Babylon; and who appears to be the same with Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar; so that the Scripture is very just and accurate in mentioning these two only as the son, and son’s son of Nebuchadnezzar, whom the nations should serve; for in the last of these ended the Babylonish monarchy . . .”—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Jer. 27:7.
- ¹²⁴ “His son was Evil-merodach, and his son’s son Belshazzar, in whom his kingdom ceased: then the time of reckoning with his land came, when the tables were turned, and *many nations and great kings*, incorporated into the empire of the Medes and Persians, *served themselves of him*, as before . . .”—Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1706-1721, 1994), Jer. 27:7.
- ¹²⁵ “As the Prophet Jeremiah had foretold—‘All nations shall serve HIM (Nebuchadnezzar), and his SON, and his SON’S SON, until the very time of his land come’ (Jer. 27:7), it is clear that Belshazzar must have been a GRANDSON, and a son, not of a daughter, but of a son of Nebuchadnezzar.”—Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:4.
- ¹²⁶ “*And his son, and his son’s son*; and Evil-merodach his son, who succeeded him, Jer. 52:31, and Belshazzar his grandchild, Dan. 4:1▶, 11▶. Until the period of his kingdom shall come, (for nations have their periods,) which was after *seventy years*, according to Jer. 29:10, during which years some say four princes ruled in Babylon, the Scripture mentions but three.”—Matthew Poole, *Matthew Poole’s Commentary on the Holy Bible* (Broken Arrow, OK: StudyLamp Software, 1685, 2006), Jer. 27:7.
- ¹²⁷ “His son - And Evil- Merodach his son, and Belshazzar his grand-child. Until - Until the period of his kingdom shall come, which was after seventy years, according to chap. xxix, 10.”—John Wesley, *John Wesley’s Notes on the Bible* (Broken Arrow, OK: StudyLamp Software, 1754 (NT), 1765 (OT)), Jer. 27:7.
- ¹²⁸ “Meaning, Evilmerodach and his son Belshazzar.”—*Footnotes from the Geneva Bible* (Broken Arrow, OK: StudyLamp Software, 1599, 2006), Jer. 27:7.
- ¹²⁹ Nevertheless, some interpreters find it saying as little, including: Feinberg, “‘His son and his grandson’ is not Jeremiah’s way of indicating the length of the Babylonian dynasty. The emphasis is rather on the comparatively long period of time of the Babylonian captivity, which should underscore the falsity of the prediction (v.16) of the near restoration of the articles of the Lord’s house.”—Charles L Feinberg, “Jeremiah,” vol. 6 in Frank E. Gaebelein, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), Jer. 27:6. Keil, “These words simply express the long duration of the king of Babylon’s power over them, without warranting us in concluding that he was succeeded on the throne by his son and his grandson. . .”—Keil, *Daniel*, Jer. 27:7. Kroll, “A Hebrew idiom meaning a very long time.”—F. Gerald Kroll, “Jeremiah,” in Edward E. Hindson and Woodrow Michael Kroll, eds., *KJV Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1994), Jer. 27:7. Naegelsbach, “The LXX. omitted the verse because it seemed so inaccurate. The prophet does not, however, intend to be exact. The phrase ‘his son and his son’s son’ is to denote an indefinite but brief period.”—C. W. Eduard Naegelsbach, “The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah,” in John Peter Lange, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1880), Jer. 27:7. and the notes for the *Net Bible*. “This is a figure that emphasizes that they will serve for a long time but not for an unlimited duration.”—*New English Translation : NET Bible*, Jer. 27:7. This may reflect a concession to the challenge of reconciling this passage with extra-biblical records concerning the *sequence of Babylonian kings which follow upon Nebuchadnezzar*. It should be born in mind that Jeremiah’s passage is divinely inspired whereas extra-biblical records are not. It is folly to dissuade ourselves of the straightforward meaning of a biblical passage in deference to fragmentary and uninspired extra-biblical records.
- ¹³⁰ Miller, *Daniel*, 149.
- ¹³¹ Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 119.
- ¹³² Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 217.
- ¹³³ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 261-262.
- ¹³⁴ Gleason Leonard Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1998, c1994), 426.
- ¹³⁵ “More characteristic of Biblical usage is the employment of the word ‘son’ to indicate membership in a class or guild, as in the common phrase ‘sons of the prophets,’ which implies nothing whatever as to the ancestry, but states that the individuals concerned are members of the prophetic guilds or schools.”—Walter R. Betteridge, “SON; SONS,” in J. W. Orr, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1915), s.v. “SON; SONS.” [Steinmann, *Daniel*, 216]
- ¹³⁶ For a similar use, see Jdg. 17:10; 18:10.

- ¹³⁷ Nabonidus appears to have had a favorable view of Nebuchadnezzar, naming one of his sons after his predecessor. “John Raven adds: “The suggestion that Nabonidus may have strengthened his position as king by marrying a daughter of the great King Nebuchadnezzar is made the more plausible by the fact that he named one of his sons Nebuchadnezzar. In this case, Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar and according to the Hebrew usage could be called his son.”— McDowell, *Daniel in the Critics’ Den*, 61. See Wiseman [Donald J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985, 2004), 12] for a reconstruction of Nebuchadnezzar’s family tree.
- ¹³⁸ Nabonidus appears to have attained a rank suitable for such a marriage. “A cuneiform text, dated in the eighth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, is attested by a number of witnesses, the first in the list being *Nabû-nâ’id*. Duplicate records of the text are available. In one *Nabû-nâ’id*, the witness, is described . . . [as being] ‘over the city.’ In another he is designated . . . ‘the son of a man of the king,’ or possibly . . . ‘the son of a man of royalty.’ [Various] considerations suggest the high rank of the *Nabû-nâ’id* of these duplicate texts and indicate that probability that he is to be identified with Nabonidus. . . . there need be no hesitancy in believing it possible that *Nabû-nâ’id* who was prominent as a city administrator in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar was afterwards made king of Babylon.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 29-31. “Nabonidus can no longer be looked upon as a puny historical figure. He cannot be regarded as a Babylonian with no claim to noble origin and with no early experience in carrying out governmental practices.”—Ibid., 38. A precedent may be seen in a previous ruler, Neriglissar (Nergal-shar-usur), who became Nebuchadnezzar’s son-in-law by marriage. “Nabu-naid was not a direct descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, but Dan 5:2▶, etc., suggest that he, like Nergal-shar-usur, had married Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter, which, in turn, suggests that marriage into Nebuchadnezzar’s family was an honor he conferred on several high ranking officers.”—Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:1. “Nebuchadnezzar had at least two daughters; one daughter married this man [Neriglissar] and another daughter married a man that we will have to deal with in chapter 5, a man by the name of Nabonidus.”—Clough, *Lessons on Daniel*, 15.191.
- ¹³⁹ Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, 11.
- ¹⁴⁰ Archer, *Modern Rationalism and the Book of Daniel*, 135.
- ¹⁴¹ Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 62.
- ¹⁴² Ibid., 189-190.
- ¹⁴³ Roland K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1969, 1999), 339-340.
- ¹⁴⁴ Archer, *Modern Rationalism and the Book of Daniel*, 135.
- ¹⁴⁵ “The preferable view is that Nabonidus married Nitocris who was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and that would mean that Belshazzar is a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar and a legitimate heir to Nebuchadnezzar.”—Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 21.250.
- ¹⁴⁶ Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 62, 189-190.
- ¹⁴⁷ “Nabonidus had a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar for wife and therefore Belshazzar from his mother’s side was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.”—Arno Clemens Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel: A Key to the Visions and Prophecies of the Book of Daniel*, 2nd (New York, NY: Our Hope, 1911), 55.
- ¹⁴⁸ “The fact that Belshazzar was mentioned in Daniel 5:18▶ as a ‘son’ of Nebuchadnezzar is in full accord with Semitic usage, which frequently employed the designation ‘son’ as synonymous with ‘descendant.’ Nitocris, mother of Belshazzar, was apparently the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, thus making Belshazzar his grandson by strict lineal reckoning.”—Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 339-340.
- ¹⁴⁹ “Archer thinks that Nabonidus may have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, making Belshazzar the earlier king’s grandson. This suggestion has merit, and Dougherty presents a strong case for it. Though any of the above suggestions are possible, this one probably is correct. The obvious reason that the relationship with Nebuchadnezzar is stressed (and that of Nabonidus omitted) is that only Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar are germane to the story. Belshazzar should have learned the lesson of humility and submission to Israel’s God from the episode in the life of Nebuchadnezzar (not Nabonidus).”—Miller, *Daniel*, 149-150.
- ¹⁵⁰ Showers, *The Most High God: Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:10-12.
- ¹⁵¹ Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:1.
- ¹⁵² “In his definitive study of this period of history, Raymond P. Dougherty showed that Nabonidus probably married Nitocris, a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar [Raymond P. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale U., 1929), pp. 42ff.]”—Whitcomb, *Daniel*, 72.
- ¹⁵³ Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, 11.
- ¹⁵⁴ Showers, *The Most High God: Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:10-12.

- ¹⁵⁵ Archer seems to overlook this problem when suggesting this scenario with Nabonidus as Belshazzar's true father. "The queen mother referred to Nebuchadnezzar as Belshazzar's 'father' אב [b]. Strictly speaking Nabonidus was his true father; but on the reasonable supposition that Nabonidus had married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar to legitimize his usurpation of the throne, Nebuchadnezzar would have been the grandfather of all his daughter's children . . ."—Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:11-12. Even if we assume a late coregency of 550—a possibility suggested by Steinmann [Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology*, 175]—he would only have reached the age of 6 by his coregency.
- ¹⁵⁶ Archer suggests that Belshazzar may have had Neriglissar as his immediate father. "So the probabilities are that Nabonidus, wishing to secure his position as the usurping king of Babylon, married one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters who had previously been married to Neriglissar (who reigned from 560 till his death in 556). If so, then Belshazzar was in fact Nebuchadnezzar's grandson."—Archer, *Daniel*, 16.
- ¹⁵⁷ "There is also the other possibility that Belshazzar, a true descendant, even a son of Nebuchadnezzar, may have been living at the same time. When Nabonidus married the widow he may have adopted the son and thus secured an heir for himself, a scion of the illustrious family of Nebuchadnezzar."—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 211.
- ¹⁵⁸ Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:1.
- ¹⁵⁹ Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:4.
- ¹⁶⁰ "Evil-merodach was succeeded by his son Belshazzar."—Scherman, *Tanach*, Dan. 5:1.
- ¹⁶¹ Herodotus makes Nabonidus a son of Nebuchadnezzar who then fathered Belshazzar. "Cyrus, then, marched against Nitocris' son [Nabonidus], who inherited the name of his father Labynetus [Nebuchadnezzar] and the sovereignty of Assyria."—Herodotus, *The Histories (English)*, 1.188. This differs from archaeological inscriptions implying Nabonidus was not of royal blood.
- ¹⁶² "Four cylinders found in the ziggurat of Ur contain the following prayer of Nabonidus: . . . *Belshazzar, the first son proceeding from my loins* . . . A variant of the above text occurs twice in a large cylinder of Nabonidus found at Ur, as the following passage indicates: . . . *Belshazzar, the first son proceeding from my loins* . . ."—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 93-94. "The remarkable inscription published by Sidney Smith under the title *A Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus* [relates] . . . *He [Nabonidus] entrusted a camp to his eldest, firstborn son; the troops of the land he sent with him. He freed his hand; he entrusted the kingship to him. . . .*" [emphasis added]—Ibid., 105-106.
- ¹⁶³ Sometimes the extra-biblical texts only appear to differ from the Bible. There are two issues: 1) unearthing the archaeological writings; 2) translating and interpreting their contents, a task more complex than many appreciate.
- ¹⁶⁴ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 263.
- ¹⁶⁵ God is not above using "unclean" means to accomplish His ends: Elijah's provision was brought by ravens (1K. 17:4), an unclean bird (Lev. 11:13-15).
- ¹⁶⁶ "Merely the *golden vessels* are here mentioned, while the silver ones are omitted, on the principle *a potiori fit denominatio*."—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 126.
- ¹⁶⁷ "καί τὰ ἀργυρᾶ [kai ta argyra], and the silver."—Theodotion, "Daniel (Theodotion's Translation)," in Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta: With Morphology* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996, c1979.), Dan. 5:3. "The MT refers only to 'the vessels of gold.' Theodotion adds 'and silver,' probably by assimilation to Dan. 5:2, which referred to 'the vessels of gold and silver' "—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:3. "The present translation reads נֶפֶטֶי [w^ekaspā] . . . 'and the silver' . . . with Theodotion and the Vulgate. Cf. v. 2. The form was probably accidentally dropped from the Aramaic text by homoioteleuton."—*New English Translation : NET Bible*, Dan 5:3.
- ¹⁶⁸ "The Sept. represents only the concubines as present at the feast (both here and in vs. 3 and 23), being apparently governed in this by what is described in Esther 1:9 et seq. (cf. Josephus, *Ant.*, XI. 6, 1) as the court custom of the *ancient Persians*; but even with reference to them, Herodotus (5:18) testifies that their wives (χοῦρίδια γυναιξες [chouridiai gynaixes]) were admitted to banquets . . ."—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 126.
- ¹⁶⁹ Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, Dan. 5:2.
- ¹⁷⁰ "The concubines were the inferior class of women from the royal harem. They probably were present for the purpose of a sexual orgy."—Showers, *The Most High God: Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Dan 5:1-4.
- ¹⁷¹ "They are being desecrated by frivolous use at a wild and wicked orgy, though once many of them held the precious blood of sacrifices."—James O. Combs, *Mysteries of the Book of Daniel* (Springfield, IL: Tribune Publishers, 1994), 61.
- ¹⁷² Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 251.
- ¹⁷³ Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:2-4.

