

Daniel 5 (TAC)

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

12:17 PM



Good evening Arising Church!

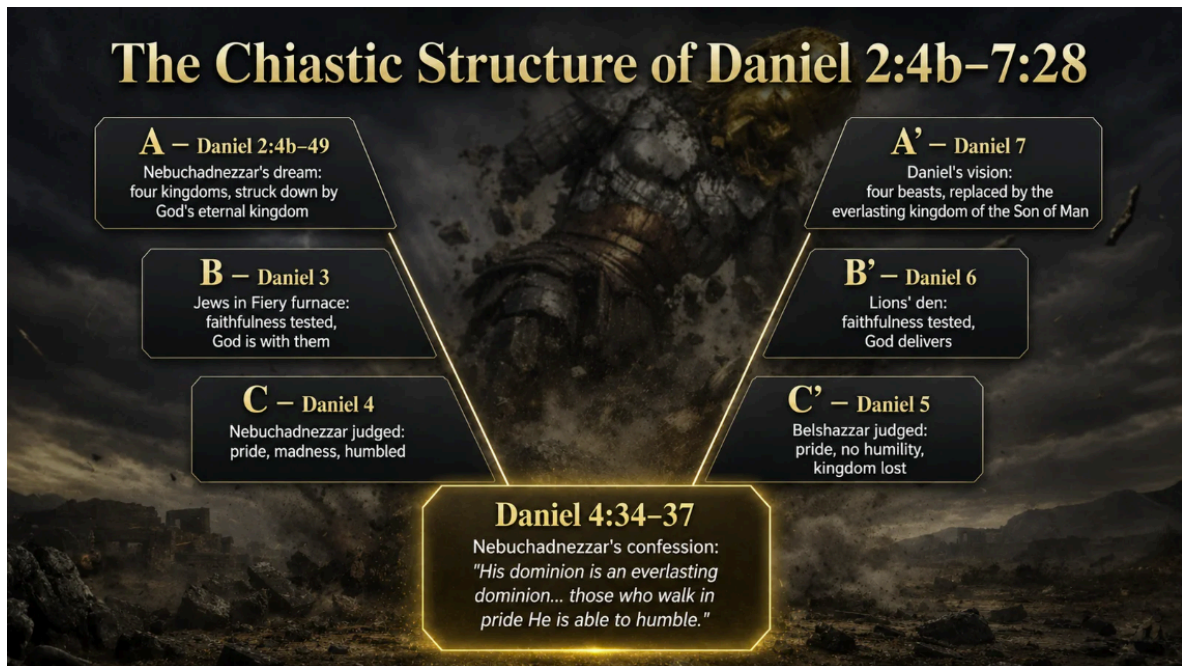
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Opening

The High Position of Believers

Last week, we covered Daniel 4 and crossed an important milestone in the Aramaic portion of the book of Daniel.



The Aramaic section of Daniel is not simply a collection of unrelated stories. As we have shown, one compelling way to read Daniel 2:4b-7:28 is as a carefully constructed chiasm. The arrangement moves from **A-B-C** to **C'-B'-A'**, with Daniel 4 at the center. This means that the heart of the book within a book is not only about the rise and fall of empires, the persecution of faithful Jews, or even the judgment of wicked kings. At its center stands the humbling of the king of the known world and his public confession that the God of Israel alone possesses everlasting dominion.

The outermost pair, Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, presents two visions of the same basic reality from two different perspectives. In Daniel 2, a Gentile king sees human kingdoms as a magnificent statue composed of valuable metals. This is the appeal of empire from humanity's perspective: impressive, powerful, and glorious. Yet the entire statue is shattered by a stone "not cut by human hands," which becomes a mountain filling the whole earth. In Daniel 7, a

faithful Jew, looks at those same human empires from heaven's perspective, and they no longer appear glorious. They appear as violent, ravenous beasts rising from a chaotic sea. **The kingdoms that look like precious metals to human rulers look like monsters before the throne of God. In both visions, however, the conclusion is the same: every human kingdom is temporary, and God's everlasting kingdom will replace them all.**

The second pair, Daniel 3 and Daniel 6, shows the faithful people of God being condemned because they refuse to compromise their allegiance to him. In Daniel 3, three Jewish men are thrown into a furnace because they will not worship the king's image. God does not prevent them from entering the fire; instead, his presence is revealed with them in the fire, and they emerge untouched. In Daniel 6, Daniel is thrown into the lions' den because he will not cease praying to his God. Once again, the law of the empire attempts to destroy the faithful, but God overrules the sentence and preserves his servants.

Together, these chapters teach that earthly kings may control the furnace and the den, but they do not control the outcome. God is able to sustain his people even when obedience leads them directly into danger.

The third pair, Daniel 4 and Daniel 5, present two Babylonian kings brought under God's judgment. King Nebuchadnezzar is judged for his pride and stripped of his glory.

Tonight, you will see another Babylonian king confronted by the same sovereign God.

Together, these chapters declare that no earthly ruler is beyond the judgment of the Most High.

But the center of the chiasm focuses on Nebuchadnezzar's response. After being humbled, he lifts his eyes to heaven and confesses that God's dominion is everlasting. The king who once **demande**d worship now proclaims to the nations that heaven rules and that God is able to humble those who walk in pride. And the easy part to miss is this, Nebuchadnezzar's understanding of this God came through the witness of the faithful Jews.

This is the theological center of the Aramaic section: the Most High rules over the kingdoms of men, human pride will be brought down, and even the greatest Gentile ruler can be transformed into a witness to the God of Israel's universal reign.

Nebuchadnezzar's testimony should have become a defining witness for every generation that followed him—especially among his own royal house. No one should have forgotten his declaration that God is able to humble those who walk in pride. No one should have forgotten Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, or the unmistakable power of their God. And yet tonight, we will meet a king who knew all of this and lived as though it had never happened.

But standing before him will be a faithful man who has not forgotten. One man is impressed by the wealth and glory of Babylon; Another remembers who actually rules over Babylon. One man is impressed by what this world can give; the other man knows that everything this world offers is already passing away.

- **James 1:9–10 (NIV)**

9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower.

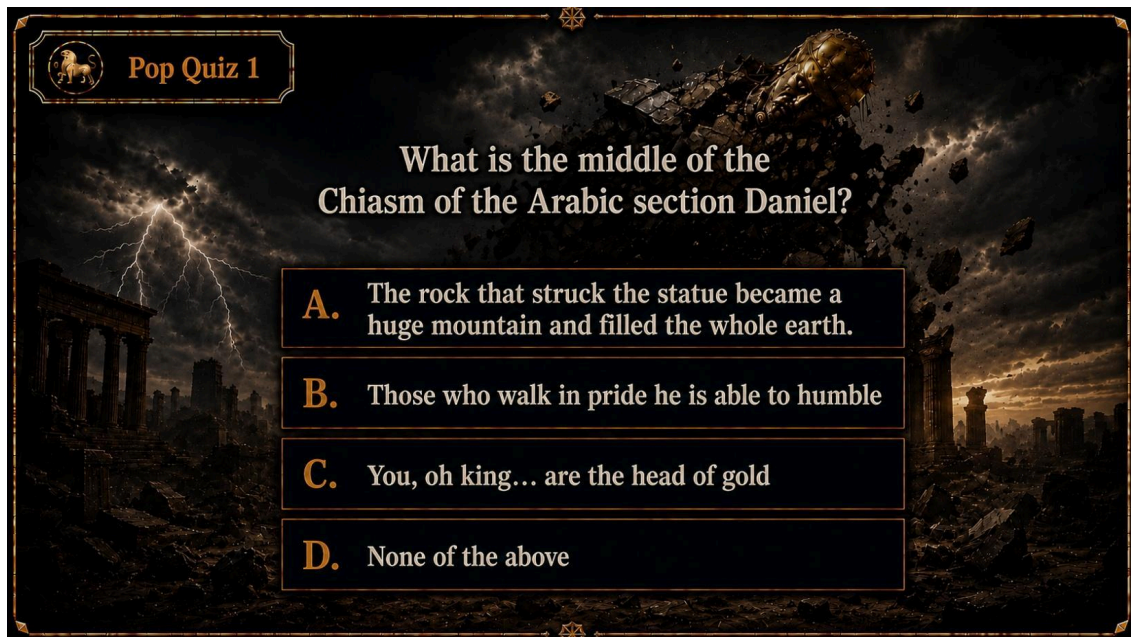
As men of the Kingdom, we stand in a high position—not because of worldly wealth, status, or influence, but because we have been entrusted with the knowledge of God. This enables us to glorify the Lord for what he is doing in us and through us. It is essential to understanding the value of our identity in Christ.

Throughout life, you will interact with people who appear rich, powerful, or influential according to this present world. But keep this truth at the forefront of your mind: this world and all its glory are like flowers that will soon pass away. You stand in the higher position because you possess something eternal with which you can bless them. You should not be

craving what they have to offer. They are the ones who desperately need what God has entrusted to you.

You will see this attitude in Daniel tonight. You should see it in your leaders, and it is an attitude every believer must grasp if he is to become an oak of righteousness rather than a pathetic reed swayed by every worldly wind.

Make up your mind tonight that you will not covet the riches of this world. Refuse to be enticed by its rewards, bribed by its tokens, or seduced by its promises of influence—especially when those pressures come through people close to you. When the enemy offers you the kingdoms of this world, remember that you already belong to the Kingdom of God—the kingdom that will ultimately fill the whole earth.



Pop Quiz 1

What is the middle of the Chiasm of the Arabic section Daniel?

- A.** The rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.
- B.** Those who walk in pride he is able to humble
- C.** You, oh king... are the head of gold
- D.** None of the above

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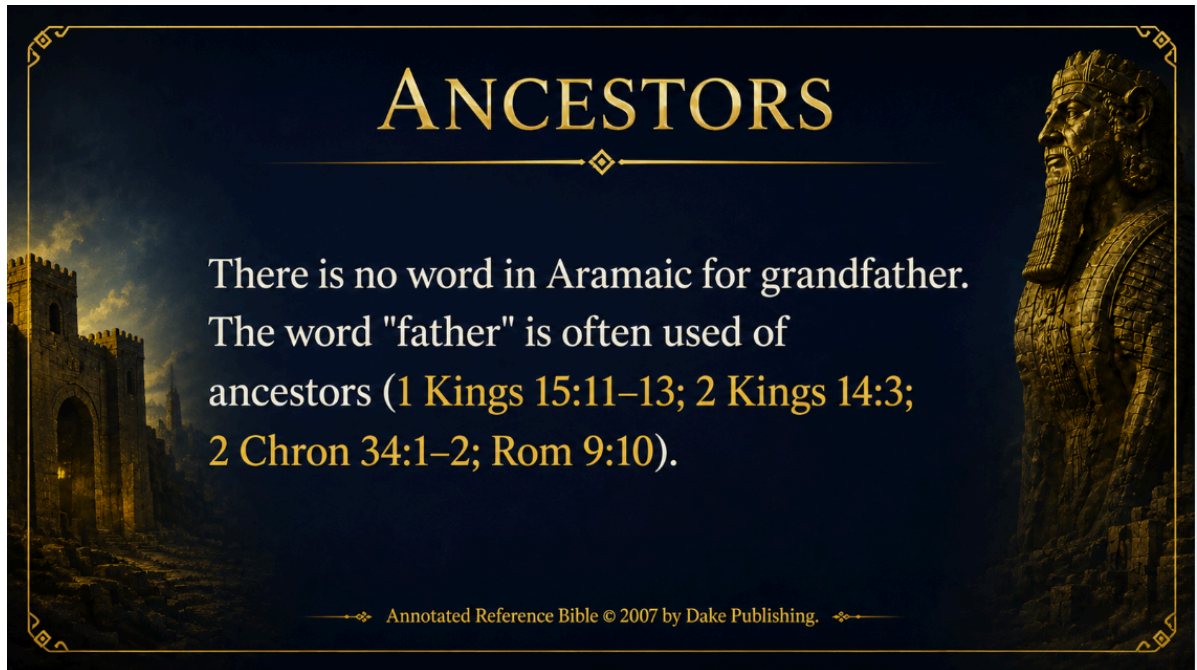
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Historical Introduction — The Neo-Babylonian Kings

TIMELINE OF BABYLONIAN KINGS			
	Nabopolassar	626 – 605 BC	the “George Washington” of Babylonian Empire
	Nebuchadnezzar	605 – 561 BC	the “head of Gold” from Daniel 2. He destroyed Jerusalem, but later worships the God of Israel.
	Evil-Merodach	561 – 559 BC	Son of Nebuchadnezzar who freed Jehoiachin (2 Kings 25:27-30)
	Neriglissar	559 – 555 BC	Son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, probably the same as “Neral-Sharezer” (Jer. 39:3) at the final siege.
	Labashi-Marduk	3 months	son of Neriglissar, removed by Nabonidus
	Nabonidus	555 – 538 BC	Absent King and father of Belshazzar who was Coregent
	Belshazzar	542 – 538 BC	The Events of Daniel 5 (He began to reign as Coregent in or before this year. Some state as early as 553BC)
— Most Dates According to “The Coming Prince” by Sir Robert Anderson. — See also: James Hastings et al., Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), 69.			

Our text tonight begins during the final hours of Belshazzar’s co-regency with Nabonidus. Before entering Daniel 5, we need enough historical background to understand who these men were and why Daniel refers to Belshazzar as king.

The timeline shows the rapid change that followed Nebuchadnezzar. After his long and powerful reign, Babylon passed through several rulers in only a few years. By the time we reach Daniel 5, Nabonidus is the official king, but he is frequently absent, while his son Belshazzar exercises royal authority in Babylon.



One possible source of confusion is Daniel's use of the words father and son. Ancient Semitic usage was broader than our modern English categories. "Father" could refer to an ancestor or royal predecessor, while "son" could describe a descendant or successor.

The point of this slide is to show that Daniel is using the normal language of the ancient world when he calls Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar's father.

Notice what the Bible Background Commentary illustrates:

(Read Slide)

Sons and Fathers

...Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus had the same name (Labynetos) and were at times confused. Additionally, however, in the ancient world, successive monarchs were often identified as sons of famous predecessors even when there were no dynastic or genealogical connections. So, for instance, on the **black obelisk of Shalmaneser III**, **Jehu, king of Israel, is identified as "son of Omri,"** even though he had been responsible for wiping out the line of Omri and was no relation (a fact probably well known to the Assyrians).

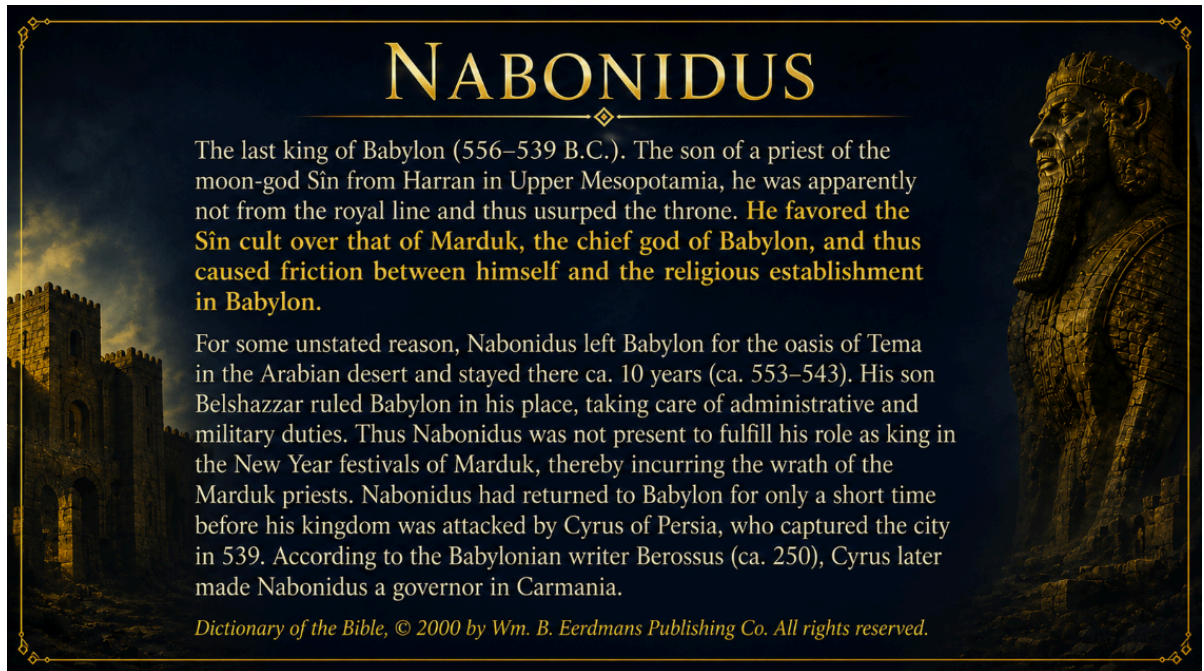
Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament, Copyright © 2000 by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas. Published by InterVarsity Press. All rights reserved.

The Black Obelisk gives us a clear example. Jehu is identified as the “son of Omri,” even though he was not biologically related to Omri and had destroyed Omri’s dynasty. Omri’s name had become associated with the throne and kingdom of Israel.

In the same way, a later Babylonian ruler could be called the son of a famous predecessor. So when Daniel calls Belshazzar the son of Nebuchadnezzar, that language fits the royal customs of the period rather than presenting a historical error.

As we will also see, Belshazzar appears to have had an actual family connection to Nebuchadnezzar through his mother.

(Do not Read Slide)



Nabonidus was the last official king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. He did not come from Nebuchadnezzar's immediate royal line and appears to have gained the throne through other means. He also favored the worship of the moon god Sin over Marduk, the chief god of Babylon, creating serious tension between himself and Babylon's religious establishment.

For reasons not fully stated in the surviving records, Nabonidus left Babylon for the oasis of Tema in the Arabian Desert and remained there for approximately ten years. His extended absence required his son Belshazzar to serve as co-regent and acting king in Babylon, overseeing the kingdom's administrative and military affairs. Nabonidus's Arabian campaigns also brought him within a few hundred miles of the later homeland of Muhammad and many of the historical sites associated with Islam.

This also brings us back to the **Prayer of Nabonidus** from the Dead Sea Scrolls. In that document, traditions associated with Nabonidus closely resemble the account of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation in Daniel 4. Their names both contain the divine element *Nabû*, and in a consonantal language the names could be more easily associated or confused in later records. This helps explain why traditions concerning Nabonidus and Nebuchadnezzar sometimes overlap.

Nabonidus's absence also meant that he did not participate in the traditional Babylonian New Year ceremonies connected with Marduk; where they would pull the king's ears and strike his face. His rejection of these ceremonies further alienated the Marduk priests. With Nabonidus and part of the army in Arabia, Belshazzar ruling in Babylon, and the religious establishment divided against the king, the empire was left spiritually, politically, and militarily vulnerable to the Persians.

The spiritual decline is especially striking. Daniel 4 ends with Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold, proclaiming the supremacy and everlasting dominion of the Most High God. Yet by the time we reach Nabonidus, the royal house has turned toward the worship of the moon god Sin. This is not merely a political transition; it is a spiritual descent. In the framework we are presenting, the worship of Sin represents a movement beyond even Babylon's devotion to Marduk and toward the moon-god tradition that would later find expression in the religious world from which Islam emerged.

Belshazzar vindicated by archaeology

A great deal of skepticism has been leveled at the book of Daniel over the years. In fact, Daniel 5 is often regarded as entirely fictional by academic critics. The primary reason is that up until recent history, the only Babylonian inscriptions that existed referred to Nabonidus as the last king of Babylon — with no mention of Belshazzar. As usual, the skepticism was misplaced. The Bible was proven to be more accurate than the assumptions made by these historians.



A clay foundation cylinder from the British Museum — the Cylinder of Nabonidus — describes the rebuilding of a ziggurat by Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon. Crucially, Nabonidus prays for his son Belshazzar, who ruled Babylon while he was away. This one cylinder resolves the entire "fictional" charge against Daniel 5.

The consistent mistake of scholars is to assume that if they haven't found a document from 2,500 years ago yet, then the Bible must be wrong. Time and time again this assumption proves to be false when the Bible is eventually proven to be historically accurate.

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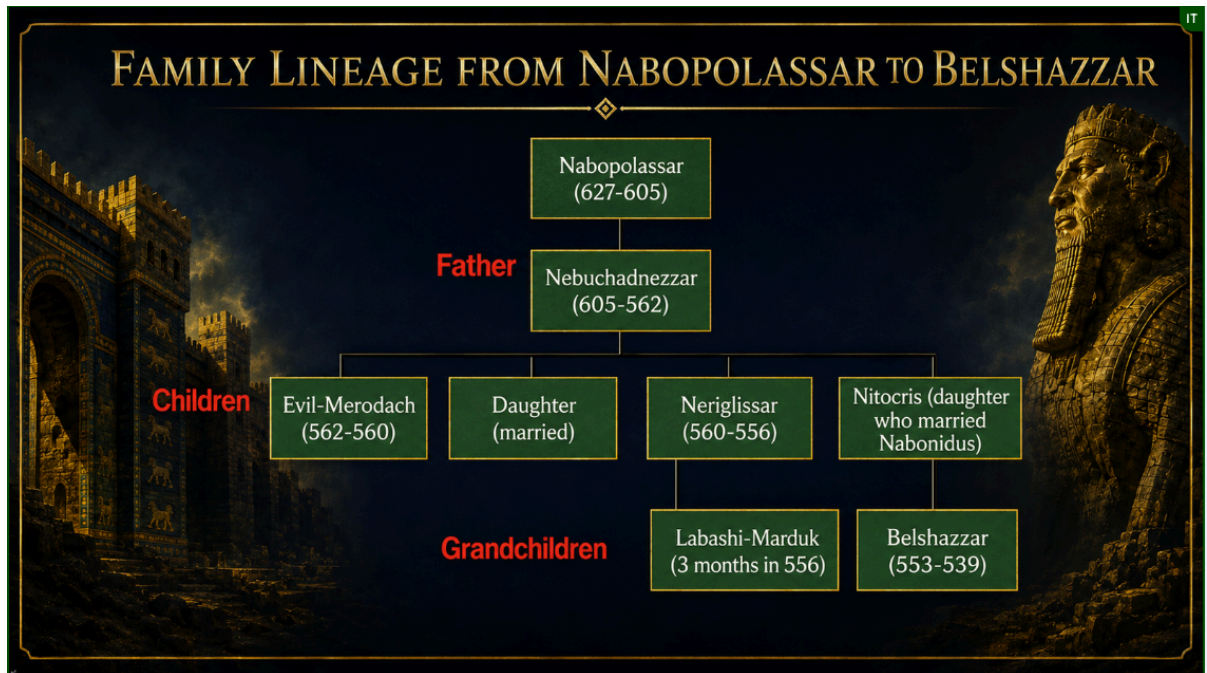
Belshazzar

“Bel has protected the king.” The eldest son and coregent of Nabonidus (539 B.C.), the last sovereign of the neo-Babylonian Empire. 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. The power of the land of Akkad advanced with him; towards Tema in the midst of the Westland he set his face. . . . He himself established his dwelling in Tema. . . . That city he made glorious. . . . They made it like a palace of Babylon. . . .” The Babylonian records indicate that Belshazzar became coregent in the third year of Nabonidus’s reign (553 B.C.) and continued in that capacity until the fall of Babylon (539 B.C.).

New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright © 1988.

Belshazzar was the son of an absent king. He was made coregent and acting king because his father did not want to be in Babylon. It is clear that Nabonidus was far more interested in Arabia and Arabian moon gods than in actually ruling the kingdom — he even made an alternate palace there in which he intended to live.

We have come to think of Belshazzar as a "playboy prince" partying while his father was away. He seems to have had no genuine military or political experience, but there is one important qualification that he did possess that helped legitimize his rule: his bloodline.



While Belshazzar was a pathetic, self-indulgent prince, he was also the actual grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Nabonidus had apparently married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar — Nitocris — and Belshazzar was their son. This connection to Nebuchadnezzar's line was probably an important factor in legitimizing the co-regency.