¹⁷⁴ The problem was not the drinking of wine per-se. The Bible condones the responsible use of wine: Num. 6:20; Deu. 7:13; 18:3-4; Jdg. 9:13; Ne. 5:18; Ecc. 9:7; Job 1:13, 18; Ps. 104:15; Sos. 1:2; Jer. 31:12; Zec. 10:7; Mat. 26:29; Luke 22:18; John 2:9. The problem comes when wine is abused: Gen. 9:21; 19:32, 34; 1K. 19:6; Pr. 20:1; 21:17; 23:20, 29-35; 31:4-7; Isa. 5:11-12, 22; 28:1, 7; 56:12; Amos 4:1; Hab. 2:15; Eph. 5:18; 1Ti. 3:3, 8. “It is worth while to notice this, to induce us to be cautious concerning intemperance in drinking, because nothing is more common than the undertaking many things far too rashly when our senses are under the influence of wine. Hence we must use wine soberly, that it may invigorate not only the body but the mind and the senses, and may never weaken, or enervate, or stupify our bodily or mental powers.”—Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:2.

¹⁷⁵ Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:1.

¹⁷⁶ The OG adds a phrase similar to that found in verse 23: “καὶ τὸν θεὸν τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ εὐλόγησαν τῶν ἔχονα τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτῶν [*kai ton theon tou aiōnos ouk eulogēsan ton echona tēn ezousian tou pneumatos autōn*], and the eternal God, they praised not, the [one] having the power/authority [over] the spirit of them”—Anonymous, *Daniel (Old Greek Version)*, Dan. 5:4.

¹⁷⁷ Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, Dan. 5:31.

¹⁷⁸ Cuneiform texts demonstrate Belshazzar’s devotion to the god’s of Babylon. “Six texts, ranging from years five to thirteen of the reign of Nabonidus, show that Belshazzar responded to the needs of the Babylonian sanctuaries by making offerings of silver, gold, and sacrificial animals. . . . [These] texts depict Belshazzar’s interest in the gods of his nation with unquestionable accuracy. They register his zeal in presenting offerings to the deities worshipped in the temple of Erech and Sippar. From his generous attitude towards these sanctuaries it may be concluded that shrines in other Babylonian cities were the beneficiaries of his practical devotion.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 87, 91.

¹⁷⁹ Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:1-12.

¹⁸⁰ Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 217.

¹⁸¹ Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 126.

¹⁸² Idolatry will stoop to utilizing wood and stone where more precious materials are unavailable.

¹⁸³ “The Babylonians confessed their gods to have dwelt in heaven . . .”—Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:4.

¹⁸⁴ “One of the latest acts of this unfortunate prince, and perhaps his crowning blunder, was his attempt to ensure the security of Babylon by gathering into it the gods from other cities, much to the displeasure, doubtless, of the priests and people of those cities, who would rightly ask, why should their defence be taken from them?”—Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, 110.

¹⁸⁵ Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 20.247.

¹⁸⁶ Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:1-12.

¹⁸⁷ This is similar to what had taken place earlier within Israel leading to Nebuchadnezzar’s capture of the vessels: “For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God, and had also presented all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD to the Baals” (2Chr. 24:7).

¹⁸⁸ Some of today’s idolatrous productions are in the form of unverified theories, such as multiverses and Darwinism—attributing God’s glorious work of creation to lifeless powers of chance and inevitability.

¹⁸⁹ Charles Lee Feinberg, *A Commentary on Daniel: The Kingdom of the Lord* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1981), 63.

¹⁹⁰ Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel: A Key to the Visions and Prophecies of the Book of Daniel*, 61.

¹⁹¹ “**Just then** fingers of a human hand came forth . . .” [emphasis added]—Scherman, *Tanach*, Dan. 5:5.

¹⁹² Hieronymus, *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel (Translated by Gleason L. Archer Jr.)*, Dan. 5:5.

¹⁹³ Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 23.272.

¹⁹⁴ Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, Dan. 5:5.

¹⁹⁵ Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, electronic ed (New York, NY: E. J. Brill, 1999.), 5:1925.

¹⁹⁶ “The candlestick, or lamp-bearer, perhaps, which had been taken from the temple at Jerusalem, and which was, as well as the sacred vessels, introduced into this scene of revelry. It is probable that as they brought out the vessels of the temple to drink in, they would also bring out all that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem.”—Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, Dan. 5:5.

¹⁹⁷ Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:5.

- ¹⁹⁸ “The wall of the banquet-hall was not panelled nor draped, but rather a simple, light-colored ‘wall of lime or plaster’ (כְּתָל [kēṭal] = כּוֹתֵל [kōṭēl] of the Targums), such as the ruins of the palaces at Nineveh still exhibit in great number . . .” —Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:5-6.
- ¹⁹⁹ Koldewey, *The Excavations at Babylon*, 103-104.
- ²⁰⁰ Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:5.
- ²⁰¹ It is unclear whether Jer. 17:13 should be included in this list. The phrase בְּאֶרֶץ יִכְתָּבוּ [bā’āreṣ yikkāṭēbū], in the earth/land they shall be written down, has been variously translated: “written in the earth” (ESV, KJV, NKJV); “written in the dust” (NIV84); “written in the dirt” (HCSB); “be doomed men” (TNK); “written down” (NASU); “consigned to the nether world” (NET).
- ²⁰² “I believe the One who wrote this is the same One who wrote in the sand when they brought a sinful woman before Him (John 8:1-11). At that time it was a message of forgiveness; here, for Belshazzar, it is a message of doom.” —J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981), Dan. 5:5.
- ²⁰³ “Requirements” is variously rendered as: “ordinances” (KJV), “record of debt” (ESV), “certificate of debt” (HCSB, NASU), “written code” (NIV84), “certificate of indebtedness” (NET).
- ²⁰⁴ Fausset, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:5.
- ²⁰⁵ *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Dan. 5:5.
- ²⁰⁶ “כַּף [pas] probably means that the king saw ‘the back of the hand that wrote’ on the wall . . . The palm of the hand would have been facing the wall as the hand wrote. כַּף [pas] denotes the flat part of the hand, as distinguished from the fingers, or the flat part of the foot, as distinguished from the toes.” —Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:5. “כַּף [pās] usually refers to the palm — which would be hardly visible during writing, even to someone below it (Bentzen) — but essentially it denotes the hand itself as opposed to the lower arm and hand, effectively referring here to the back of the hand or knuckles (neb, Plöger, comparing Gen 37:3).” —Goldingay, *Daniel*, 101.
- ²⁰⁷ *Rendition by Rembrandt circa 1625-1669*. The scene depicts the words arranged as an anagram 3 characters tall by 5 characters wide which reads top-to-bottom, left-to-right. Image courtesy of Pimbrils. This image is in the public domain.
- ²⁰⁸ Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 22.261.
- ²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.269.
- ²¹⁰ The OG adds the phrase, “καὶ φόβοι καὶ ὑπονοιαὶ αὐτὸν κατέσπευδον [kai phoboi kai hyponoiai auton katespeudon], And his fear and suspicion rapidly increased” —Anonymous, *Daniel (Old Greek Version)*, Dan. 5:6.. “κατέσπευδω [katespeudō], urge, hasten on.” —Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, With a revised supplement, 1996 (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1996), 913.
- ²¹¹ William Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel (3rd. ed.)* (Richardson, TX: Galaxie Software, 1881, 2004), Dan. 5:1.
- ²¹² Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:6.
- ²¹³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, Dan 5:6]. “ ‘His hip joints went loose,’ i.e., he lost the strength to stand.” —Goldingay, *Daniel*, 101.
- ²¹⁴ “Aramaic ‘his loins went slack.’ ” —*New English Translation : NET Bible*, Dan. 5:6. “Nor could he hold his urine; as Grotius and others; see Isa. 45:1, where this seems to be prophesied of.” —Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:6. “One commentator [Lucas, *Daniel*, 138] has argued that the phrase ‘his hip joints went slack’ should actually be translated, ‘the knots of his loins were loosed,’ referring to the fact that he soiled his pants.” —Howe, *Daniel in the Preterist’s Den*, 160.
- ²¹⁵ Bob Deffinbaugh, *Daniel: Relating Prophecy to Piety* (Richardson, TX: Bible.org, 2006), Dan. 5:5-9.
- ²¹⁶ Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:6.
- ²¹⁷ Numerous passages speak of shaking and being on the verge of collapsing from fear (1S. 14:15; 28:5; Eze. 7:15-18; 26:16). “For the ‘loosening of the loins’ as symptom of panic fear, cf. Isa. 21:3; Nah. 2:11; Eze. 21:11; Ps. 69:24, and for the ‘knocking of the knees one against the other’ Nah. 2:11.” —Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 253. The inhabitants of Nineveh had experienced similar fear during its overthrow, “She is empty, desolate, and waste! The heart melts, and the knees shake; Much pain [is] in every side, And all their faces are drained of color.” —*The New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Nah. 2:10.
- ²¹⁸ Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 127.
- ²¹⁹ Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:7.

²²⁰ Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:7.

²²¹ “The king called loudly for the exorcists, Chaldeans, and diviners to be brought.”—*Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1997, c1985), Dan. 5:7. “The astrologers, the Chaldean [stargazers] and the demonists . . .”—Scherman, *Tanach*, Dan. 5:7.

²²² According to Matthew, the wise men who sought the predicted King of the Jews were μάγοι [*magoi*] (Mat. 2:1, 7, 16). This knowledge probably originated with Daniel and was preserved and handed down for centuries among the Babylonian “magicians.” This may also indicate Daniel’s close association with this particular class of wise men in Babylon.

²²³ The modern attempt to account for the complexity and diversity of life by appealing to experts on evolution—who shut their eyes to overwhelming evidence of intelligent design pointing to the Creator—comes to mind.

²²⁴ Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:7.

²²⁵ Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 128.

²²⁶ “And have a golden collar placed on his neck. . . The term translated ‘golden collar’ here probably refers to something more substantial than merely a gold chain (cf. NIV84, NCV, NRSV, NLT) or necklace (cf. NASB).”—*New English Translation : NET Bible*, Dan. 5:7.

²²⁷ *Cylinder describing repairs on the temple of the moon-god Sin at Ur by King Nabonidus, with a prayer for his son Belshazzar. Terracotta, 555-539 BC.* The cylinder states: *As for me, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, save me from sinning against your great godhead and grant me as a present a life long of days, and as for Belshazzar, the eldest son—my offspring—instill reverence for your great godhead in his heart and may he not commit any cultic mistake, may he be sated with a life of plenitude.*—*Wikipedia*. Copyright © 2007 by Marie-Lan Nguyen. Use of this image is subject to a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license](#).

²²⁸ “It is uncertain whether he promises the third portion or the third rank; for many think the queen, of whom mention will soon be made, was the wife of King Nebuchadnezzar, and grandmother of King Belshazzar.”—Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:7. “But be the third man in the kingdom; next to the king and the queen mother, or to the king and the heir apparent . . .”—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:7.

²²⁹ Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 427.

²³⁰ Kyle Butt, “The Prophecy of Daniel 8,” in *Bible and Spade*, vol. 25 no. 3 (Landisville, PA: Associates for Biblical Research, Summer 2012), 61.

²³¹ T. C. Mitchell, *The Bible in the British Museum* (London, England: British Museum Press, 1988, 1998), 80.

²³² “He would give him leave to wear purple, and to put a chain of gold about his neck, and would bestow on him the third part of his dominion . . .”—Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 10.240.

²³³ “What Belshazzar is saying here is not that you’re going to be third in rank but you’re going to come on as a third in the triumvirate. There will be three of us ruling the kingdom, not just two. And so he is offering Daniel to be the third ruler, the third of three, in the kingdom.”—Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 22.273.

²³⁴ “[Many interpreters conclude] that the statements here regard the government of a triumvirate as it was regulated by the Median king Darius, Dan. 6:3▶ (2); and this appears also to be the meaning of the words as one may literally explain תַּלְתִּי [talfī] and תַּלְתָּי [taltā].”—Keil, *Daniel*, 9:611-612.

²³⁵ “The term is a true reminiscence of old Babalonian officialdom, where the Akkadian *šalšū* (= our word spelled both *talfī* and *taltā* was a high official title, = ‘Thirdling’ or ‘Triumvir,’ similar in its use to the Hebrew equivalent *šāl/š*.”—Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 254.

²³⁶ “The dignity of triumvir which is here promised to the fortunate interpreter of the mystery is probably not identical with the office of one of the three governors of the province of Babylon mentioned in Dan. 2:49▶, but designates the position of one of the three chief governors over the whole kingdom. The latter office is noticed in Dan. 6:3▶, as established by Darius the Mede; but that statement may be regarded as merely indicating the restoration of a feature in the administration of government which had already existed under the Babylonian regime. . . . The Sept. presents the correct idea: ἐξουσία τοῦ τρίτου μέρους τῆς βασιλείας [*hezousia tou tritou merous tēs basileias*] (*authority of the third part of the kingdom*); . . .”—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 128.

²³⁷ “And I have authority for stating that the Revisers gave the question full consideration, and that it was only at the last revision that the alternative rendering, ‘rule as one of three,’ was admitted into the margin. On no occasion was it contemplated to accept it in the text.”—Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, 10th ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1894, 1957), 1.

²³⁸ “Since Nabonidus was king and Belshazzar his coregent, the highest office to be conferred was that of the third highest ruler.”—Pentecost, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:5-7.

- ²³⁹ “This word in Belshazzar’s promise ought to be understood as offering the person who can read and interpret the writing a royal position with the ‘third’ highest authority. Only the two coregents, Nabonidus and Belshazzar, would have higher authority.”—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:7.
- ²⁴⁰ Belshazzar was coregent with Nabonidus. As with most coregencies, his position was subordinate to that of his father. “Cuneiform sources have shown that Belshazzar was associated with Nabonidus in governing the kingdom, but in a subordinate capacity, for they speak of him specifically as *mar sharri* or ‘son of the king,’ and never as *sharru* or ‘king.’” —Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 341.
- ²⁴¹ A comparison of characters used to render the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, equivalent to the letters ‘A’ and ‘B’ in the English alphabet. The form of the characters have changed significantly over time. Image courtesy of wikipedia.org. This image is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).
- ²⁴² Constable, *Notes on Daniel*, Dan. 5:25-28.
- ²⁴³ “The words of the king do not make clear the exact nature of the difficulty, for the king mentions both the reading of the writing and the making known of the interpretation. This may mean that the words could neither be read nor be interpreted.”—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 221-222.
- ²⁴⁴ Feinberg, *A Commentary on Daniel: The Kingdom of the Lord*, 67.
- ²⁴⁵ “We cannot even surmise in what language the handwriting appeared, whether in the ancient Sumerian, the current Babylonian, or the Aramaic.”—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 222.
- ²⁴⁶ “And as Daniel was able to read the letters at once, it would seem not improbable that the words were in the Hebrew character then used - a character such as that found now in the Samaritan Pentateuch - for the Chaldee character now found in the Bible has not improbably been substituted.”—Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, Dan. 5:7. “Let it be observed, - 1. That the character which we now call Hebrew is the Chaldean character. 2. That the true Hebrew character is that which we call the Samaritan. 3. Daniel could easily read this, for it was the character used by the Jews previously to the Babylonish captivity. 4. It appears that it was simply on account of the strangeness of the character that the Chaldeans could not read it.”—Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible - Daniel*, Dan. 5:25. “The Hebrews think the words were *Chaldee*, but in the old *Hebrew* character (like that now in the Samaritan Pentateuch).”—Fausset, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:7. “Kranichfeld supposes that the reason for this was, that the mysterious inscription was written in the old Phoenician characters, which Daniel, being a Hebrew, would have recognized, while the Chaldean *Chartummin*, who were acquainted only with the character in use among the ancient Babylonians, which corresponded to the later Syriac or Palmyrene, would naturally be unable to understand them.”—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 129. “The characters employed in the writing, as Hengstenberg has rightly observed (*Beitr.*, I. p. 122), ‘must have been altogether unusual, so as not to be deciphered but by Divine illumination.’ ”—Ibid. Elsewhere, Zöckler seems to take the opposite stance: “This interpretation of the miracle on natural principles is quite erroneous. First, it is very unlikely that the Chaldean wise men should not have known these old Shemitic characters, even although at that time they had ceased to be in current use among the Babylonians in their common writing.”—Ibid.
- ²⁴⁷ “Weights could be abbreviated, as in English, and perhaps the inscription consisted in a series of abbreviations that were not immediately recognizable as such (Alt, *Vetus Testamentum* 4 [1954] 303-5). But most straightforwardly the story envisages them written as unpointed consonants: being able to read out unpointed text is partly dependent on actually understanding it, and Daniel later reads the words out one way and interprets them another.”—Goldingay, *Daniel*, 109.
- ²⁴⁸ “The Talmudists suppose that the words were written in a cabalistic manner, in which certain letters were used to stand for other letters, on the principle referred to by Buxtorf (‘Lex. Chal. Rabb. et Talm.’ p. 248), and known as אַתְּבַשׁ [*’tbs*] - that is, where the alphabet is reversed, and the Hebrew letter א is used for the Hebrew letter ת, and the Hebrew letter ב for the Hebrew letter ד, etc., and that on account of this cabalistic transmutation the Babylonians could not read it, though Daniel might have been familiar with that mode of writing.”—Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, Dan. 5:25. “Or they were written according to the position of the letters of the alphabet, called ‘athbash’, of which , or the words were placed so as to be read backward, or else downward, and not straightforward; or they were all in one word; or only the initial letters of words . . .” —Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:8. “The writing was in Aramaic, and the letters may have been arranged in Acrostic style, and so mystified the ‘Wise Men.’ The illustration below, taken from the Talmud, will show how this could have been done.

P T M M
R K N N
S L A A

The Chaldeans (Wise Men), reading the letters from right to left, as in Hebrew and Aramaic, or from left to right, as in other languages, could make no sense of the words: but Daniel read from top to bottom, beginning at the right.”—Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:28. “Perhaps the writing was in the form of an anagram written vertically rather than horizontally, from left to right, instead of normally right to left, or read from bottom to top instead of top to bottom, and written with consonants only. Unless the sovereign God revealed the key to Daniel, the words could not be read, much less interpreted.”—Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1633.

²⁴⁹ Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:8-9.

²⁵⁰ Miller, *Daniel*, s.v. “Understood but Incomplete.”

²⁵¹ Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 23.275-276.

²⁵² “Even if the wise men could have read the words (which they couldn’t), they could not have interpreted them for they had no point of reference as to what had been numbered, weighed, and divided.”—Pentecost, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:25.

²⁵³ Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:8-9.

²⁵⁴ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Aramaic (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), #10698.

²⁵⁵ Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 129.

²⁵⁶ “The Hebrews had no equivalent for our word *queen*, in the sense of a female sovereign; neither did the wives of the king have the dignity that the word *queen* now denotes. 1. *Queen regnant or queen consort* (Heb. *malkā*, the feminine of *melek*, king). It is applied in the sense of *queen regnant* to the queen of Sheba (1K. 10:1). It is also applied to the *queen consort*, the chief wife, as distinguished from all other females in the royal harem (Est. 1:9, 11-12; 7:1-3; etc.). . . . By *queen*, then, we understand the *chief wife* of the king’s harem. This rank may be obtained by being the *first* wife of the king or the *first after accession*, especially if she was of high birth and became mother of the firstborn son; otherwise she may be superseded by a woman of higher birth and connections subsequently married or by the one who gave birth to the heir apparent. The king, however, often acted according to his own pleasure, promoting or removing as he willed.”—Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Queen.”

²⁵⁷ “A wife of the king with high status, not likely of equal status to the king, in context, showing herself more informed about the court of the kingdom (Dan. 5:10▶(2×)+), . . . queen-mother, i.e., the mother of the king (Dan. 5:10▶(2×)+), note: this meaning is inferred from the context, since the queen knew more historical information about the time of the king’s father than the others in the king’s court.”—Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Aramaic (Old Testament)*, #10423.