Here is how the Neo-Babylonian royal family connects:

- **Generation 1:** Nabopolassar (founder) → Nebuchadnezzar (his son, the head of gold)
- **Generation 2:** Nebuchadnezzar's children — Evil-Merodach (son), Nerglissar (son-in-law), Nitocris (daughter), and others
- **Generation 3:** Belshazzar (son of Nabonidus and Nitocris; grandson of Nebuchadnezzar)

This simplification illustrates that there are essentially three generations of Babylonian kings from Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar — whether we are speaking of genetic descent or the Babylonian reckoning of seeing successors as sons. And Jeremiah had summarized this in advance:

- **Jeremiah 27:6–7 (NIV)** — Now I will give all your countries into the hands of my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make

even the wild animals subject to him. All nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him.

Him (Nebuchadnezzar). His son. His grandson. In Daniel 5, the time that Jeremiah announced has come for Babylon to be subjugated as the prophet had said.



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Finally, going into Daniel 5, it is critical to remember that the book of Daniel is arranged thematically and is not in chronological order.

(Do Not Read)

CHRONOLOGY OF DANIEL

CHAPTER 1	Babylonian Captivity and Training in Babylon
CHAPTER 2	Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Interpretation
CHAPTER 3	Nebuchadnezzar's Image and the Fiery Furnace
CHAPTER 4	Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Tree, Interpretation, and Pride
CHAPTER 7	The Dream of the Four Beasts and Interpretation
CHAPTER 8	The Vision of the Ram and the Goat and Interpretation
CHAPTER 5	The Writing on the Wall: Babylon Falls to Persians
CHAPTER 9	Daniel's Prayer and Vision of Seventy Weeks
CHAPTER 6	The Lions' Den
CHAPTERS 10-12	Closing Visions

Daniel 4 left off with Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation and restoration and now Daniel 5 is in the last year of Belshazzar

When you are reading Daniel, Belshazzar seems to come out of nowhere and disappear just as quickly. However, a significant portion of Daniel occurred during his reign. Here is what we mean:

- **Daniel 7:1 (ESV)**

7 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.

At the time Belshazzar first came into power, Daniel was shown the vision of four kingdoms that would reign but ultimately fall to the Kingdom of God. Daniel understood from the book of Jeremiah and the vision, that the Medo-Persian empire would supplant Belshazzar. Daniel knew this in the first year of Belshazzar's reign.

- **Daniel 8:1 (ESV)**

8 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first.

Daniel again had a vision and understood the order of the successive kingdoms that would follow Belshazzar's reign. This second witness came on top of Jeremiah's writings and the vision of chapter 7 — it constituted a kind of third witness.

This means that when we get to Daniel 5's writing on the wall, Daniel did not have to just pull the interpretation out of the air. He had been prepared for this moment since before Belshazzar came into office. He already knew from Jeremiah that there would be three generations. He already knew from Daniel 2 that the Babylonian empire would be succeeded by Medo-Persia. He already knew from Daniel 7 and 8 the nature and order of the coming kingdoms. He can count the Babylonian monarchy. He knows that the grandson has just taken power. Daniel walks into that throne room knowing exactly what is about to happen — not because he prayed in a special session, not because he and his friends needed to intercede — but

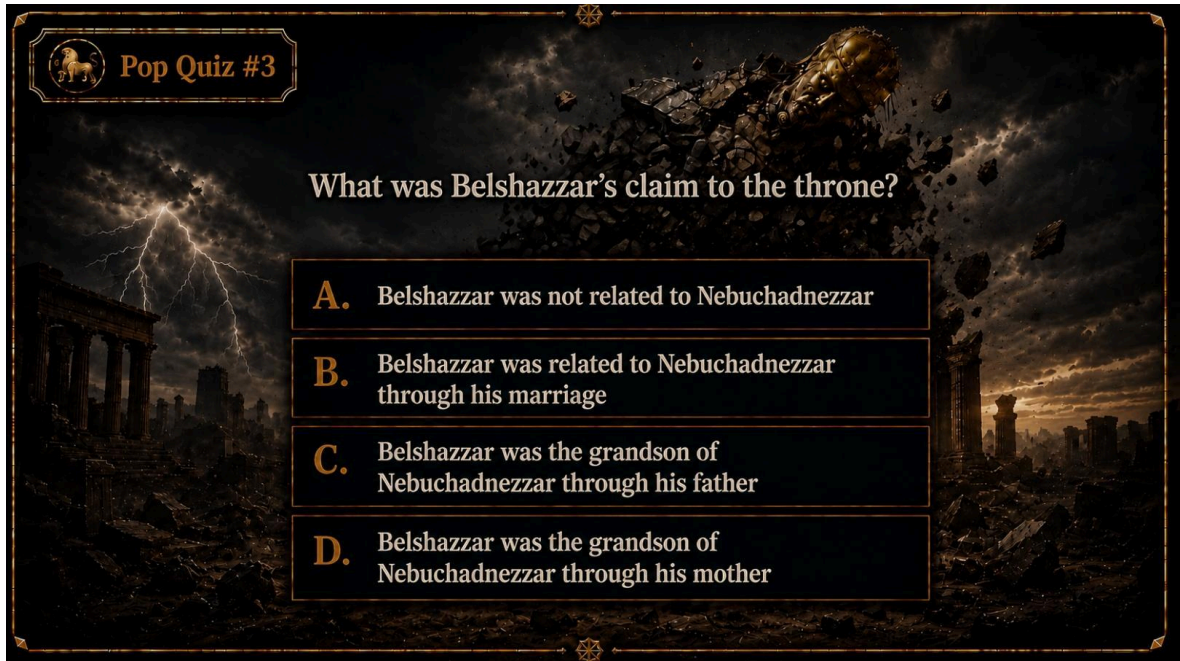
because he had been reading and meditating on the Word of God for decades.

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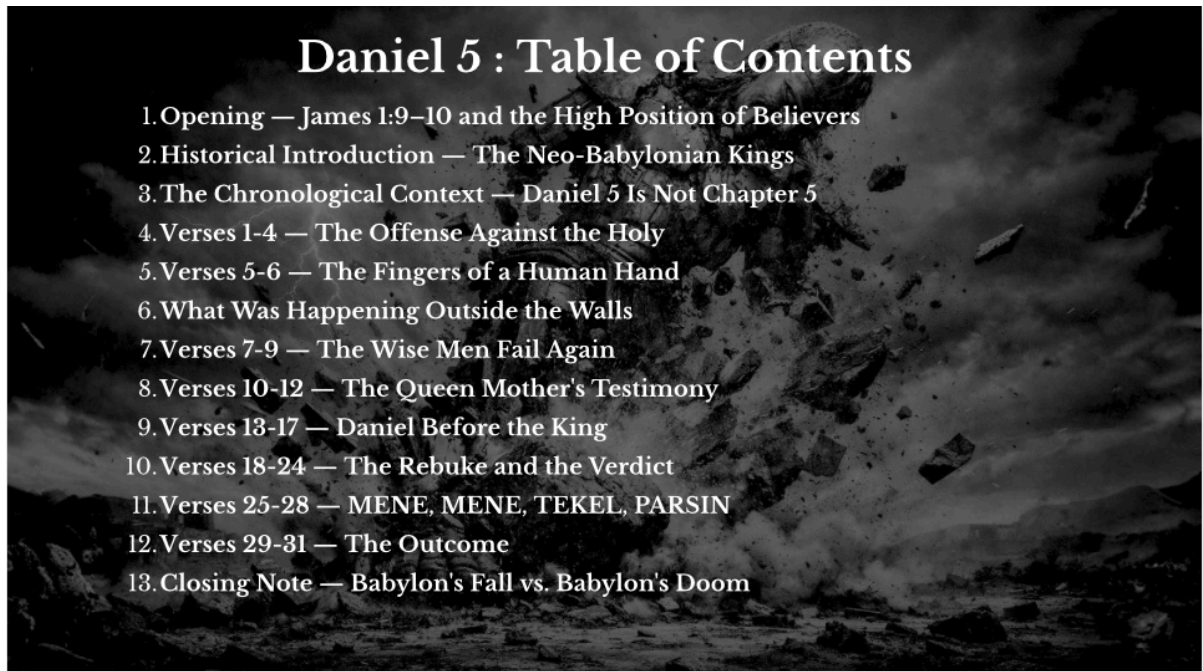
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All Dates According to “ <i>The Coming Prince</i> ” by Sir Robert Anderson.			

This chapter takes place at least 22 years after the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and there have been at least 2 other rulers between Nebuchadnezzar and the coregency of Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

This also means that Daniel is approximately 81 years old and had been in Babylon for over 60 years! He is the chief of the magi and has spent a lifetime grounding the wise men of Babylon — and later Persia — in the reality of the God of Israel. When the wise men of the East later appear in Matthew's account of the Nativity, it is not unreasonable — in fact, it is biblically hermeneutically sound — to connect them to Daniel's enduring influence as their teacher and predecessor.



Pray and Read



The Offense Against the Holy

5 King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. ² While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave

orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. ³ So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

It would be hard to overstate how offensive this action is to the Most High God. Why did Belshazzar feel the need to bring these particular items into his party? Surely there were other objects he could have used from the exploits of Babylon's military campaigns!

This act of completely profaning what was declared as holy unto God was undoubtedly satanically motivated — and was probably emanating from the influence of the Arabian moon god Sin that the Belshazzar and his father were so drawn toward.

Let's read Numbers 4 to get an idea of how the God of Israel viewed these objects:

- **Numbers 4:4–7 (NIV)**

⁴ “This is the work of the Kohathites at the tent of meeting: the care of the most holy things. ⁵ When the camp is to move, Aaron and his sons are to go in and take down the shielding curtain and put it over the ark of the covenant law. ⁶ Then they are to cover the curtain with a durable leather, spread a cloth of solid blue over that and put the poles in place.

⁷ “Over the table of the Presence they are to spread a blue cloth and put on it the **plates, dishes and bowls, and the jars for drink offerings**; the bread that is continually there is to remain on it.

It is, most likely, these objects that Belshazzar is using for his party. When you consider that these are the articles that were entrusted to the priests and how much care they were to be given, this story simply becomes more and more detestable. These things were holy and precious to God and Belshazzar was treating them with utter contempt.

- **Numbers 4:8–12 (NIV)**

⁸ They are to spread a scarlet cloth over them, cover that with the durable leather and put the poles in place.

⁹ “They are to take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand that is for light, together with its lamps, its wick trimmers and trays, and all its jars for the olive oil used to supply it. ¹⁰ Then they are to wrap it and all its accessories in a covering of the durable leather and put it on a carrying frame.

¹¹ “Over the gold altar they are to spread a blue cloth and cover that with the durable leather and put the poles in place.

¹² “They are to take all the articles used for ministering in the sanctuary, wrap them in a blue cloth, cover that with the durable leather and put them on a carrying frame.

As we continue to read this passage, notice that it doesn't matter which item is being used by Belshazzar... all the articles... all the accessories are to be covered with a blue cloth and carried on poles to avoid contact between the common and the Holy.

- **Numbers 4:13–15 (NIV)**

¹³ “They are to remove the ashes from the bronze altar and spread a purple cloth over it. ¹⁴ Then they are to place on it all the utensils used for ministering at the altar, including the firepans, meat forks, shovels and sprinkling bowls. Over it they are to spread a covering of the durable leather and put the poles in place.

¹⁵ “After Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy furnishings and all the holy articles, and when the camp is ready to move, only then are the Kohathites to come and do the carrying. But they must not touch the holy things or they will die. The Kohathites are to carry those things that are in the tent of meeting.

The Kohathites were Levites assigned the special job of carefully moving the items dedicated to the worship of Yahweh. If the Kohathites had to take this kind of care in handling the holy things — even Aaron's sons had to wrap everything before the Kohathites could touch it — how much more should

this Gentile, playboy prince have been hesitant to use these objects to entertain his friends at a raucous party?

These things were not for casual use. The way they were handled was the difference between life and death.

If you think we are overplaying this point, consider verse 20:

- **Numbers 4:20 (NIV)**

²⁰ But the Kohathites must not go in to look at the holy things, even for a moment, or they will die.”