²⁵⁸ Herodotus relates the following accomplishments of Nitocris: “[184] [1] Now among the many rulers of this city of Babylon (whom I shall mention in my Assyrian history) who finished the building of the walls and the temples, there were two that were women. The first of these lived five generations earlier than the second, and her name was Semiramis: it was she who built dikes on the plain, a notable work; before that the whole plain used to be flooded by the river. [185] [1] The second queen, whose name was Nitocris, was a wiser woman than the first. She left such monuments as I shall record; and moreover, seeing that the kingdom of Media was great and restless and Ninus itself among other cities had fallen to it, she took such precautions as she could for her protection. [2] First she dealt with the river Euphrates, which flows through the middle of her city; this had been straight before; but by digging canals higher up she made the river so crooked that its course now passes one of the Assyrian villages three times; the village which is so approached by the Euphrates is called Ardericca. And now those who travel from our sea to Babylon must spend three days as they float down the Euphrates coming three times to the same village. [3] Such was this work; and she built an embankment along either shore of the river, marvellous for its greatness and height. [4] Then a long way above Babylon she dug the reservoir of a lake, a little way off from the river, always digging deep enough to find water, and making the circumference a distance of fifty two miles; what was dug out of this hole, she used to embank either edge of the river; [5] and when she had it all dug, she brought stones and made a quay all around the lake. [6] Her purpose in making the river wind and turning the hole into marsh was this: that the current might be slower because of the many windings that broke its force, and that the passages to Babylon might be crooked, and that right after them should come also the long circuit of the lake. [7] All this work was done in that part of the country where the passes are and the shortest road from Media, so that the Medes might not mix with her people and learn of her affairs. [186] [1] So she made the deep river her protection; and this work led to another which she added to it. Her city was divided into two parts by the river that flowed through the middle. In the days of the former rulers, when one wanted to go from one part to the other, one had to cross in a boat; and this, I suppose, was a nuisance. But the queen also provided for this; she made another monument of her reign out of this same work when the digging of the basin of the lake was done. [2] She had very long blocks of stone cut; and when these were ready and the place was dug, she turned the course of the river into it, and while it was filling, the former channel now being dry, she bricked the borders of the river in the city and the descent from the gate leading down to the river with baked bricks, like those of the wall; and near the middle of the city she built a bridge with the stones that had been dug up, binding them

together with iron and lead. [3] Each morning, she laid square-hewn logs across it, on which the Babylonians crossed; but these logs were removed at night, lest folk always be crossing over and stealing from one another. [4] Then, when the basin she had made for a lake was filled by the river and the bridge was finished, Nitocris brought the Euphrates back to its former channel out of the lake; thus she had served her purpose, as she thought, by making a swamp of the basin, and her citizens had a bridge made for them.”—Herodotus, *The Histories (English)*, 1.184.1-1.186.4.

²⁵⁹ “Herodotus (1.185-88) talks at some length of the role in Babylon of Queen Nitocris, who he says was Nebuchadnezzar’s wife. The difficulty with this statement is that Nitocris was actively anti-Median, whereas Nebuchadnezzar was pro-Median and had a Median wife.”—Goldingay, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:10. “Nabonidus’ wife Nitocris was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar II.”—R. F. Youngblood, F. Wayne Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, eds., *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), s.v. “Nabonidus.” “Queen Nitocris governed the kingdom during his [Nebuchadnezzar’s] aberration.”—J. Thein, *Ecclesiastical Dictionary* (New York, NY: Benziger Brothers, 1900), 492.

²⁶⁰ “It is supposed that this queen was the widow of Evil-Merodach, and was that famous Nitocris whom Herodotus mentions as a woman of extraordinary prudence.”—Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Dan. 5:10.

²⁶¹ “Some have argued that Nabonidus married Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter Nitocris . . .” —D. J. Clines, “Belshazzar,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979, 1915), 1:455. “[Belshazzar] was the son of Nabonidus by Nitocris, who was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and the widow of Nergal-sharezer.”—M. G. Easton, *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1893), s.v. “Belshazzar.”

²⁶² “The classical historians mention two wives [of Nebuchadnezzar]: Amytis, the daughter of Astyages, and Nitocris, the mother of Nabonaid. According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, the queen in this scene could not have been the mother of Nabonidus who died in the ninth year of his reign. “The unquestioned testimony of the *Nabonidus Chronicle* is that Nabonidus’ mother died in the ninth year of his reign.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 25.”—Robert Dick Wilson, “Nebuchadnezzar,” in J. W. Orr, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1915), s.v. “Nebuchadnezzar.”

²⁶³ Thomas Myers, “Translator’s Notes,” in John Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998, 1561), s.v. “DISSERTATION 18.”

²⁶⁴ A passage in Jeremiah concerning the judgment of Babylon mentions the shame of “your mother” which might, at first glance, be taken to refer to the mother of the final Babylonian king, Belshazzar. “For behold, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon An assembly of great nations from the north country, And they shall array themselves against her; From there she shall be captured. Their arrows [shall be] like [those] of an expert warrior; None shall return in vain. And Chaldea shall become plunder; All who plunder her shall be satisfied,” says the LORD. “Because you were glad, because you rejoiced, You destroyers of My heritage, Because you have grown fat like a heifer threshing grain, And you bellow like bulls, **Your mother shall be deeply ashamed; She who bore you shall be ashamed.** Behold, the least of the nations [shall be] a wilderness, A dry land and a desert” [emphasis added] (Jer. 50:9-12). But the pronominal suffixes designating “the mother of you” who “bore you” (Jer. 50:12) are second-person plural (𐤀𐤍 [kēm]) and therefore, cannot designate the (singular) king. It would seem the “mother” is not an individual but a collective related to the nation: “**the land** where you were born will be disgraced” [emphasis added]—*New English Translation : NET Bible*, Jer. 50:12.. “ ‘Your mother’ is the whole body of the people, the nation considered as a unity.”—Carl Friedrich Keil, “Jeremiah,” in Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 8:428.

²⁶⁵ Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:9.

²⁶⁶ Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1632.

²⁶⁷ “Nabonidus did spend a large part of his reign at *Tēmā* in the northwest of Arabia, leaving the control of affairs in Babylonia to his eldest son, and it is altogether likely that the mother of the empowered crown prince remained at the national capital.”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 43.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Goldingay, *Daniel*, 109.

²⁷⁰ “It would appear therefore that the Queen mentioned was the wife and Queen of King Nabonidus, who was still the ‘First Ruler’ of the land, though away at the time, and who had a perfect right to be living in the Palace at that time, and who as a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar would still have a fresh and vivid memory of the wonderful part Daniel had taken in the affairs of the Empire during her father’s reign.”—Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:9.

²⁷¹ “Notably, the queen of Dan. 5:10 does not appear to have been one of Belshazzar’s wives (vv.2-3), and this indicates that she was his mother, Nabu-naid’s wife, queen by virtue of the fact that her husband was the senior monarch. Apparently no

- competing queen was appointed by the ‘junior’ monarch, Belshazzar, and explicity so in deference to his mother.”—Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:1.
- ²⁷² “The lady’s masterful appearance on the scene betokens rather the queen-mother than the consort. . . . Says Rawlinson, *The Seven Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World* “Fifth Monarchy,” c. 3: ‘The mother of the reigning prince, if she outlived his father, held a position at the Court of her son beyond that even of his Chief Wife’; and he cites, n. 393, from Arrian, *Exp. Alex.*, ii, 12, a passage indicating that the queen-mother might properly hold the title of queen.”—Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 258.
- ²⁷³ “Neither Herodotus’ Nitocris, nor the wife of Nabonidus, nor Belshazzar’s mother, nor Belshazzar’s wife have as yet been identified in cuneiform sources. Tentatively, the queen referred to here may be identified with Nitocris, and be considered as the queen mother to Belshazzar.”—Shea, *Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and the Book of Daniel: An Update*, 138.
- ²⁷⁴ “She conceivably was Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter and Belshazzar’s mother. Nabonidus may have married her in order to give the legal status denoted by the term ‘son of Nebuchadnezzar’ to Belshazzar (cf. v. 2).”—Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1632.
- ²⁷⁵ “מַלְכָּתָא [malkēṭā] can only be the queen-mother (נְבִיָרָה [gēbīrā], 1K. 15:13; 2Chr. 15:16. cf. Jer. 13:18).”—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:10-12.
- ²⁷⁶ “This was probably Nitocris, the queen-mother, widow of Evil-merodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar, and father of Belshazzar.”—Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, Dan. 5:10.
- ²⁷⁷ Goldingay, *Daniel*, 109.
- ²⁷⁸ Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 173-175.
- ²⁷⁹ “‘in whom is the spirit of the holy gods;’ . . . she uses the very words of Nebuchadnezzar; which seems to confirm that opinion, that she was his widow, Dan. 4:8.”—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:11.
- ²⁸⁰ “Her judgment concerning Daniel [Dan. 5:11] is that of Nebuchadnezzar . . . and that she states it in the same words leads to the conclusion that Nebuchadnezzar was her husband. ²⁷⁹”—Keil, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:11.
- ²⁸¹ “It could have been Nitocris, his [Belshazzar’s] mother, a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar (and wife of Nabonidus . . .). But in view of the fact that her husband, Nabonidus, had been away from Babylon for so many years and was in disfavor there, this interpretation creates some problems. It seems that the best view is to identify this queen as Amytis, the aged widow of Nebuchadnezzar, . . .”—Whitcomb, *Daniel*, 75.
- ²⁸² “We turn next to the ‘queen’ of Dan. 5:10. So far she has not been identified. She was not the mother of Nabonidus. That lady, as we learn from the Annalistic Tablet, died in the camp at Sippara in the ninth year of Nabonidus. . . . it is reasonable to suppose that she was the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, whom Nabonidus had married, and who—now that her husband was a prisoner in the hands of the enemy—had assumed the post of queen-mother.”—Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, 117.
- ²⁸³ Ibid.
- ²⁸⁴ “This is generally allowed to have been the widow of Nebuchadnezzar; if so, she was the queen Amiyt, daughter of Astyages, sister of Darius the Mede, and aunt of Cyrus, according to Polyhistor, cited by Cedrenus.”—Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible - Daniel*, Dan. 5:10.
- ²⁸⁵ “At this tense juncture, the Queen Mother stepped in. She was doubtless the widow of Nebuchadnezzar.”—Feinberg, *A Commentary on Daniel: The Kingdom of the Lord*, 67.
- ²⁸⁶ “Then the wife of Nebuchadnezzar, the aged queen, appears upon the scene.”—Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel: A Key to the Visions and Prophecies of the Book of Daniel*, 56.
- ²⁸⁷ Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:11.
- ²⁸⁸ “Now when the king’s grandmother saw him cast down at this accident, she began to encourage him, . . .”—Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 10.237.
- ²⁸⁹ Keil, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:11.
- ²⁹⁰ Whitcomb, *Daniel*, 75.
- ²⁹¹ “Queen, probably the queen-mother, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar.”—Berlin, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1652.
- ²⁹² “It is believed that she [the aged wife of Nebuchadnezzar] had actually died just a few years prior to this event.”—Benware, *Daniel’s Prophecy of Things to Come*, 104.
- ²⁹³ If she was the king’s consort, she must have had reasons for initially avoiding the banquet. “She had not been present at the banquet board, perhaps as a protest against a profligacy and an indifference to duty of which she could not but disapprove.”—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 225.

- ²⁹⁴ “She had not attended the banquet. This would be understandable if she was elderly and the widow of Nebuchadnezzar.”—Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:10.
- ²⁹⁵ Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:10-12.
- ²⁹⁶ Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 225.
- ²⁹⁷ The OG indicates the queen was summoned by the king: “ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐκάλεσε τὴν βασίλισσαν περὶ τοῦ σεμείου [*ho basileus ekalese tēn basilissan peri tou semeiou*], the king called the queen concerning the omen.”—Anonymous, *Daniel (Old Greek Version)*, Dan. 5:9.
- ²⁹⁸ “Not only was the tumult that arose from the loud confused talk of the king and the nobles heard by those who were there present, but the queen-mother, who was living in the palace, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar, also heard it and went into the banqueting hall.”—Keil, *Daniel*, 9:612.
- ²⁹⁹ Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 23.270.
- ³⁰⁰ “There is a trueness, a readiness, a self-command and a fertility of resources in a genuine woman of which all kings and all men do well to avail themselves whether in shadow or in sunshine. . . . If woman is apt to be agitated with trifles, yet when some great crisis comes she has more calm magnanimity than a thousand lords—more sense and self-possession than they all. From her finer-strung nature she may feel it the more afterward and suffer the more severely under the rebound, but while the dread crisis is upon her the other sex sinks greatly by comparison.”—Joseph Augustus Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet* (Philadelphia, PA: Porter & Coates, 1879), 158-159.
- ³⁰¹ “[Belshazzar] was ignorant of him personally, and probably even of his services as an officer in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. An ingenious and not improbable solution of this difficulty has been proposed as founded on a remark of Sir John Chardin: ‘As mentioned by the queen, Daniel had been made by Nebuchadnezzar “master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers.”’ Of this employment Chardin conjectures that he had been deprived on the death of that king, and obtains this conclusion from the fact that when a Persian king dies, both his astrologers and physicians are driven from court - the former for not having predicted, and the latter for not having prevented, his death. If such was the etiquette of the ancient Babylonian, as it is of the modern Persian court, we have certainly a most satisfactory solution of the present difficulty, as Daniel must then be supposed to have relinquished his public employments, and to have lived retired in private life during the eight years occupied by the reigns of Evil-Merodach and Belshazzar.’ ”—Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, Dan. 5:11. “It is to be remembered also, that Daniel was raised to power by the will of Nebuchadnezzar alone, and that the offices which he held were, in part, in consequence of the service which he had rendered that prince; and it is not strange, therefore, that on a change of the government, he, with perhaps the other favorites of the former sovereign, should be suffered to retire. We find consequently no mention made of Daniel during the reign of Evil-Merodach, or in the short reign of his successor; we lose sight of him until the reign of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon.”—Ibid., s.v. “Introduction to Daniel.”
- ³⁰² “As Daniel was probably, according to Oriental custom, deprived of the office to which Nebuchadnezzar had promoted him, as ‘master of the magicians’ (Dan. 4:9), at the king’s death, Belshazzar might easily be ignorant of his services.”—Fausset, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:11.
- ³⁰³ “Historians tell us that after Nebuchadnezzar died, all of the ministers who were at the core of the palace regulars were banished and sent way from the throne. Daniel, being one of those ministers, virtually dropped out of sight for almost a decade and lived in obscurity.”—David Jeremiah, *The Handwriting on the Wall: Secrets from the Prophecies of Daniel* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1992), 99.
- ³⁰⁴ “After Nebuchadnezzar’s death he [Daniel] appears to have been deprived of his elevated rank, as the result of the change of government.”—Keil, *Daniel*, 9:486. “That Daniel did not at first appear along with the wise men, but was only called after the queen had advised it, is to be explained on this simple ground, that he was no longer president over the magicians, but on the occasion of a new king ascending the throne had lost that situation, and been put into another office (cf. Dan. 8:27).”—Ibid., Dan. 5:12.
- ³⁰⁵ “Belshazzar did not seem to be personally acquainted with Daniel. One reason is that it had been twenty-three years since Nebuchadnezzar’s death, and Daniel did not have the exalted position in the new regime that he had enjoyed earlier. Leupold remarks that ‘especially when usurpers arose, wholesale dismissal of the men in office was the rule.’ . . . Daniel probably had semiretired from public life after Nebuchadnezzar’s death (he was almost sixty years of age), and now he was about eighty.”—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:10-12.
- ³⁰⁶ “He may have been retired from royal service. More importantly, there had been two palace coups since Nebuchadnezzar’s death. The new kings may have demoted or forcefully retired many of Nebuchadnezzar’s advisors in order to appoint new ones whom they thought would be more loyal to them.”—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:10-12.
- ³⁰⁷ “The assumption of Hengstenberg and Hävernick, that on the accession of Belshazzar Daniel was formally deprived of his office as the chief Magian, is a very doubtful supposition, and stands in direct contradiction to Dan. 8:27 (cf. Dan.

- 8:1▶).”—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 128.
- ³⁰⁸ “Perhaps he was in semiretirement; Dan. 8:27▶ implies that he had been in government service as recently as the third year of Belshazzar (cf. Dan. 8:1▶) but had not been enjoying good health.”—Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:10.
- ³⁰⁹ “The scene on the fatal night of Belshazzar’s feast suggests that he had been then so long in retirement, that the young king-regent knew nothing of his fame.”—Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, 34.
- ³¹⁰ Belshazzar mentions Daniel’s ethnicity. Because the queen does not mention this, this may provide evidence that Belshazzar knew of Daniel independently of the queen. “When Daniel is brought before the king, it is obvious from Belshazzar’s words that he is already acquainted with Daniel. The queen did not tell him about Daniel’s ethnic background, but Belshazzar already knows about it.”—Steinmann, *Daniel*, 281-282. Or, it may be that the words attributed to the queen in Daniel 5▶ are only a subset of everything she said on that occasion.
- ³¹¹ “The words of the queen in Dan. 5:11▶ et seq. by no means indicate that the king was wholly unacquainted with Daniel, but merely that up to that time no personal or official intercourse had taken place between them.”—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 128.
- ³¹² The LXX renders the phrase in the singular: “πνεῦμα θεοῦ [*pneuma theou*]”—Theodotion, *Daniel (Theodotion’s Translation)*, Dan. 5:11., *spirit of God*, as does the Stone edition of the Tanach: “The Spirit of the Holy God . . .”—Scherman, *Tanach*, Dan. 5:11.
- ³¹³ “She is referring to God by His generic name, she’s not using it as a plural and she is saying, ‘There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of God.’”—Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 23.271.
- ³¹⁴ The LXX also mentions wakefulness: “γρηγόρησις καὶ σύνεσις εὐρέθη ἐν αὐτῷ [*grēgorēsis kai synesis heurethē en autō*], *wakefulness and understanding were found in him*.”—Theodotion, *Daniel (Theodotion’s Translation)*, Dan. 5:11.
- ³¹⁵ Commentators disagree as to whether the queen was a believer. “Sadly, we must observe that the queen mother’s confidence in Daniel does not seem to have been related to any personal faith in his God. She refers to Daniel and his great wisdom in pagan terms and makes no reference to Daniel’s God as the God of the Jews.”—Deffinbaugh, *Daniel: Relating Prophecy to Piety*, Dan. 5:10-12. “Daniel and the Queen Mother, Nitocris, stand out as stalwart examples of believers who are applying doctrine in the midst of a national crisis and have complete poise and stability despite the fact that they know that this very night the kingdom is going to be taken from Babylon, it will be overrun by the enemies of Babylon, by the Persians, and on the new day there will be a new government in place, a new power in control and their positions of privilege, their positions of aristocracy will probably no longer be theirs and they could very well be dead by morning.”—Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 22.256. “She is a believer, and she was fully aware of everything that Daniel had taught and she shows tremendous stability and has poise under pressure. Real poise under pressure only comes from doctrine in the soul because you know God’s perspective.”—Ibid., 23.270. “She calls him not by his Chaldean name, Belteshazzar, which would invoke the renaming of the Jews when they came into Chaldea, but she calls him Daniel mostly, and that indicates she recognizes him, she probably knew him personally and knew him by his Jewish name . . . It’s very likely that Daniel is the one who taught her as a young woman about the Lord and taught her doctrine.”—Ibid., 23.271-272.
- ³¹⁶ Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:10-11.
- ³¹⁷ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of Messiah*, rev. ed (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1982, 2003), 215.
- ³¹⁸ Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 130.
- ³¹⁹ Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:12.
- ³²⁰ Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, Dan. 5:13.
- ³²¹ “Why did Belshazzar call him ‘Daniel’ instead of ‘Belteshazzar,’ which was his official Babylonian name? The answer could well be that he wanted to emphasize Daniel’s humble Jewish background and thereby excuse his own failure to have honored him previously. Also, he may have sought ‘to avoid the name Belteshazzar which was so similar to his own.’ [Young].”—Whitcomb, *Daniel*, 76. “The use of the name Daniel instead of Belteshazzar, in the king’s address, was probably dictated simply by a desire to avoid the use of a name so nearly identical in sound to his own—although it certainly belonged to the prophet in the official language of the Babylonian court.”—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:13-16.
- ³²² “Belshazzar took particular pains to find out if he was a Jew (Dan. 5:13▶), as if his presence had something to do with the King’s desecration of the ‘Sacred Vessels’ of the Temple.”—Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:24.
- ³²³ The LXX renders the phrase in the singular, “πνεῦμα θεοῦ [*pneuma theou*], *Spirit of God*”—Theodotion, *Daniel (Theodotion’s Translation)*, Dan. 5:14. as does the Stone edition of the Tanach, “That the Spirit of God is in you . . .”—Scherman, *Tanach*, Dan. 5:14.

- ³²⁴ The LXX also mentions wakefulness: “γρηγόρησις . . . ἐν σοί [grēgorēsis . . . en soi], wakefulness . . . in you.”—Theodotion, *Daniel (Theodotion’s Translation)*, Dan. 5:14.
- ³²⁵ God is the source of true wisdom: Gen. 40:8; 41:38; 1K. 3:28; 10:24; 2Chr. 9:23; Dan. 1:17; 2:11; 22; Mat. 11:25; 16:17; John 14:26; 16:13-14; 1Cor. 2:10-13; 2Cor. 12:1-4; Eph. 1:17; 3:3-5; 1Jn. 2:27.
- ³²⁶ The New Testament word for “Mystery” (μυστήριον [mystērion]) does not mean “mysterious,” as in complex or difficult to understand. It refers to “what can be known only through revelation mediated from God *what was not known before* (Mat. 13.11).”—Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 267.
- ³²⁷ New Testament mysteries: Mat. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1Cor. 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph. 1:9; 3:3-4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col. 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3; 2Th. 2:7; 1Ti. 3:9, 16; Rev. 1:20; 10:7; 17:5; 7
- ³²⁸ Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:13.
- ³²⁹ Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 158-159.
- ³³⁰ Jeremiah, *The Handwriting on the Wall: Secrets from the Prophecies of Daniel*, 106.
- ³³¹ *Daniel Interpreting the Writing on the Wall; illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible*. Image courtesy of Dauster. This image is in the public domain.
- ³³² Balaam gave lip service to his intention to deliver an unbiased message (Num. 22:16-18) and his messages were constrained by God, but he still exhibited evidence of temptation.
- ³³³ “As God’s prophet, Daniel spoke to men for God. He was not like Balaam, whose ministry could be bought.”—Deffinbaugh, *Daniel: Relating Prophecy to Piety*, Dan. 5:17-24.
- ³³⁴ Jeremiah, *The Handwriting on the Wall: Secrets from the Prophecies of Daniel*, 108.
- ³³⁵ Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:17-24.
- ³³⁶ “Daniel, on this occasion, behaved in a very different manner to Belshazzar, than he had formerly done to Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar had that very night insulted the God of heaven in the most daring manner; and the venerable prophet, as His delegate, denounced sentence against him.”—Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, Dan. 5:17.
- ³³⁷ “What good was it to be ‘proclaimed’ (to the people in the room, not throughout the empire) the third ruler in an empire that would collapse in only a few hours?”—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:29-31.
- ³³⁸ This is the challenge of all evangelistic work.
- ³³⁹ Keil, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:18.
- ³⁴⁰ Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:18-20.
- ³⁴¹ Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, Dan. 5:19.
- ³⁴² “τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐκραταιώθη τοῦ ὑπερηφανεύσασθαι [to pneuma autou ekrataiōthē tou yperēphaneusasthai]”—Theodotion, *Daniel (Theodotion’s Translation)*, Dan. 5:20., “His spirit was emboldened to act proudly”—Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1851, 1992), Dan. 5:30..
- ³⁴³ Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:18-20.
- ³⁴⁴ Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:17-24.
- ³⁴⁵ Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 131.
- ³⁴⁶ Benware, *Daniel’s Prophecy of Things to Come*, 98.
- ³⁴⁷ “What a courageous declaration he made in front of over a thousand people. But he was able to do so because he did not fear what men could do. He only feared the Lord God of Israel.”—Ibid., 106. “The old prophet’s words demonstrated great courage in the face of a monarch who held the power of life and death over him.”—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:17-24.
- ³⁴⁸ Oliver B. Greene, *Daniel* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, 1964, 1974), 196.
- ³⁴⁹ Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:29.
- ³⁵⁰ Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 141.
- ³⁵¹ Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 11.
- ³⁵² Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:1.
- ³⁵³ “Belshazzar as a boy had association with the royal court of Nebuchadnezzar. He would have been about fourteen years of age when Nebuchadnezzar died. [Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, pp. 114-15.]”—Showers, *The Most High God: Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:1-4. “Belshazzar was probably fifteen years old when

Nebuchadnezzar recovered from his insanity. Anyway he knew all about it from his mother's lips, and as heir apparent to the throne had been warned to avoid his grandfather's sin."—Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:24.