If a Kohathite touched the holy things without Aaron's sons wrapping them, God said he will die. If a Kohathite even looked at the holy things even for a moment without that preparation, God said he WILL die.

Belshazzar is using the emblems of God's desire to meet with men in holiness as an accessory to his dinner party. This story is less funny when you read it in that light.

You must ask yourself: what possessed Belshazzar to want to involve the holy things of God in this way? Some would suggest simple ignorance. We are suggesting that there was a more devious motivation inspired by the Arabian moon god's influence on his family.

This was not simply a problem in Daniel's day—this pattern of behavior continues to the present day.

The people who worship this Arabian moon god, for generations, have targeted the things chosen by God to profane or destroy.

- For instance, consider how Islam has targeted the holy people of God, Israel — to destroy them for generations. **(Ex.19:6)**
- Consider how the holiest site for the people of Israel—the temple mount—is now a profaned place filled with the worship of a foreign god. **(Ps. 79:1)**

Anything that is holy to Adonai, this enemy seeks to defile.

You can see how wherever the people of Israel are, this specific, moon worshipping enemy is hard at work to destroy or profane that which God has called Holy. He doesn't so much care about destroying Buddhism, Hinduism, or Yoga, he wants to profane the things of God.

Moving back into the text of Daniel 5, for **Belshazzar**, it was not enough to utilize holy things in a casual manner. This practice quickly escalated to blatant idolatry. This is always the case when people are in decline — they go from bad to worse:

- **2 Timothy 3:12–17 (NIV)**

¹² In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ **while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.** ¹⁴ **But as for you,** continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy **you have known the Holy Scriptures**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Now we spoke of how Islam continues to target that which is Holy to God and attempts to profane it through their own idolatry, just as Belshazzar did. These are pagans. We expect them to take the things that are holy and treat them as common... Now we want to bring this closer to home.

Notice that in 2 Timothy 3, it states "But as for you...". There should be nothing in all this world more precious to us than the division between the "Holy" and the "Common." The Word is to us, the breath of God, and we must maintain that kind of reverence for what we have been entrusted with. Scripture itself is not a footnote to justify a point we would like to make — you can use common literature for that. No, the Scripture is all we have and should be treated more precious than your life.

- Has The Word become rote to you? Rote meaning to be done without feeling or emotion
- Do you study the Holy Scripture just when convenient?
- Or only when you know others are going to expect you to have a word?

It is easy to judge Belshazzar for what he is doing, and it is right to do so, but we are talking about you. YOU must treat that which is holy with the kind of reverence that the priests would have shown for the articles of the temple.

Consider the rebuke of the **priesthood** in Ezekiel:

- **Ezekiel 22:26–29 (NIV)**

²⁶ Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. ²⁷ Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. ²⁸ Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says'—when the Lord has not spoken. ²⁹ The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice.

Belshazzar will receive his judgment for what he is doing, but imagine the judgment that awaits those who should be responsible for setting the example and know better, if they should **grow accustomed to blurring the lines between holy and common.**

Let's move into verses 5-6 in our text.

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Daniel 5:5–6 — The Fingers of a Human Hand

⁵ Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. ⁶ His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.

Notice that what appeared was the "fingers of a human hand." This is significant for at least two reasons.

First, it was by a human hand influenced by the hand of God that the regulations were written concerning these holy things:

- **1 Chronicles 28:17–19 (ESV)**

17 and pure gold for the forks, the basins and the cups; for the golden bowls and the weight of each; for the silver bowls and the weight of each; 18 for the altar of incense made of refined gold, and its weight; also his plan for the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD. 19 "All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan."

Even if these Babylonians could not read the handwriting on the wall, they should have been able to read the handwriting of the Holy Scripture. Adonai had given the instructions concerning the articles of the temple directly from his hand to David's and now he is using another divine hand to judge the misuse of those items. The act of Belshazzar and his harem was no accidental mistake, it was blatant and willful rebellion against Adonai! Even if he had not heard what the scripture stated concerning these items, the truth of God is plain to all men, although some choose to suppress this truth.

- **Romans 1:18–25 (ESV)**

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Belshazzar had the witness of the nation of Israel. Belshazzar had the witness of the worldwide edict of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. He is not ignorant of the truth — he is suppressing the truth because he is a debased playboy prince.

(Do Not Read)

H677 Finger/Toes אֶצְבָּע



Daniel 2:41–42 (ESV)

41 And as you saw the feet and **toes** [etsba], partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. 42 And as the **toes** [etsba] of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle.



Daniel 5:5 (ESV)

5 Immediately the **fingers** [etsba] of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw

Second, the word translated "fingers" is *etsba* (H677): this word can mean either finger or toe. It is plural here and is translated "fingers" because it occurs in conjunction with the word for "hand." Its only other occurrences in the Bible are in Daniel 2, where it is translated "toes" — as in the toes on the feet of the statue. This is significant because the toes are the least valuable portion of the statue which is taken over by the kingdom of God. This subtle verbal hint shows that the statue is declining in value and one step closer to the kingdom of God taking over the world.

Aside from the verbal hint of the toes in Daniel 2 and the fingers of Daniel 5, it is significant that what the Babylonians saw was not a traditional form of divine manifestation — not lightning, fire, or clouds — but a human hand. They had already been told that a rock would be cut from the mountain and crush the kingdoms of the world in Daniel 2. Daniel 7 has already occurred, with these words:

Daniel 7:13–14 (ESV)

13 "I saw in the night visions,
 and behold, with the clouds of heaven
 there came one like a **son of man**,
 and he came to the Ancient of Days
 and was presented before him.

14 And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.

Now in Daniel 5 — occurring after Daniel 7 — we are seeing the handwriting of God and it is coming through the form of a human hand. It is hard not to see this as a *remez* — a hint — that the Human Form of Adonai is acting to bring the Gentile kingdoms to an end in their proper order and will bring them to a complete ending in the last days of their reign. The process of the *etsba* (finger) of God striking the *etsba* (toes) of the statue has already begun — and is still also yet to come in one final climactic moment.

Now let's look at Belshazzar's Reaction:

(Do Not Read)



BELSHAZZAR'S RESPONSE

-  **His color changed** (*this is good — God is at work*)
-  **His thoughts were alarmed** (*this is good — light is piercing*)
-  **His limbs gave way** (*this is expected*)
-  **His knees knocked** (*this is expected*)
-  **He called on the wrong source and offered earthly rewards** (*this is the stubborn human tendency — repeating the errors of the past, hoping for a better result*)

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When confronted with sin it is good to have your color change, it is good to be alarmed, but it is not good to call on carnal men to comfort you! On another more comical note, listen to what the KJV has to say about Belshazzar's reaction.

- o **Daniel 5:6 (KJV 1900)**
6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the **joints of his loins** were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

The KJV describes something that could be described as incontinence, or in layman's terms, he crapped his pants.

As comical as this is, there is a profound truth behind it. Isaiah prophesied in the 700s BC that a king named Cyrus would do exactly this to the Babylonians:

(Do Not Read)

LOOSING LOINS

— PROPHECY FULFILLED —



DANIEL 5:6 (KJV 1900)

6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of **his loins were loosed**, and his knees smote one against another.

ISAIAH 45:1 (KJV 1900)

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,
Whose right hand I have holden,
To subdue nations before him;
And **I will loose the loins of kings**,
To open before him the two leaved gates;
And the gates shall not be shut;

FULFILLED:

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAR. CYRUS' VICTORY.

- o **Isaiah 45:1 (KJV 1900)**

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Whose right hand I have holden,
To subdue nations before him;
And **I will loose the loins of kings**,
To open before him the two leaved gates;
And the gates shall not be shut;

Before Cyrus was born and Babylon was a world power, Isaiah had prophesied about Cyrus by name and even called out this embarrassing moment that Belshazzar would have 150 years earlier! Surely there is no end to the depth of the LORD's divine foreknowledge.

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In Daniel 5, you are seeing a description of what is happening inside the palace, but at the same time **something else is happening right outside the city walls of Babylon.**

Take a look at this slide:

(DO NOT READ)



BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST AND FALL



Belshazzar hosted an **extravagant feast** to boost morale as Babylon was surrounded by a Persian army under the leadership of Ugbaru. Belshazzar had a **false sense of security**: Babylon had massively fortified walls and food provisions that could last many years. He thus displayed a festive mood before his nobles to demonstrate confidence in the security of his kingdom...



The Medo-Persians' army **diverted the flow** of the Babylonian River and **captured the city** without any major battles (Dan 5:25–31; 539 BC).



McLean, J. A. (2016). Belshazzar, King of Babylon. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

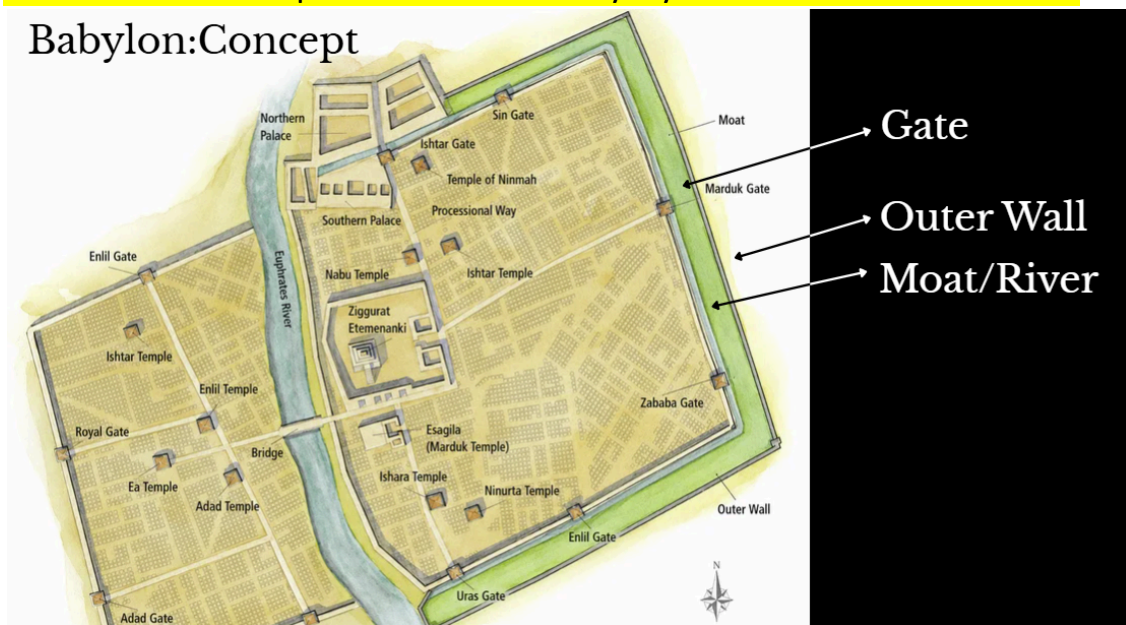
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*The Medo-Persians' army **diverted the flow** of the Babylonian River and **captured the city** without any major battles (Dan 5:25–31; 539 BC).*

So, in the very same moment that Belshazzar's britches were in danger, so was his entire kingdom. The Persians were amassed right outside and were busy diverting the water of the canal system so they could take Babylon without much of a fight.

Here is some concept art of what the city layout could have looked like:



Picture the city in three layers: an outer wall running the full perimeter, a defended zone inside it, and then an inner wall around the city's core. Between the two walls ran a moat, fed by the Euphrates through a canal the Babylonians had built specifically to make the city look and feel impenetrable. No one, they believed, could break through both walls and cross that channel.

The Persians' whole strategy was aimed at exactly that gap: outer wall, moat, inner wall. And Nebuchadnezzar himself, generations earlier, had already recognized this as Babylon's soft spot.

Here is the evidence of that:

(DO NOT READ)

Canals and the City of Babylon

Nebuchadnezzar also refurbished the main canal, the Libil-hegalla, which provided fresh water and drainage for Babylon. It had been blocked with dust and silt after Sennacherib had gotten to it. **Ever the military strategist, he came up with the idea of installing iron grills to prevent soldiers or spies from using this canal or others as a discreet entry into the city.** Raising this canal then required him to further raise Procession Street, because the one flowed under the other.