³⁵⁴ "Belshazzar was made co-regent in 553 B.C., and he was killed in 539. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C., so there was only about nine or ten years between the time of Nebuchadnezzar's death and the time Belshazzar is made co-regent with his father Nabonidus."—Howe, *Daniel in the Preterist's Den*, 162.

³⁵⁵ Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:17-24.

³⁵⁶ "Prophet therefore convinces the king of manifest obstinacy; as if he had said, You have provoked God's anger on purpose; since he ought to have been aware of the horrible judgment awaiting all the proud, when he had such a remarkable and singular proof of it in his grandfather."—Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:22. "His sin was the more aggravated, since he had had an example before him of pride being humbled in a very awful manner, and yet took no warning by it."—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:22. "Depend upon it, the words and ways of our day, although not met at once by God, are not forgotten: there is a treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath. The present is not a time when God lets His judgments fall. Rather is it a day when man is building up his sins to heaven, only so much the more terribly to fall when the hand of God is stretched out against him."—Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel (3rd. ed.)*, Dan. 5:11.

³⁵⁷ "We may see prefigured the overthrow of all Gentile power and dominion in the Time of the End; and especially of that evil system designated in the book of the Revelation 'Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.' "—Ironsides, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, 90. "Belshazzar knew what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar, but did not learn from it and humble himself. Instead, he did the opposite and lifted himself against God (Dan. 5:23). This makes Belshazzar the 'son' of Nebuchadnezzar and a forerunner of the great eschatological king, the Antichrist, who will lift himself against God (Dan. 11:36)."—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:22-24.

³⁵⁸ Concerning God as living: Ex. 3:14; Deu. 5:26; Jos. 3:10; 1S. 17:26, 36; 2K. 19:4, 16; Ps. 42:2; 84:2; Isa. 37:4, 17; Jer. 10:10; 23:36; Dan. 6:20, 26; Hos. 1:10; Mat. 16:16; 22:32; 26:63; John 6:69; Acts 3:15; 14:15; Rom. 9:26; 2Cor. 3:3; 6:16; 1Ti. 3:15; 4:10; 6:17; Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev. 7:2. Concerning lifeless idols: Deu. 4:28; 32:38; 1K. 18:29; 2K. 19:18; Ps. 115:4-8; 135:15-17; Isa. 37:19; 41:25; 44:9; 45:20; 46:7; Jer. 2:28; 10:5; 10:8; 10:15; 16:20; 51:17; Dan. 5:23; Hab. 2:18-19; Acts 19:26; Rev. 9:20; 13:15.

³⁵⁹ *New English Translation : NET Bible*, Dan. 5:23.

³⁶⁰ "Perhaps Daniel intended an interesting wordplay by adding that God, who held Belshazzar's life in His *hand*, sent a hand to write him a message."—Pentecost, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:22-24.

³⁶¹ "If Darwin's theory of evolution has little to contribute to the content of the sciences, it has much to offer their ideology. It serves as the creation myth of our time, assigning properties to nature previously assigned to God."—David Berlinski, *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and its Scientific Pretensions* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2008, 2009), loc. 2278. "For whether or not Darwinian (or neo-Darwinian) evolution actually happened, it must be admitted on all hands that without the theory or some equivalent the modern secular world would be quite unable to give an account of itself. Its whole self-understanding rests on the idea that there are natural processes that will account for all present phenomena. The atheist and the agnostic recognized will enough that the theory of evolution *must* be true, and in consequence—as some eminent men have actually said—whatever the difficulties in believing the theory (and it has faced and does face strong challenges, for instance of a mathematical nature, which evolutionists acknowledge) they are incomparably less than the difficulties involved in rejecting the theory, since that would imply special creation; and special creation would imply God."—Nigel Cameron, *Evolution and the Authority of the Bible* (Exeter, England: Paternoster Press, 1983), 14.

³⁶² John M. Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1995), 28.

³⁶³ "καὶ τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην ἐνέταξεν [*kai tēn graphēn tautēn enetaxen*], and this writing was posted."—Theodotion, *Daniel (Theodotion's Translation)*, Dan. 5:24.

³⁶⁴ The OG renders this phrase at Dan. 5:17 as, Ἐριθμηται κατελογισθή, ἐξῆρται [*Erithmētai katelogisthē, exertai*], having been "numbered, reckoned, removed." Ἐριθμηται [*Erithmētai*], perfect passive indicative of ἀριθμέω [*arithmeō*], "be numbered"—James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), #749. κατελογίσθη [*katelogisthē*], aorist passive indicative of κατα-λογίζομαι [*katālogizomai*], "be reckoned"—Johan Lust, Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, rev. ed (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), s.v. "καταλογίζομαι." ἐξῆρται [*exertai*], perfect middle indicative of ἐξαίρω [*exairō*], "exclude, expel, remove, drive away"—Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)*, #1976.

³⁶⁵ “The Greek version of Theodotion lacks the repetition of מְנֵה [m^enē] . . .”—*New English Translation : NET Bible*, Dan. 5:25.

³⁶⁶ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 280-281.

³⁶⁷ “The representation ‘mene, mene’ is emphatic, denoting a quick and thorough end to the kingdom.”—Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1633-1634. “The repetition of מְנֵה [m^enē] as indicating the character of the entire sentence, is designed merely to add a solemn emphasis to the words; cf. the frequent ἀμὲν, ἀμὲν λέγω ὑμῖν [*amen, amen legō hymin*] [verily, I say to you . . .] in the New Testament.”—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 132.

³⁶⁸ “MENE MENE TEKEL and PARSIN can be understood in at least two ways: 1. (the first word as a ptc.) NUMBERED: A MINA, SHEKEL, and a HALF SHEKEL or, 2. (the first MENE is considered a duplicate, then) NUMBERED WEIGHED DIVIDED.”—James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), #10428.

³⁶⁹ Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:25-28.

³⁷⁰ “Peres is used as the third word although *upharsin* had been used in the first reading. The *u* of the original form is the customary conjunction ‘and.’ *Pharsin* is merely the plural form of *peres*.”—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 235. “Peres (פְּרֵס [p^erēs]) is the singular form of פְּרָסִין [p^arśîn] in Dan. 5:25.”—*New English Translation : NET Bible*, Dan. 5:28.

³⁷¹ Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1634.

³⁷² Scherman, *Tanach*, Dan. 5:28.

³⁷³ “We can narrow the beginning of the use of graphic signs for vowels and accents to the time period 600-750 C.E.”—Page H. Kelly, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 15.

³⁷⁴ Table based upon [Steinmann, *Daniel*, 287]

³⁷⁵ “תְּקֵל [tāqēl]—This Aramaic term for ‘shekel,’ another unit of weight, is cognate to the Hebrew שֶׁקֶל [šeqel].”—*Ibid.*, Dan. 5:25.

³⁷⁶ Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 235-236.

³⁷⁷ “The terms may have been actual language of the counting-house or of the law, used of the settling of a bargain, winding up a contract, settling a bankrupt’s affairs, or the like.”—Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 263.

³⁷⁸ Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1634.

³⁷⁹ Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:24.

³⁸⁰ “The Aramaic text of Daniel takes all those forms as past participles (i.e., verbs). It does not permit, as some critics hold, that they are substantives denoting weights . . .”—Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1634.

³⁸¹ “Behrmann well points out that there is no explanation of the illogical order mina, shekel, half-mina.”—Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 264. This has led some scholars to suggest the final word represents a half-shekel rather than half-mina. “Some scholars have been bothered by the order of the weights, since they do not proceed from heaviest to lightest. A Babylonian mina was equivalent to sixty shekels. Some have suggested that the final weight, pēre’, the half-mina, is actually a half-shekel.”—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:25-28.

³⁸² “However, part of the reason that the Babylonian wise men were unable to interpret the inscription (and did not realize that it refers to three weights) is that the weights are not in a logical order.”—*Ibid.*

³⁸³ “Similarly ambiguous was Isaiah’s proffered enigma, *Maher-šalal-ḥaš-baz* (Isa. 8:1).”—Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 264. “Even if the word division and vocalization were certain, arriving at the correct interpretation intended by God required a huge step that required divine revelation.”—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:8-9.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Dan. 5:25-28.

³⁸⁶ Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:25-28.

³⁸⁷ Josephus refers to the Greek form of the cryptic phrase found in the LXX.

³⁸⁸ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 10.243-244.

³⁸⁹ Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 234.

³⁹⁰ Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 127.

³⁹¹ Benware, *Daniel's Prophecy of Things to Come*, 108.

³⁹² Some commentators incorrectly identify Belshazzar as Evil-merodach, who died years before Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians. This forces an interpretation separating the end of the king's life and the end of the kingdom. “מַלְכוּתְךָ [malḵuṭāk] is not ‘thy kingdom,’ but ‘thy kingship’ the duration of thy reign, the days of thy sovereignty. . . . The interval of perhaps 22-24 years which thus falls between his own destruction and that of his kingdom, will, in view of the recognized perspective character of all prophecy, appear no more questionable than the still greater number of years which, according to that earlier prediction, were to elapse between the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the ruin of his dynasty.”—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 132-133. “The narrative contains not the least hint that, at the time when Belshazzar revelled with his lords and his concubines, the city of Babylon was besieged by enemies.”—Keil, *Daniel*, 9:598. “Neither the combination of the two events [the judgment of Belshazzar and the fall of Babylon] in their announcement, nor their union in the statement of their fulfilment, by means of the copula ו in Dan. 6:1▶, affords conclusive proof of their being contemporaneous. Since only the time of Belshazzar's death is given (v. 30), but the transference of the Chaldean kingdom to the Median Darius (Dan. 6:1▶) is not chronologically defined, then we may without hesitation grant that the latter event did not happen till some considerable time after the death of Belshazzar, in case other reasons demand this supposition.”—Ibid., 9:597-598. The Old Greek merely states that Belshazzar was *judged*, not necessarily *killed*: “The Old Greek version does not state that Belshazzar was killed. Instead it says, καὶ τὸ σύγκριμα ἐπῆλθε βαλτασαρ τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ τὸ βασιλείον ἐξήρται ἀπὸ τῶν Χαλδαίων καὶ ἐδόθη τοῖς Μήδοις καὶ τοῖς Πέρσαις [kai to synkrima epēlthe baltasar tō basilei kai to basileion exērtai apo tōn Chaldaion kai edothē tois Mēdois kai tois Persais], ‘and the judgment came upon King Baltasar, and the kingdom was removed from the Chaldeans and given to the Medes and the Persians.’”—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:30.

³⁹³ “καὶ ἐπλήρωσεν αὐτὴν [kai eplērōsen autēn], and completed it.”—Theodotion, *Daniel (Theodotion's Translation)*, Dan. 5:26.

³⁹⁴ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Aramaic (Old Testament)*, #10719.

³⁹⁵ Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, IV.5.1-7.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., V.2.27-28.

³⁹⁷ “Found to be adulterated gold, reprobate silver, bad coin, a false stone; found to be a worthless man, a wicked prince, wanting the necessary qualifications of wisdom, goodness, mercy, truth, and justice.”—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:27.

³⁹⁸ “He [Xenophon] tells us also how Babylon was taken, viz., by Gobryas and Gadatas his generals. For Belshazzar had castrated one of these to his shame, and had slain the son of the other in the lifetime of his father. Since then the latter burnt with the desire of avenging his son's death, and the former his own disgrace, they conspired against him.”—Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:1.

³⁹⁹ Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:24.

⁴⁰⁰ Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 158-159.

⁴⁰¹ Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 5:27.

⁴⁰² Clough, *Lessons on Daniel*, 17.230.

⁴⁰³ “διήρηται [diērētai]”—Theodotion, *Daniel (Theodotion's Translation)*, Dan. 5:28. from διαίρεω [diaireō], “divide, distribute, apportion.”—Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)*, #1349.

⁴⁰⁴ “Here a balanced phrase is obtained by finding a double paranomasia in the mystic word, i.e., *division and Persia*.”—Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 263. “The word *peres* has the same consonants (only the consonants were written in ancient Aramaic and Hebrew scripts) as the Aramaic term translated ‘Persians’ and likely was a *paranomasia* (a wordplay) hinting that the division of the kingdom would be accomplished by the Persian armies.”—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:25-28.

⁴⁰⁵ Archer, *Daniel*, 16-17.

⁴⁰⁶ “The Babylonian empire must have been divided by Cyrus into two parts. One part would be added to the countries which already owned his sway, and the other given as a sub-kingdom to his son Cambyses, the ‘Darius the Mede’ of the Book of Daniel.”—Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, 151.

⁴⁰⁷ “The meaning is not that the kingdom was to be divided into two equal parts, and the one part given to the Medes and the other to the Persians; but פָּרַס [p̄ras] is *to divide into pieces, to destroy, to dissolve* the kingdom.”—Keil, *Daniel*, Dan.

5:25-28. See Gen. 38:29; 1Chr. 13:11.

⁴⁰⁸ “The warning was no longer remedial and left no room for repentance. It announced judgment.”—John Nelson Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible: Ezra to Malachi* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 472. “*Has finished it*, i.e., its duration is so counted out that it is full, that it now comes to an end.”—Keil, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:25-28.

⁴⁰⁹ Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, 89.

⁴¹⁰ Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet*, 132-133.

⁴¹¹ Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, 96-97.

⁴¹² *Sample detail from one side of the cylinder*. The [cylinder records](#) the genealogy of Cyrus the Great and an account of his capture of Babylon in 539 B.C. Copyright © 2010 by Fæ. Use of this image is subject to a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license](#).

⁴¹³ “Belshazzar’s Feast was the turning point in the history of Babylon. It marked the transition from the ‘Head of Gold’ to the ‘Arms and Breast of Silver’ (Dan. 2:32▶) of the ‘Image,’ and from the ‘Lion’ to the ‘Bear’ phase of Gentile rule (Dan. 7:5▶).”—Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:4. “About seventy years had elapsed since the capture of Jerusalem recorded in Daniel 1▶. In the interpretation of the image in chapter 2▶, Daniel had predicted to Nebuchadnezzar, ‘After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee’ (Dan. 2:39▶).”—Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:1.

⁴¹⁴ “[The author] was not guilty of thinking that the second and third stages of the empire (in the colossus of chap. 2 and the beasts of chap. 7) was to be Median and Persian, respectively, but envisioned them to be Medo-Persian and Grecian, respectively, with Rome as the fourth kingdom. The unbelieving critical position flounders upon this verse as well as in the exposition of chapters 2 and 7.”—Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1634.

⁴¹⁵ Keil, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:25-28.

⁴¹⁶ Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 235.

⁴¹⁷ Whitcomb, *Daniel*, 78.

⁴¹⁸ “Elam is a part of Persia; but is taken for the whole of Persia, and on this account also the Persians are called Elamites. It is worthy of observation, that, when Isaiah foretold these things [Isa. 21:2], there was no probability of war, and that he was dead a hundred years before there was any apprehension of this calamity. Hence it is sufficiently evident that he could not have derived his information on this subject from any other than the Spirit of God; and this contributes greatly to confirm the truth and certainty of the prediction.”—John Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Isaiah* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998, 1561), Isa. 21:2.

⁴¹⁹ Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:13-16.

⁴²⁰ “The assumption is still admissible, that any protest which the prophet may have offered, remained without effect, in view of the stormy haste of the king in his alarm, and was lost amid the acclamations and the noisy conversation of the excited throng.”—Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 133.

⁴²¹ Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:17.

⁴²² “Rowley considers it to have been ‘grim humour’ for anyone to have received such an honor when the empire was ready to fall. For such an honor would have placed its recipient in grave danger . . . Such may very well have been the case, but it must be remembered that the king was in terror. He was desperate, and not acting as a result of calm reflection.”—Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 121.

⁴²³ “Meanwhile, we must observe God’s wonderful kindness towards the Prophet. He was not in the slightest danger, as the rest were. He was clad in purple, and scarcely an hour had passed when the Medes and Persians entered the city. He could scarcely have escaped in the tumult, unless God had covered him with the shadow of his hand.”—Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:30-31.

⁴²⁴ “There is no doubt that Cyrus was afterwards informed of this prophecy; for he would not have courted Daniel so much, nor honored him so remarkably, unless this *occurrence* had been made known to him.”—Ibid., Dan. 5:8-9.

⁴²⁵ “Coming into power in Babylon upon the fall of Nabonnedus and Belshazzar, he would necessarily have his attention very particularly directed to Daniel, not only from his connection with the court for such a long succession of years, but chiefly on account of his interpretation of the mysterious writing on the wall, his prediction of Belshazzar’s fall, and his remarkable wisdom in connection with the reign of the great Nebuchadnezzar. Very naturally, he would desire to avail himself of the services and talents of so wise, experienced and faultless a man.”—Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 158-159.

⁴²⁶ Keil, *Daniel*, 9:616.

⁴²⁷ “Belshazzar’s promotion of Daniel in spite of Daniel’s earlier rebuke of the king again exemplifies to the deportees how they are to live in the exile by consecrating themselves to God and trusting in Him to handle the remaining issues in their

lives.”—Andy Woods, *Introduction to the Book of Daniel*, 28.

⁴²⁸ Howe, *Daniel in the Preterist's Den*, 169.

⁴²⁹ Some commentators misidentify Belshazzar with Evil-merodach, who perished years before Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians. This forces them to suppose the end of the king's life did not coincide with the fall of Babylon. See [endnote in commentary on Daniel 5:26](#).

⁴³⁰ “As the capture of the city by Cyrus was not till near daylight, there was no want of *time* in that eventful night for accomplishing all that is here recorded.”—Fausset, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:29. “For the king's death was at hand and the city was taken in a few hours — nay, in the very same hour!”—Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:17.

⁴³¹ Clough, *Lessons on Daniel*, 15.191.

⁴³² “Much as Babylon fell on that sixteenth day of Tishri (Oct. 11 or 12) 539 B.C., as indicated in the Nabonidus Chronicle, so the world will be overtaken by disaster when the day of the Lord comes (1Th. 5:1-3).”—Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 5:29.

⁴³³ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 340.

⁴³⁴ Archer, *Modern Rationalism and the Book of Daniel*, 136.

⁴³⁵ Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, VII.5.28-30, 33.

⁴³⁶ Anderson, *Daniel in the Critic's Den*, 27, 31, 34.

⁴³⁷ Goldingay, *Daniel*, 107.

⁴³⁸ “Gadatas and Gobryas . . . did homage to the gods, seeing that they had avenged themselves upon the wicked king, and then they kissed Cyrus' hands and his feet with tears of joy.”—Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, VII.5.32.

⁴³⁹ Courtesy of [wikisource.org](#). Use of this image is subject to a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#).

⁴⁴⁰ “This is what Berosus relates . . . ‘but when he [Nabonnedus] was come to the seventeenth year of his reign, Cyrus came out of Persia with a great army; and having already conquered all the rest of Asia, he came hastily to Babylonia. When Nabonnedus perceived he was coming to attack him, he met with his forces, and joining battle with him, was beaten; and fled away with a few of his troops with him, and was shut up within the city Borsippus. Hereupon Cyrus took Babylon, and gave order that the outer walls of the city should be demolished, because the city had proved very troublesome to him, and cost him a great deal of pains to take it. He then marched away to Borsippus, to besiege Nabonnedus; but as Nabonnedus did not sustain the siege, but delivered himself into his hands, he was at first kindly used by Cyrus, who gave him Carmania, as a place for him to inhabit in, but sent him out of Babylonia. Accordingly Nabonnedus spent the rest of his time in that country, and there died.’ ”—Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1.20.142-153.

⁴⁴¹ “Nabonidus was arrested in Babylon when he returned (there).”—Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, 281.

⁴⁴² “Returning to Babylon in 539 B.C., he was captured by Cyrus' general Gobryas and exiled.”—Michael Levy, ed., *Britannica 2012 Deluxe Edition CDROM*, s.v. “Nabonidus.”

⁴⁴³ The OG mentions both Darius and Artaxerxes: “καὶ Ἀρταξέρξης ὁ τῶν Μήδων παρέλαβε τὴν βασιλείαν. Καὶ Δαρείος πλήρης τῶν ἡμερῶν καὶ ἔνδοξος ἐν γῆρει [*kai Artaxerxēs ho tōn Mēdōn parelabe tēn basileian Kai Dareios plērēs tōn hēmerōn kai endoxos hen gērei*], *And Artaxerxes of the Medes received the kingdom. And Darius [was] full of days and honored into old age.*”—Anonymous, *Daniel (Old Greek Version)*, Dan. 6:1.

⁴⁴⁴ “The fact that God predicted more than 150 years in advance that a man named Cyrus would release the Jewish exiles points to God's uniqueness.”—John A. Martin, “Isaiah,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983), 1:1099. “As proof of the inspiration of the Scriptures it is worthy of note that the ‘Fall of Babylon’ was foretold, and the manner of its capture described, and the name of its captor given, 175 years before the event took place. The Prophecy is found in Isa. 44:28 - Isa. 45:1-4 . . .”—Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:31.

⁴⁴⁵ Beginning as early as the first [deportation](#) of the Jews to Babylon, but especially by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., Isaiah's prophecy could be understood as predicting Cyrus would gain dominion over Babylon. The Median aspect of this prediction may not have become evident until Cyrus conquered the Medes in 549 B.C. “Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire, first came to the throne of Anshan in Eastern Elam in 559. In 549 he conquered the Medes and became the ruler of the combined Persian and Median Empire.”—Martin, *Isaiah*, 1:1099.

⁴⁴⁶ Jeremiah 51 was written in *ca.* 590 B.C. [Charles H. Dyer, “Jeremiah,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983), 1127]

⁴⁴⁷ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 257-258.