Legends of the Ancient World: The Life and Legacy of King Nebuchadnezzar II

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So think through this for a second, Like Constantinople centuries later, or like some of the churches Jesus addressed in Revelation, Babylon believed its defenses made it untouchable. Outer wall, moat, inner wall, and then a palace within all of that — every possible layer of safety. Ironically at the moment that Belshazzar's britches are getting wet, the moat outside was going dry, engineered by the very armies who'd come to take the city. This left the iron bars of the canal exposed, only to be cut for a perfect gateway into the city.

We read Isaiah 45 to you earlier, and mentioned that Isaiah had prophesied roughly a century and a half beforehand that Cyrus would "loose the loins of kings."

That's not the only detail Isaiah nailed. Look at this slide again, and let it build your confidence in the accuracy of biblical prophecy.

(Do not read)

Isaiah 45:1–3 KJV

- 1 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; **and I will loose the loins of kings,** to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;
- 2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and **cut in sunder the bars of iron:**
- 3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

o **Isaiah 45:1–3 KJV**

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- 3** And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

Loins were loosed and iron bars were being cut through — simultaneously, in real time — both of them prophesied a century and a half before the night it happened.

God raised up a second Gentile ruler to succeed the "head of gold," identified in Daniel 2 as silver — a step down from Nebuchadnezzar, in the same way silver is a step down from gold. Cyrus, unlike Nebuchadnezzar, never comes to faith in the God of Israel, but he still does exactly what God appointed him to do. And in just three generations, Belshazzar has managed to ignore the testimony both of the God of Israel and of the four faithful Hebrews who lived through his grandfather's reign. He is about to die having soiled himself.

So the Persians entered the city on the very night of the banquet:

(Do not read)

The Conquest of Babylon

On October 12, 539 B.C., Cyrus' general captured Babylon without a battle. The Persians diverted the River Euphrates into a canal upriver so that the water level dropped "to the height of the middle of a man's thigh," which thus rendered the flood defenses useless and enabled the invaders to march through the river bed to enter by night.

Herodotus

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The accuracy of Isaiah's prophecy is remarkable, and Daniel would have known exactly what it foretold. Look at the wording just a few verses earlier:

(Do not read)

Isaiah 44:27–45:1 KJV

27 That saith to the deep, Be dry, and **I will dry up thy rivers:**

28 That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

45 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

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Isaiah, prophesying somewhere around the eighth century BC, nails the events of 539 BC with precision, while Belshazzar can't even honor his grandfather's testimony even though Jews who had blessed his kingdom were still living under his rule.

Strip out the chapter break between 44 and 45, and these lines run one after another: rivers to be dried up, the loins of kings to be loosed, iron bars to be cut through — all three happening at once, on this same night, in

Daniel 5. That's remarkable. One more slide before we move to verse 7 — this one comes from Josephus, who records something amazing about how Cyrus came to understand his own role in all of this.

(Do not read)

The Letter to Cyrus

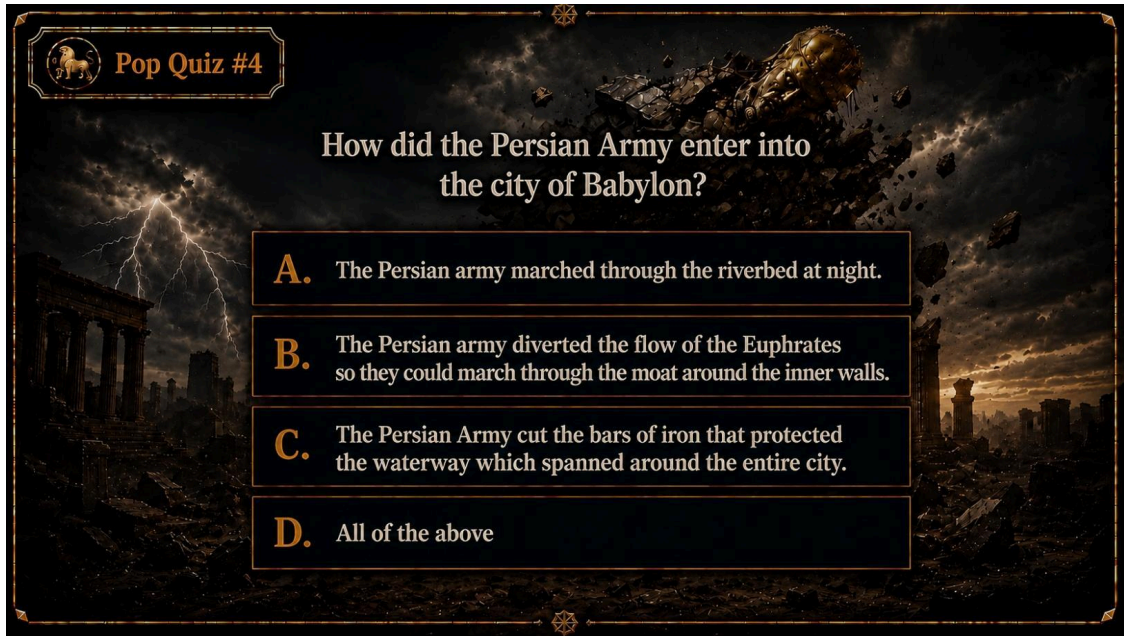
When Cyrus made his grand entrance, Daniel presented him with an ancient scroll of Isaiah, which contained a personal letter addressing him by name.

Josephus, Antiquities XI, 1, 2

When Cyrus made his grand entrance, Daniel presented him with an ancient scroll of Isaiah, which contained a personal letter addressing him by name.

Daniel had spent decades studying Isaiah's prophecies and understood exactly what history was building toward. And Daniel would go on to serve in Cyrus's court in the years after Babylon fell (Daniel 10:1) — which makes it entirely reasonable to think he had some hand in helping Cyrus connect his own reign to what Isaiah had written centuries earlier, even if we don't have a record of the exact moment that happened.

And look at what followed: Cyrus became history's greatest early advocate for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of Israel to her land.



Pop Quiz #4

How did the Persian Army enter into the city of Babylon?

- A.** The Persian army marched through the riverbed at night.
- B.** The Persian army diverted the flow of the Euphrates so they could march through the moat around the inner walls.
- C.** The Persian Army cut the bars of iron that protected the waterway which spanned around the entire city.
- D.** All of the above



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Daniel 5:7–9 — The Wise Men Fail Again

- **7** The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to be brought and said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

- o **8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. 9 So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled.**

Why does Belshazzar offer the **third-highest position**? Because Nabonidus remained the senior king and Belshazzar ruled beneath him as co-regent. He can only offer Daniel what remains within his control—and that is not much, because before the night is over, Belshazzar will lose everything.

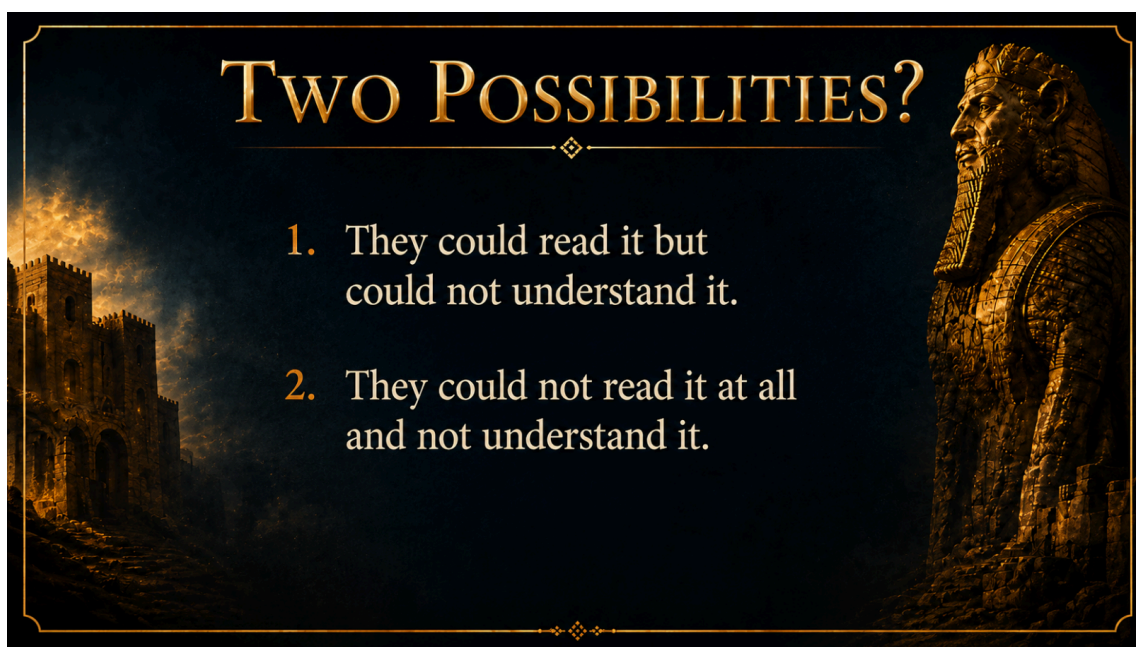
This is a perspective believers must maintain when standing before the powerful people of this age. We should not be dazzled by what they possess or desperate for what they can give us. Everything they control is passing away. We are the ones carrying something eternal that they desperately need.

The failure of the wise men makes Belshazzar even more terrified. His color changes, his thoughts alarm him, and the entire court is thrown into confusion. For some men, that kind of terror would produce repentance. In Belshazzar, it produces only greater desperation. His britches may have been soiled, but his soul remained proud.

Why could they not read the writing?

There are at least **two compelling ways** to understand what happened.

(read slide)



1. They could read it but could not understand it.
2. They could not read it at all and not understand it.

Let's look at this possibility first: The words were recognizable but they could not grasp the message

The Septuagint does not say in verse 8 that they couldn't read it only that they couldn't explain it.

While we do have portions of Daniel 5 from the Dead Sea Scrolls we do not have verse 25 which contains the actual characters. The writing preserved in Daniel consists of the Aramaic consonants:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN

Without vowels or an explanation, those words could be understood as ordinary terms for weights or monetary values: something like **“mina, mina, shekel, and half-minas.”**

It would be like seeing the words “pound, pound, ounce, halves” written on a wall. The words could be recognized, but what did they mean, and what did they have to do with the king?

Daniel reads those same consonants as a divine verdict: **numbered, weighed, and divided**. Belshazzar's days have been numbered, he has been

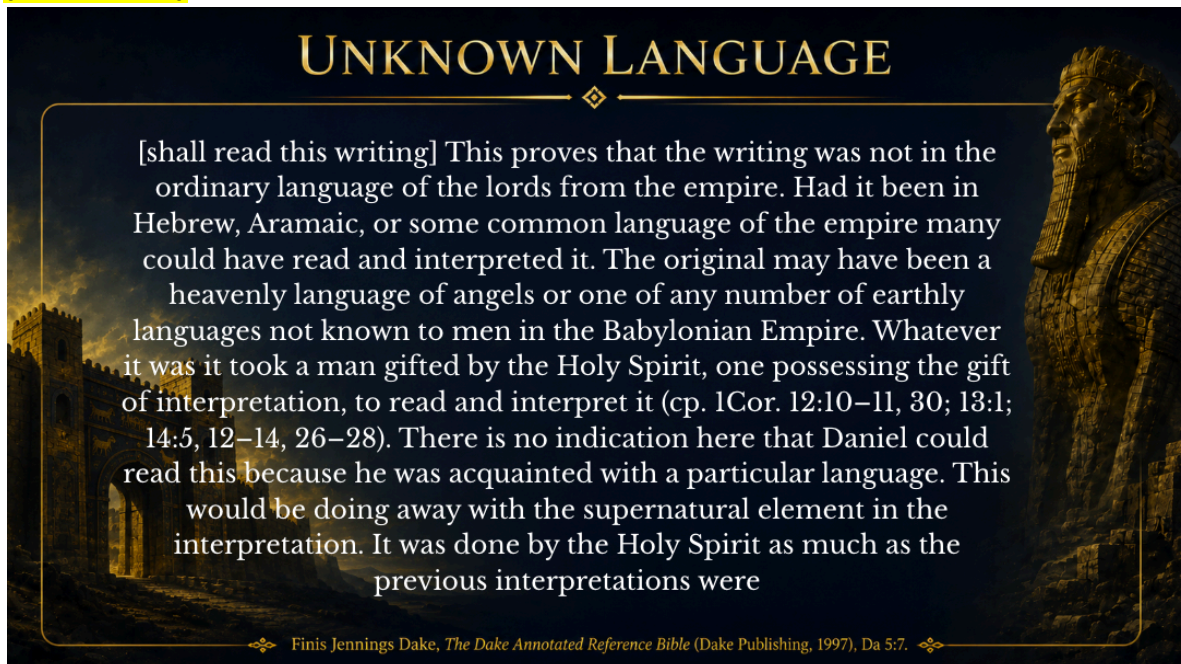
weighed and found deficient, and his kingdom will be divided. The final word also contains a wordplay connecting **Peres** with the **Persians**. The problem, on this reading, was not merely recognizing letters; it was discerning the judicial message hidden within them.

This resembles the name **Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz** in Isaiah. The words themselves could be read, but their prophetic significance had to be revealed by the prophet. Ordinary language carried a meaning that human wisdom alone could not uncover. So that's possibility number 1, known language, unknown prophetic meaning.

Second possibility: The writing itself was supernaturally unreadable. It was not a known language.

The Aramaic text in the Latin Vulgate and the Masoretic does not merely say that the wise men failed to interpret the message. It says they could not **read the writing** or disclose its interpretation. This leaves open the possibility that the characters, arrangement, or language itself was unknown to them. Look at what Dake says about it.

(Read Slide)



UNKNOWN LANGUAGE

[shall read this writing] This proves that the writing was not in the ordinary language of the lords from the empire. Had it been in Hebrew, Aramaic, or some common language of the empire many could have read and interpreted it. The original may have been a heavenly language of angels or one of any number of earthly languages not known to men in the Babylonian Empire. Whatever it was it took a man gifted by the Holy Spirit, one possessing the gift of interpretation, to read and interpret it (cp. 1Cor. 12:10–11, 30; 13:1; 14:5, 12–14, 26–28). There is no indication here that Daniel could read this because he was acquainted with a particular language. This would be doing away with the supernatural element in the interpretation. It was done by the Holy Spirit as much as the previous interpretations were

❖ Finis Jennings Dake, *The Dake Annotated Reference Bible* (Dake Publishing, 1997), Da 5:7. ❖

On this reading, Daniel did not succeed merely because he had better linguistic training. He succeeded because the Spirit of God gave him both the ability to read the supernatural message and the interpretation necessary to proclaim it.

That possibility opens an important biblical connection. In Isaiah 28, Israel had rejected the clear and understandable word God had already spoken through his prophet.

- **Isaiah 28:11 (ESV)**

For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the LORD will speak to this people,

God warned that he would speak to them through foreign lips and strange tongues. The foreign language was the speech of the Assyrian invaders that were about to come upon Israel. They would know judgment had arrived when they were surrounded by the voices of conquerors whose language they could not understand.

The unknown speech was not meaningless. It was a sign of divine judgment.

That produces a remarkable picture in Daniel 5:

Outside the palace, Babylon is about to hear the foreign speech of its conquerors. Inside the palace, God has already written a message its wise men cannot understand.

The unintelligible writing on the wall announces the same reality as the foreign armies approaching the city: Babylon has been judged, and another kingdom is coming.

Paul develops this same principle in 1 Corinthians 14 and uses this exact verse from Isaiah 28:11 to describe the function of tongues within the church. In verses 6–20 of 1 Corinthians 14, he repeatedly insists that speech without understanding does not profit the hearer. Musical instruments must produce distinct notes. Words must communicate

meaning. Otherwise, the speaker and hearer remain foreigners to one another.

Therefore, a public word in tongues (which is described in verse 22 as a sign for unbelievers) must be accompanied by interpretation so that the gathered people can understand and be built up. In Isaiah, the foreign language signaled judgment because the people had refused God's understandable word.

Daniel 5 follows a strikingly similar pattern. A supernatural message is given in the presence of unbelievers. The unbelieving wise men cannot receive or explain it. Then a man marked by the Spirit of God enters, reads what they cannot read, and makes the divine meaning known.

The wise men had education, titles, religious training, and access to the king—but none of it enabled them to understand what God had written. Daniel possessed what they lacked: the Spirit of God and the revelation of the Most High.



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Daniel 5:10–12 — The Queen Mother's Testimony

Daniel 5:10

10 The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. "O king, live forever!" she said. "Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale!

Your Bible may carry a footnote here reading "queen mother" rather than simply "queen." This is why the family trees were laid out earlier. The woman entering the hall is Nitocris, mother of Belshazzar and wife of Nabonidus. She cannot be one of Belshazzar's wives, since his wives and concubines are already present in the hall. You saw that in verses 2 and 3.

Her testimony carries weight precisely because, as queen mother, she has lived through decades that Belshazzar never witnessed firsthand.

Daniel 5:11

11 There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father — your father the king, I say — appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners.

Her testimony here is extraordinary: it is the testimony of a righteous man's life spanning six or seven decades in Babylon. Daniel is in his eighties by this point. Think about what it means to have lived so consistently, so faithfully, for so long, that a queen mother can vouch for you to a panicking king on the very night the kingdom is about to fall. Reputation like that isn't built in a single crisis...it is the result of a lifetime of faithfulness.

There's also a wider thread worth pulling on. Daniel is repeatedly called "chief of the magicians," a title that persists into the Persian period. Babylon sits east of Jerusalem, and Daniel spent decades shaping and instructing the very class of wise men who would later be known as "Magi." We mentioned this brevity in the introduction. Read against that backdrop, the wise men from the East who later seek "the King of the Jews" in Matthew 2 look less like a historical loose end and more like an ancient institution that had been instructed about the messiah through Daniel.

Daniel 5:12

12 This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means."

What's striking about this whole scene is who's actually in control of it. Belshazzar has convened his nobles, his wives, his concubines, and a room full of gold and silver vessels — every symbol of royal power he can gather — and none of them can interpret a sentence written on his own wall. God takes an old woman who remembers his grandfather's reign to tell him where the answer actually is. The kingdom's fate hangs not on the men currently holding power, but on a man who has spent most of his life quietly proving trustworthy, decade after decade, long before this night ever arrived. Belshazzar is about to learn, in the space of a single verse, what it looks like when a lifetime of faithfulness finally gets called into the room.



Daniel 5:13–17 — Daniel Before the King

13 So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, "Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah?"

Notice what Belshazzar leads with. He has just heard, from his own grandmother, an extraordinary testimony: a man with the spirit of the holy

gods in him, insight and wisdom like the gods themselves, chief of every wise man in Babylon for decades...

Belshazzar surely knew all of this already. Daniel's reputation wasn't a secret in that court. And yet the first thing out of the king's mouth is a reminder that Daniel is a foreign exile. It's a jab and one more show of the same arrogance that filled the banquet hall. Even in his terror, even needing something only Daniel can give him, Belshazzar can't resist reasserting the hierarchy and trying to put Daniel in his place.

14 I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom. 15 The wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it.

16 Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

17 Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.

Sit with the irony here. Belshazzar is offering Daniel purple robes, a gold chain, and the third highest seat in the kingdom — and none of it will belong to Belshazzar himself two hours from now. Whatever anyone offers you from outside the kingdom of God will not be theirs for more than a breath of a lifetime. What God offers is different...it's eternal, and it protects you for the whole of your life, not just the night.

Now would be a good time to tell you why we opened the evening the way that we did. This is an article of the One Association:

"I will not be bribed, intimidated, or seduced away from the daily implementation of the undeniable truths of Scripture."

That conviction comes straight out of Hebrews:

- o **Hebrews 3:12–15 (NIV)**

12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. 15 As has just been said:

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion.”

Daniel is holding, on the night the kingdom falls, to the same conviction he held decades earlier as a young exile. Nothing about his foundation has shifted. Daniel is the one in a position of greatness here — he's the one with something to offer. He is in a position to help the Babylonians; they are in no position to help him. Daniel wants and needs nothing from them. Adonai is the one thing they need, and He comes to them through this one prophet.

That kind of certainty can look like arrogance from the outside. Some might even call it that. But it isn't arrogance — it's confidence in the eternal judgment of all people, and confidence in your own relationship with God. When you can be moved by what someone offers you, when people can tie strings to you through their gifts, you're quietly telling everyone watching that you don't actually trust your God to provide.

Here is a string of Scriptures that formed the basis of Daniel's conviction — and ours:

- o **Ex 23:8 NIV**

8 "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous.

If your advice can be altered or bought by money, friendship, or acceptance, then you are in violation of the Torah and your witness will be ruined.

- **Deut 10:17 NIV**

17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

Our God cannot be influenced — as if He needed anything. Neither should you be.

- **Deut 16:19-20 NIV**

19 Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a **bribe blinds the eyes of the wise** and twists the words of the righteous. 20 Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you.

If you accept things from people who don't know God, ask yourself how you'll still see their lives clearly — this is especially true with relatives. It shows up in the inheritance they dangle in front of you. It shows up every time someone offers to rescue you from a situation you should have trusted God to handle instead — and it always circles back to, *"Remember, I helped you once."*

The day you were baptized, you died to their claims on you. You died to your expectations of them, too. The life you now live, you live in Christ alone. When we lose sight of that, we stop seeing our relationships clearly, and we stop representing God well.

- **1 Sam 12:3 NIV**

Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the Lord and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right."

Samuel could say this, and so could Daniel. As sons who've been discipled, we should be able to say it too. We shouldn't care about what we can extract from the people we're ministering to.

- **2 Chron 19:7-8 NIV**

7 Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery."

8 In Jerusalem also, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites, priests and heads of Israelite families to administer the law of the Lord and to settle disputes. And they lived in Jerusalem.

If we're going to see the people we minister to clearly, we can't be lusting after what they have or what they're offering us — that's what blinds judgment and excuses it.

- **Prov 6:34-35 NIV**

34 for jealousy arouses a husband's fury,
and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge.

35 He will not accept any compensation;
he will refuse the bribe, however great it is.

That's true of an earthly husband. How much more true of the God who calls Himself a jealous husband to His bride? He cannot be bribed or intimidated out of His intentions. We are His bride, and that has to be our posture too — it was Daniel's, and it should be ours.

- **Ecclesiastes 7:7 NIV**

7 Extortion turns a wise man into a fool,
and a bribe corrupts the heart.

If you're still not feeling the weight of this, it's because you're already guilty of it somewhere. We're simply encouraging you to take pride in your position in Christ, and to need nothing from the world, so you can see clearly enough to offer the world something of real value.

- **Micah 3:11-12 NIV**

11 Her leaders judge for a bribe,
her priests teach for a price,
and her prophets tell fortunes for money.
Yet they lean upon the Lord and say,

"Is not the Lord among us?
No disaster will come upon us."
12 Therefore because of you,
Zion will be plowed like a field,
Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble,
the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.

The love of money is a root of many evils. You won't be tempted by bribes or gifts if you don't love those things to begin with. Love the Word of God instead, and love putting it into practice as you help people along the way.

- **Micah 7:3 NIV**

3 Both hands are skilled in doing evil;
the ruler demands gifts,
the judge accepts bribes,
the powerful dictate what they desire —
they all conspire together.

Belshazzar is trying to move Daniel with a reward. He can't. Neither can we be moved that way. We've already lost our lives and gained the true one. Remember your position, and this will never be a problem for you.

Their kingdom is ending. Ours has no ending. Stand on that ground, and call them up into it.

- **Joshua 7:20–21 (NIV)**

20 Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: 21 **When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them.** They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

Achan wanted something more than God had already given him, and it cost him everything. Now think about Daniel, standing in a very similar spot — offered purple robes and gold, the very things Achan buried in his tent — and simply setting them aside. Daniel is everything Israel was called to be and will yet become, and we are grafted into those same great and precious

promises. It's time we started living like it: unmoved by bribes, unbought, undeterred from the will of God — because we, too, have already lost our lives and found the life that actually lasts.