- ⁴⁴⁸ “The Medes are important because the Medes are descendants of a man by the name of Japheth; they are not Semitic peoples. They are Japhetic people; very important because the times of the Gentiles will be largely Japhetic; we are Japhetic, our civilization is largely Japhetic. So the Medes are one of the great forerunners of the Japhetic line.”—Clough, *Lessons on Daniel*, 15.199.
- ⁴⁴⁹ *Extract from the Cyrus Cylinder (lines 15-21), giving the genealogy of Cyrus the Great and an account of his capture of Babylon in 539 B.C.* Translated by E.A. Wallis Budge (1857-1934) in 1884. This image is in the public domain.
- ⁴⁵⁰ “Cyrus, who was of the royal family of the Persians, might have been a satrap of Persia and commanded a part of the army under Darius but was not yet an absolute and independent king. However, soon after the taking of Babylon, when he had a victorious army at his devotion and after Darius returned to Media from Babylon, Cyrus and the Persians under him revolted from Darius. . . . According to Strabo, this last battle was fought at Persepolis or Pasargadae in Persia, and Darius the Mede was beaten and taken prisoner by Cyrus. This victory transferred the empire to the Persians from the Medes. [Strabo, book 15. c. 3. s. 8. (730)] . . . This victory over Darius the Mede likely happened in 537 B.C., about the year after the taking of Babylon, for the reign of Nabonnedus the last king of the Chaldeans, whom Josephus calls Naboandelos and Belshazzar, ended in 538 B.C. eight years before the death of Cyrus, according to Ptolemy’s Canon.”—Newton, *Newton’s Revised History of Ancient Kingdoms*, 112. “The first time Cyrus defeated Darius the Mede was in 537 B.C. He revolted from Darius and became king of the Persians, either the same year, or in the end of the previous year.”—Ibid.
- ⁴⁵¹ “(5) This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision:— ‘My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple.’ (6) This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God, . . .” —Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.5-6.
- ⁴⁵² Care is needed when interpreting passages predicting the overthrow of Babylon. The passages contain both near-term and far-future predictions mixing aspects of different historical overthrows of the city. The final overthrow remains future to our time. See *Babylon of the Future*.
- ⁴⁵³ “The first period of [Isaiah’s] ministry was in the reigns of Uzziah (792-740 B.C.) and Jotham (750-738 as regent, 738-732 as sole ruler), in which he called for repentance without success, and consequently had to announce judgment and banishment. The second period extended from the commencement of the reign of Ahaz (735-715) to that of the reign of Hezekiah; the third from the accession of Hezekiah (c. 715) to the fifteenth year of his reign.”—Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Isaiah.” Isaiah’s prediction concerning the Medes, in Isaiah 13:17, may refer to their participation in an earlier sack of Babylon by Assyria in 689 B.C. See Q293 : *The Fall of Babylon to the Medes (Isaiah 13:17-19)*.
- ⁴⁵⁴ The references to *Sheshach* in Jeremiah 25:26 and 51:41 are thought to be a cipher for Babylon. “Who or what is Sheshach? Most scholars believe that the word is a cryptogram or *atbash* for Babylon. An *atbash* was a code in which the letters of a name counted from the end of the alphabet are substituted for the letters counted from the beginning. For example, in English the letter ‘z’ would replace the letter ‘a,’ the letter ‘y’ would replace the letter ‘b,’ etc. The word ‘Abby’ as an *atbash* would become ‘zyyb.’ If ‘Sheshach’ (*ššk*) is a Hebrew *atbash* the consonants become *bbl*, which is the spelling for Babylon (cf. Jer. 25:1).” —Dyer, *Jeremiah*, Jer. 25:26. Wiseman offers an alternative explanation: “The unusual name *šešak* in Jeremiah 25:26; 51:41, though commonly explained as an *Atbash* cypher for *bbl*, could be an erudite rendering of the title *šeš.ku*’ or *u’ru* (= *šeš*).*ku*’, ‘holy city.’ ” —Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 45. The term *Marathaim* in Jeremiah 50:21 also refers to Babylon: “‘Merathaim’ was the region of *Mat Marratim* in southern Babylon where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers enter the Persian Gulf. However, the word in Hebrew (*merāṭayim*) means “double rebellion.” “Pekod” referred to an Aramean tribe (*Pequdu*) in southern Babylon on the east bank of the Tigris River; but the word in Hebrew (*peqôḏ*) means “to punish” or “punishment.” Thus God was saying He would attack the land of double rebellion and inflict His punishment on it.” —Dyer, *Jeremiah*, Jer. 50:21.
- ⁴⁵⁵ Also see Ps. 137:8.
- ⁴⁵⁶ Jeremiah also predicts that Babylon will be made “a perpetual desolation.” This part of Jeremiah’s predictions has not found complete fulfillment. See *Babylon of the Future*.
- ⁴⁵⁷ Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 6:1.
- ⁴⁵⁸ Herodotus, *The Histories (English)*, 1.190.1-1.192.1.
- ⁴⁵⁹ Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, VII.5.9-70.
- ⁴⁶⁰ This is implied by the merriment of the king, holding a feast while the siege was in progress.
- ⁴⁶¹ See *Babylon of the Future*.
- ⁴⁶² See *Babylon of the Future*.

⁴⁶³ See *Babylon of the Future*.

⁴⁶⁴ “‘But,’ said Chrysantas, ‘does not this river flow through the midst of the city? And it is more than two stadia in width.’ ‘Aye, by Zeus,’ said Gobryas, ‘and its depth is such that two men, one standing on the other’s shoulders, would not reach the surface of the water, so that the city is better defended by the river than by its walls.’ ‘Chrysantas,’ Cyrus answered . . . ‘we must . . . dig a ditch as wide and as deep as possible . . .’”—Ibid., VII.5.8-9.

⁴⁶⁵ “While the extent to which the Euphrates was diverted may be exaggerated in these classical sources, the Chronicle nevertheless does lend some support to the idea that the Persians gained access to the city by way of the river, since they attacked Babylon in Tishri (October), when the river was at its lowest level.”—Shea, *Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and the Book of Daniel: An Update*, 144.

⁴⁶⁶ “Having stationed the bulk of his army near the passage of the river where it enters Babylon, and again having stationed another division beyond the city, where the river makes its exit, he gave order to his forces to enter the city as soon as they should see the stream fordable. . . .he himself marched away with the ineffective part of his army; and having come to the lake, Cyrus did the same with respect to the river and the lake as the queen of the Babylonians had done; for having diverted the river, by means of a canal, into the lake, which was before a swamp, he made the ancient channel fordable by the sinking of the river. . . .It is related by the people who inhabited this city, that. . .those of the Babylonians who inhabited the centre knew nothing of the capture (for it happened to be a festival); but they were dancing at the time, and enjoying themselves, till they received certain information of the truth.”—Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, 129-130.

⁴⁶⁷ “Some say he constructed a large artificial lake, miles above the city, into which he drained the river. Others say, and it seems the most likely, that he constructed a new channel for the river, far away and invisible from the tops of the Towers on top of the walls, and into this new channel he diverted the water of the river above the city, so that the water that flowed through the city flowed away and left the river bed through the city dry.”—Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:31.

⁴⁶⁸ “[The] site for the northernmost defence wall for the Babylonian area suits the operation by Cyrus when he diverted the R. Euphrates at such a distance as not to arouse immediate suspicion. This allowed the element of surprise for the attack on the city along the dried-up river and canal beds which gave access under and through walls into the citadel itself.”—Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, 62.

⁴⁶⁹ “[Babylon] will be taken by stratagem, caught in a snare (Jer. 50:24). This stratagem is connected with her water defences, of which Nebuchadnezzar gives such an eloquent description [India House Inscription, col. vi. 39-46.] : Jehovah ‘will dry up her sea and make her fountain dry’ (Jer. 51:36).”—Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, 121.

⁴⁷⁰ Once again, phrases which might have appeared symbolic at the time they were given turned out to describe literal events related to Cyrus’ capture of Babylon.

⁴⁷¹ Howard P. Free and Voss, *Archaeology and Bible History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 203.

⁴⁷² Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 142.

⁴⁷³ Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:31.

⁴⁷⁴ These historical records are far from objective, but the basic tenor of what they record is that of a peaceful take-over of the city.

⁴⁷⁵ Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, 282.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 283.

⁴⁷⁷ “In the march of Cyrus’ army against Babylon the only real battle of the campaign was fought at Opis: . . . *In the month Tishri, when Cyrus fought at Opis on the Tigris river against the troops of Akkad, the people of Akkad he destroyed by means of a conflagration: he put the people to death.*”—Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 169-170.

⁴⁷⁸ Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, V.2.7.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., V.3.15-18.

⁴⁸⁰ Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, 282.

⁴⁸¹ “When the Persians attacked at Opis on the Tigris, the Chronicle records that the inhabitants of Akkad revolted. In order to suppress the revolt, Nabonidus massacred a number of his own subjects. No wonder the Babylonians welcomed Cyrus as a deliverer!”—Shea, *Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and the Book of Daniel: An Update*, 141.

⁴⁸² Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, 281.

⁴⁸³ Mitchell, *The Bible in the British Museum*, 83.

⁴⁸⁴ Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 382.

⁴⁸⁵ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*, #10618.

⁴⁸⁶ “ ‘Received the kingdom’ has been explained in various ways: (1) God bestowed the kingdom upon Darius (Charles, Slotki); (2) he (a subordinate to the king) was granted the kingdom by a superior, probably Cyrus (Whitcomb, Keil, Boutflower, Wilson); and (3) it denotes mere ‘secular succession’ (Montgomery, Young).” — Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:29-31.

⁴⁸⁷ Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, 143.

⁴⁸⁸ Archer, *Modern Rationalism and the Book of Daniel*, 139.

⁴⁸⁹ “Darius the Mede did not take Babylon. It was captured by Cyrus. But as an act of courtesy, and because Media was the older of the two Kingdoms Media and Persia, and because he had some other military campaigns to finish, Cyrus committed the governorship of Babylon to his uncle Darius, the king of Media, who ruled for two years.” — Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 5:31. Pusey suggests additional reasons an elderly Median might be an ideal ruler over Babylon. “Babylon then, probably, could not be safely left to itself; and it was a wise policy to attach the Medes by placing over it, out of their royal line, as Vice-king, one who, by reason of his age and apparent softness of character, would have no temptation to revolt, and who would find, in Babylon, no old associations or support.” — Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet*, 130.

⁴⁹⁰ “Also, this first year is when there was significant warfare in the angelic realm (Dan. 11:1▶) as God’s predicted program transitions from the first kingdom of gold to the second kingdom of silver. Clearly, evil angels under Satan’s direction are involved in an attempt to thwart God’s work.” — Benware, *Daniel’s Prophecy of Things to Come*, Dan 6:4-5.

⁴⁹¹ Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 5:29-31.

⁴⁹² “The statement concerning Darius’ age seems to have been added to show that Darius’ reign was not of long duration, but soon gave way to that of Cyrus the Persian.” — Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, Dan. 5:31.

⁴⁹³ For slightly different dates, see [John A. Martin, “Ezra,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983), 1:654].

⁴⁹⁴ “537-8 B.C.” — W. A. Criswell and Paige Patterson, eds., *The Holy Bible: Baptist Study Edition* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 634.

⁴⁹⁵ The decree allowing their return was issued in 457 B.C. and the return followed soon thereafter. “In B.C. 458, Ezra, . . . in accordance with the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus, organised another large caravan of those whose hearts were made willing to return to the land of their fathers.” — David Baron, *The History of the Ten ‘Lost’ Tribes: Anglo-Israelism Examined*, 4th ed (London, England: Morgan & Scott Ltd., 1915+), par. 382. “Two major expeditions made the journey, one in 537-8 B.C. and another in 458 B.C.” — Criswell, *The Holy Bible: Baptist Study Edition*, 634.

⁴⁹⁶ “Artaxerxes I was nicknamed by the Greeks ‘long-armed’ (Greek *markocheir*; Latin *Longimanus*). According to Plutarch (*Artaxerxes* 1), ‘the first Artaxerxes, among all the kings of Persia the most remarkable for a gentle and noble spirit, was surnamed the Long-handed, his right hand being longer than his left, and was the son of Xerxes.’ ” — Edwin E. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 241.

⁴⁹⁷ This image was produced by www.spiritandtruth.org and is hereby placed in the public domain.

⁴⁹⁸ Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, Dan. 5:22.

⁴⁹⁹ Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:7.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, Dan. 5:6.

⁵⁰¹ Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 158-159.

⁵⁰² Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 5:25-28.

⁵⁰³ Woods, *Introduction to the Book of Daniel*, 28.

⁵⁰⁴ Deffinbaugh, *Daniel: Relating Prophecy to Piety*, Dan. 5:30-31.

⁵⁰⁵ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 258.





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