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The Rebuke and the Verdict

Daniel 5:18–24 (NIV)

¹⁸ “Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. ¹⁹ Because of the high position he gave him, all the nations and peoples of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. ²⁰ But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. ²¹ He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.

The events of Nebuchadnezzar's life show that the God of Israel humbled the most powerful man on the planet. This was not an insignificant moment in the empire. If you weren't aware of this moment, it would have required

willful ignorance of the power that the God of Israel demonstrated over the empire of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar's testimony was obvious, but it was ignored.

Consider the parable that Jesus told:

- o **Luke 16:29–31 (NIV)**

²⁹ “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’

³⁰ “ ‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

³¹ “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ ”

Listen, whether it's your relative or the person at your work that you have been ministering to.

Another miracle is not what they need to believe. If you are filled with the truth of God's word and Christ is in you, and they are asking for a sign, it is because they do not recognize the truth of the word living and active in you.

Knowing what you now know and how Jesus' words expand on this concept, we want to look at Daniel's attitude in the next few verses.

²² “But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.

Although you knew all this, you did not respond like your grandfather.

Your grandfather was a head of gold — but you are of greatly diminished value.

Consider how Daniel gave the interpretation of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:19b

- o **Daniel 4:19b (NIV)**

Belteshazzar answered, “My lord, **if only** the dream applied to your **enemies** and its meaning to your **adversaries**!

We discussed the love these two men had for each other and the great respect they showed one another. This is a stark contrast to the way in which Daniel addresses Belshazzar.

²³ Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. ²⁴ Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription.

Understand this: Adonai accepted drink offerings. The drink offerings had to be fermented and something very valuable and special.

The priests, however, when offering these drink offerings, did not drink from those goblets; they poured them out before the Lord. Belshazzar is doing something that the priests didn't dare to do! As Belshazzar is worshipping these lifeless, man-made gods—who cannot see or comprehend—with the articles from the Temple, his very life is being held in the hand of the God of Israel—and he is completely unaware of the wrath he is bringing upon himself.

And now the sentence for profaning the holy, that was given in Numbers 4, is being passed down to him.

The Kohathite that even looked upon these articles would be struck dead; if they touched the articles they would be struck dead... this chapter ends with Belshazzar being struck dead.

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Daniel 5:25–28 — MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN

Daniel 5:25–28 (NIV)

²⁵ “This is the inscription that was written:

mene, mene, tekel, parsin

²⁶ “Here is what these words mean:

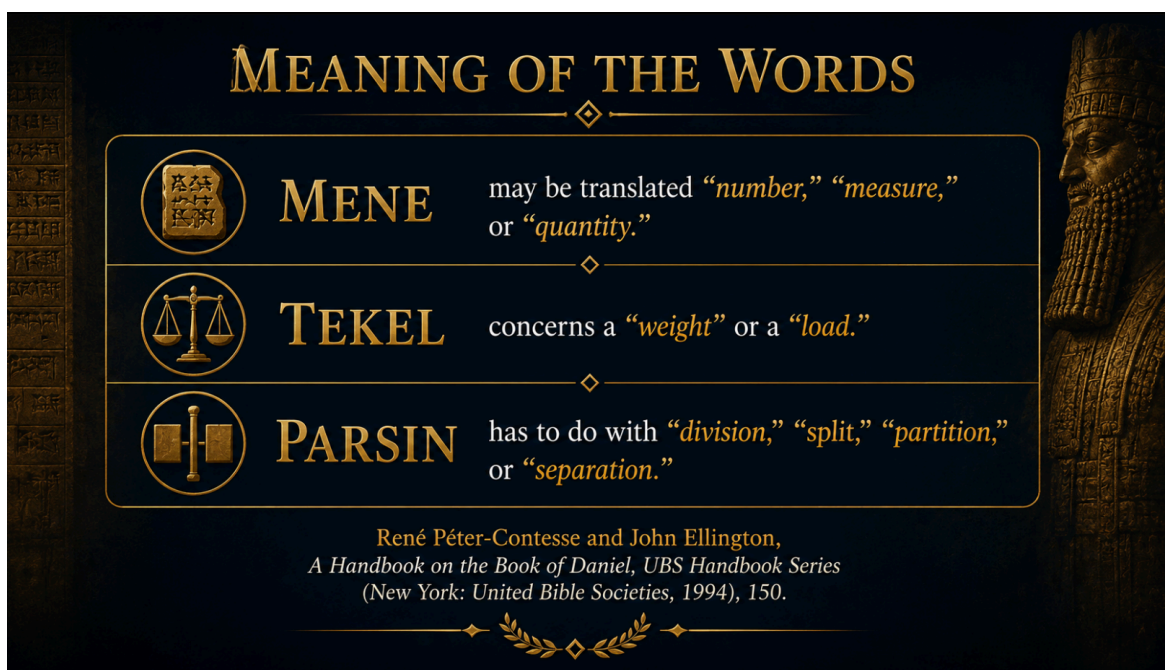
Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.

²⁷ ***Tekel:*** You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

²⁸ ***Peres:*** Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Before Daniel interprets the message, it is important to recognize that the biblical text preserves meaningful Aramaic terms rather than meaningless sounds. Whether those terms originally appeared on the wall in recognizable Aramaic script, in an unfamiliar foreign character, or in a form that required divine illumination to read remains debated. But the words Daniel gives us belong to the language of numbering, weighing, and division.

(Do Not Read)



MENE may be translated “number,” “measure,” or “quantity.”

TEKEL concerns a “weight” or a “load.”

PARSIN has to do with “division,” “split,” “partition,” or “separation.” Note that the first word is repeated while the others occur only once.

René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel, UBS Handbook Series* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 150.

We are thankful Daniel interpreted the writing — that ends all debates as to the exact message Adonai was speaking, however, given that Aramaic is a consonantal language, there is more here than immediately meets the eye.

Daniel's interpretation begins with three words expressed in ordinary Aramaic consonants — no vowels. Ancient Aramaic, like Hebrew, was written without vowel points, which means the reader had to supply them from context. This means that the way Daniel interpreted the writing was not the only way to interpret the writing. Consider the following quote from the Bible Knowledge Commentary:

(Do Not Read)

CONSONANTAL WORD PLAY

PART 1

In interpreting the third word Daniel changed the plural *parsîn* (v. 25) to the singular **PERES** (*perēs*). Belshazzar's kingdom was to be broken up (divided, *perîsat*) and given to the Medes and Persians. Apparently Daniel intended a play on words for a change in the vowels in *perēs* gives the word "Persian" (*Pāras*). Thus the message was that because of the moral and spiritual degradation of the king and his kingdom, God would terminate the Babylonian Empire and give it to the Medes and Persians.

J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1346.

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This is similar to the way in which the Hebrew word Saul is consonantly the same as Sheol and without the vowel pointing, you are forced to only use context in determining which meaning is correct. Consonantal languages are replete with similar examples to this.

Likewise, the word **Parsin** carries a double meaning. It not only means "**divisions**" or "**to divide**," but also alludes to the **Persians** (*Paras* in Hebrew and Aramaic), who would inherit the kingdom. But there is another layer of wordplay at work here.

(Do Not Read)

CONSONANTAL WORD PLAY

PART 2



MENE (*menē'*)

Aramaic noun

50 shekels (a mina, equal to 1 1/4 pounds).

It is from the verb *menâh*,
“to number, to reckon.”



TEKEL (*teqēl*)

Noun

Shekel (2/5 of an ounce).

It is from the verb *teqâl*,
“to weigh.”



PARSIN (*parsîn*)

Noun

Half-mina (25 shekels, or about 2/3 of a pound).

It is from the verb *peras*,
“to break in two, to divide.”

The word on the wall was actually
Ūparsîn, which means “and Parsin”
(NIV marg.).

J. Dwight Pentecost, “Daniel,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1346.

MENE (*menē'*) is an Aramaic noun referring to a weight of 50 shekels (a mina, equal to 1 1/4 pounds). It is from the verb *menâh*, “to number, to reckon.”

TEKEL (*teqēl*) is a noun referring to a shekel (2/5 of an ounce). It is from the verb *teqâl*, “to weigh.”

PARSIN (*parsîn*) is a noun meaning a half-mina (25 shekels, or about 2/3 of a pound). It is from the verb *peras*, “to break in two, to divide.” The word on the wall was actually *Ūparsîn*, which means “and Parsin” (NIV marg.).

J. Dwight Pentecost, “Daniel,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1346.

The value decreasing from 50 to 1 to ½ mirrors exactly what we have seen across the whole Daniel narrative — the decreasing intrinsic value of each successive Babylonian generation, moving further and further from the head of gold.

(Do Not Read)

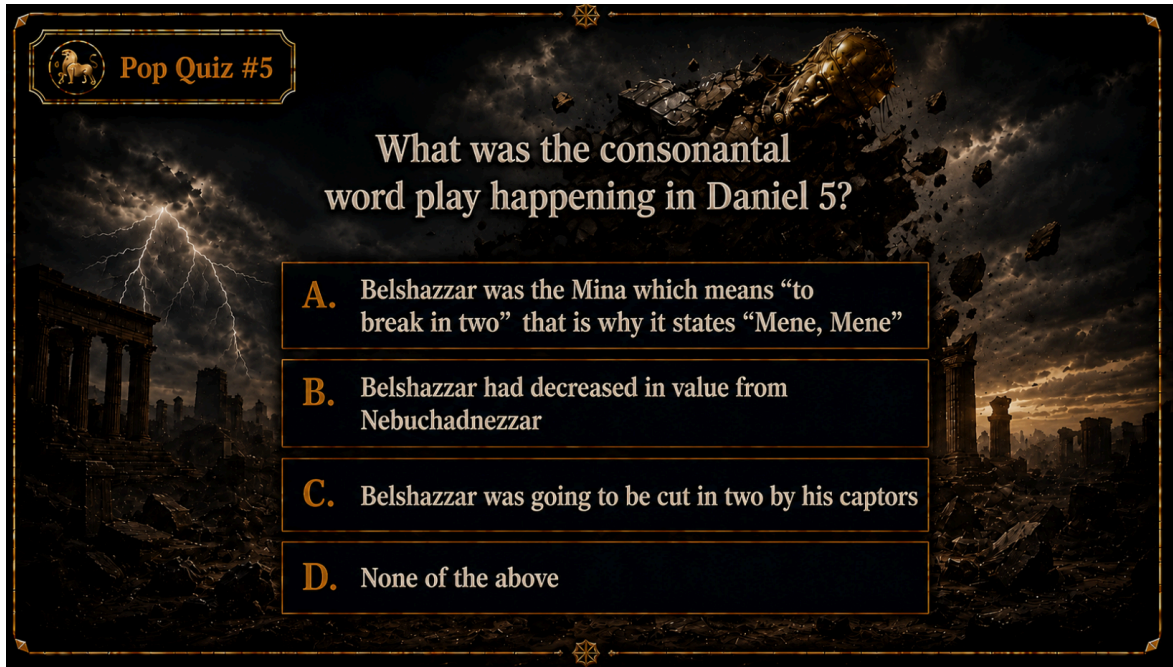
TIMELINE OF BABYLONIAN KINGS				
	Nabopolassar	626 – 605 BC		"George Washington" of Babylonian Empire, won independence from Assyria
	Nebuchadnezzar	605 – 561 BC	 Mina	Father
	Evil-Merodach	561 – 559 BC	 Mina	Son
	Neriglissar	559 – 555 BC	 Shekel	Father of Labashi-Marduk and Son-in-Law of Nebuchadnezzar
	Labashi-Marduk	3 months	 Shekel	Son
	Nabonidus	555 – 538 BC	 ½ Shekel	Father "married to Nebuchadnezzar's daughter"
	Belshazzar	542 – 538 BC	 ½ Shekel	Son
Most Dates According to "The Coming Prince" by Sir Robert Anderson. See also: James Hastings et al., Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), 69.				

It is possible to see Nebuchadnezzar and Evil-Merodach as worth 50 units, or a mina. Neriglissar and Labashi-Marduk as worth only 1 unit or a shekel, and finally Nabonidus and Belshazzar as both less than 1 unit due to their detestable worship of the god Sin.

No matter which way we view the writing, Jeremiah's prophecy is still fulfilled.

o **Jeremiah 27:6–7 (ESV)**

6 Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. 7 All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.



Before moving on, we want to derive one more sod from the wordplay that takes place in this chapter. The language used in the interpretation of this prophecy seems to be comparing Belshazzar, and by proximity, Nabonidus, to the lesser kingdoms which follow Babylon, specifically the clay feet.

Consider the wordplay we have discussed:

(Do Not Read)

CONSONANTAL WORD PLAY AND THE DANIEL 2 VISION

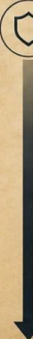
- 
 • Belshazzar is told that his kingdom is **weighed** and **found wanting**. Gold has the highest density by volume out of all the metals used in the statue, followed by silver, then bronze, then iron, and finally iron mixed with clay.
- 
 • The words can convey **decreasing value**. Each successive kingdom in the statue is represented by a metal of decreasing value, finishing with the iron mixed with clay of the feet and toes.
- 
 • The word for **finger** (*etsba*) is the same word as what the toes are called in chapter 2 bringing to mind the final empire



DECREASING
IN VALUE



DECREASING
IN DENSITY



Consonantal Word Play and the Daniel 2 Vision

- *Belshazzar is told that his kingdom is weighed and found wanting. Gold has the highest density by volume out of all the metals used in the statue, followed by silver, then bronze, then iron, and finally iron mixed with clay.*
- *The words can convey decreasing value, Each successive kingdom in the statue is represented by a metal of decreasing value, finishing with the iron mixed with clay of the feet and toes.*
- *The word for finger (etsba) is the same word as what the toes are called in chapter 2 bringing to mind the final empire*

Putting these three facts together, it seems like God is subtly speaking that Belshazzar and Nabonidus were supposed to be part of the head of gold, but are acting like lesser kingdoms, perhaps even like the feet of Iron mixed with clay. Compound the above wordplay with the following facts about the Nabonidus/Belshazzar administration.

In the intro we told you Nabonidus inexplicably spent 10 years shortly after coming to the throne in Modern Day Sudia Arabia, just north of Medinah, Muhammed's birthplace.

(Do Not Read)



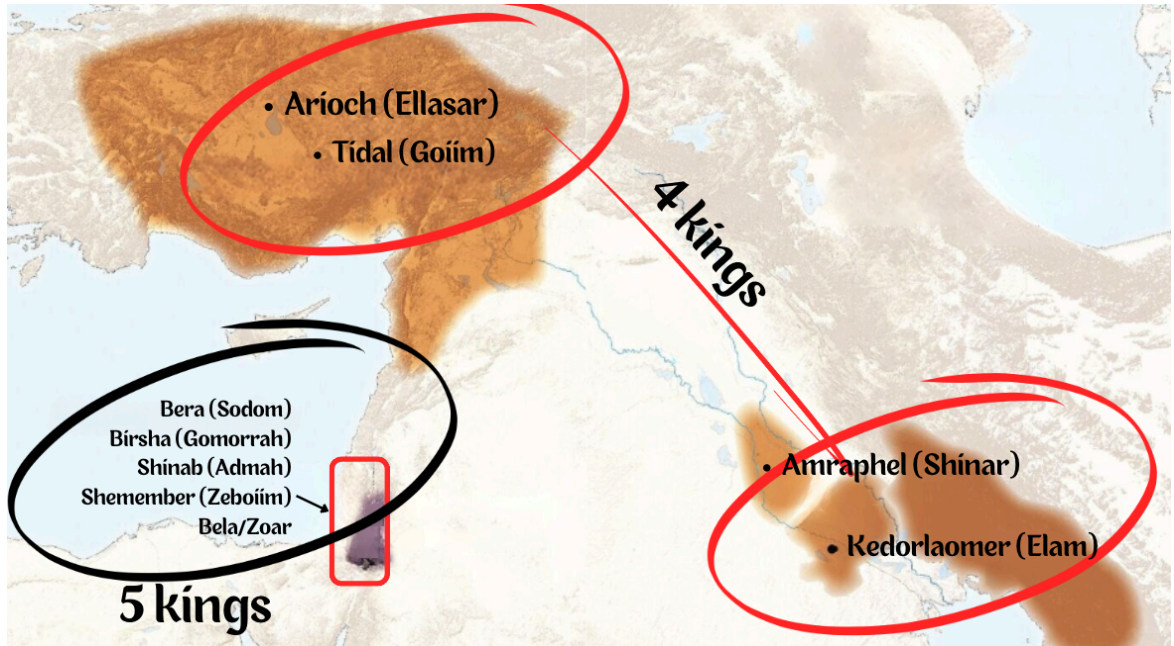
Based on the Bible Knowledge Commentary

He also devoted extraordinary attention to the worship of the moon god **Sîn**. Nabonidus restored the great temple of Sîn at **Harran** and the temple at **Ur**, where he installed his daughter as high priestess. Unlike Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus was not ethnically Babylonian but was likely from the region of Harran. Many historians believe he sought to elevate the worship of Sîn throughout his empire, perhaps even making Sîn the empire's supreme deity.

<https://archaeology.org/issues/march-april-2022/features/babylon-nabonidus-last-king/>

In the introduction we hinted at similarities between Genesis 14 and Nabonidus' worship of the moon god Sin. You may remember this map from Genesis 14.

(Do Not Read)



The northern highlighted zone holds the city of Harran, and the southeast highlighted zone holds the city of Ur. The regions that Abraham fought against are same regions that Nabonidus was uniting under the god Sin.

Further, In Ezekiel 38-39 there is a coalition that comes against Israel in the last days led by the antichrist.

(Do Not Read)



The antichrist's coalition in Ezekiel 38-39 is seemingly led by Turkey and Persia, similar regions to the ones Nabonidus was seeking to unite under Allah's predecessor, or alternate name, Sin.

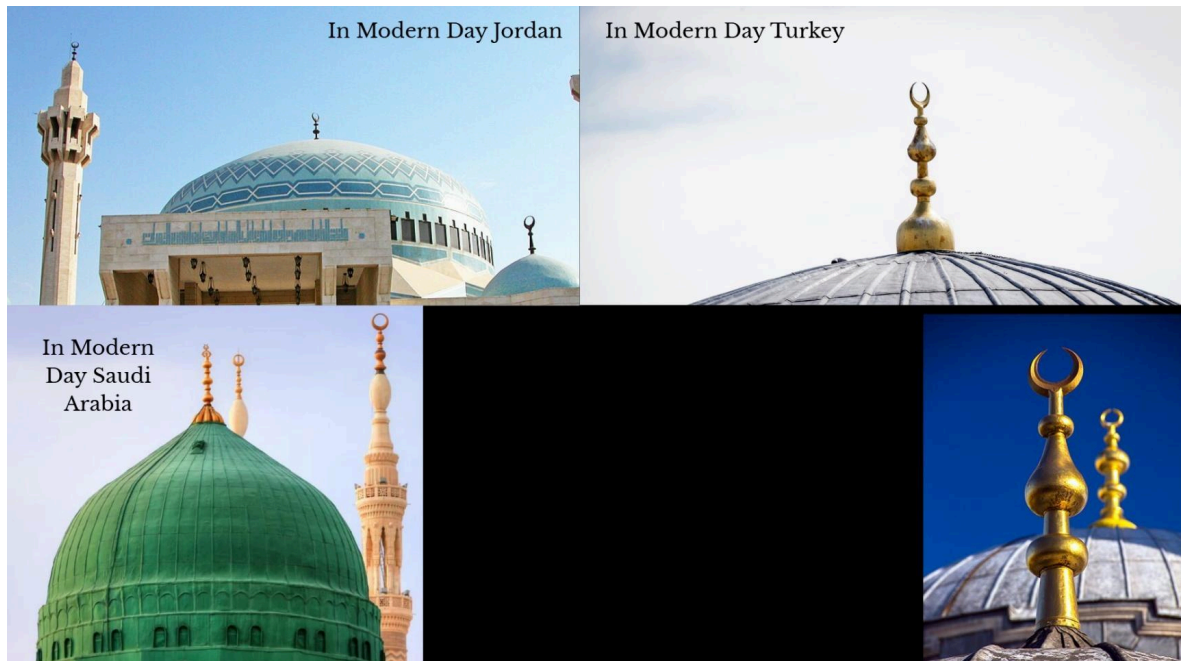
Further, archeologists have discovered at least four inscriptions that show Nabonidus worshipping the moon god as signified by an upside down crescent moon.



These inscriptions were found scattered around the ancient Babylonian empire as far west as Jordan, as far south as central Saudia Arabia and as far north as Harran. Some historians have gone so far as to call Nabonidus a 'moon god fanatic'.

When these ancient symbols are compared with the crescent-and-star imagery that is widespread across much of the modern Islamic world, the visual similarity is striking.

(Do Not Read)



If one understands the final kingdom of prophecy to involve an Islamic caliphate, it is possible to see Nabonidus and Belshazzar as foreshadowing that final rebellion. Under that interpretation, Daniel's wordplay would not merely announce Babylon's fall but would subtly compare its last rulers with the character of the final Gentile empire that ultimately stands opposed to God.



Pop Quiz #6

Why did Daniel accept none of the gifts Belshazzar was trying to give him?

A: Accepting a bribe goes against scripture

B: He knew Babylon was going to fall that night

C: He did not want to be seen as accepting the kings gifts

D: he trusted the Lord to exalt him

E: None of the above

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The Outcome

Daniel 5:29–31 (NIV)

²⁹ Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, ³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

The rewards Daniel said "keep for yourself" were given to him anyway—and were worthless within hours. That very night the kingdom fell.

Just as Daniel had interpreted, the Empire of Babylon was given to the Medes and the Persians. There was not a word of Adonai that failed. The sentence of death was carried out on Belshazzar for his arrogance and defiance towards Adonai.

The things that this world has to offer are completely worthless. They are treasures of a kingdom that is falling. The positions of this world mean nothing because the systems of this world are falling. The things this world

has to offer you are temporal. The treasures of the everlasting Kingdom of God are eternal! We will not exchange eternal treasures for temporal bribes to turn us from obedience to the Word of God.

- **Matthew 16:26–27 (NIV)**

²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.



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Closing Note — Babylon's Fall vs. Babylon's Doom

While Jeremiah and Isaiah's prophecies are undisputable, as you study these topics on your own you will inevitably find some seemingly glaring contradictions in the biblical prophecies about Babylon that you will need to wrestle with. If you read the last two chapters of Jeremiah, the destruction of Babylon that is described is not what occurs in our chapter tonight. Cyrus takes over the city without much of a fight and the city stays intact and governmental positions stay in place—they are simply given to the Persian people.

The last two chapters of Jeremiah (50–51), Isaiah 13–14, and Revelation 17–18 all describe a Babylon that is utterly and finally destroyed — a haunt for mere jackals, never to rise again.

However Babylon stayed on the world stage for hundreds of years after the Medo-Persian conquest. Saddam Hussein the former president of Iraq was, in living memory, rebuilding parts of the very palace where these events occurred. This means that the events in Jeremiah 50-51, Isaiah 13-14, and Revelation 17-18 are yet to be fulfilled. Babylon's doom is what is prophesied in those six chapters and what we saw tonight was not the doom of Babylon, it was the fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire. The fall of

the Neo-Babylonian empire was the first of many transitions in the Gentile world that are being ordered toward the never-ending Kingdom of God.

Stand to your feet as we read our final verse and pray:

- **James 1:9 (NIV)**

⁹ Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position.

No matter what those around you— relatives, business prospects, those in influential positions are offering you— remember, do not let any offer, do not let any help be offered you other than what God himself is giving to you. **Here in this family, there is nothing that is worth losing out on your high position by allowing yourself to be bribed through worldly enticements, through business growth, through familial affection.**

We will not forfeit our high position for the bribes of this world. We do not need anything from the world, the world needs everything from you!

You've been given a high position church. You are seated with Christ. He has given you everything. You have been made full in Christ, and that is the attitude that we're going to walk out of this place with tonight.

Pray