

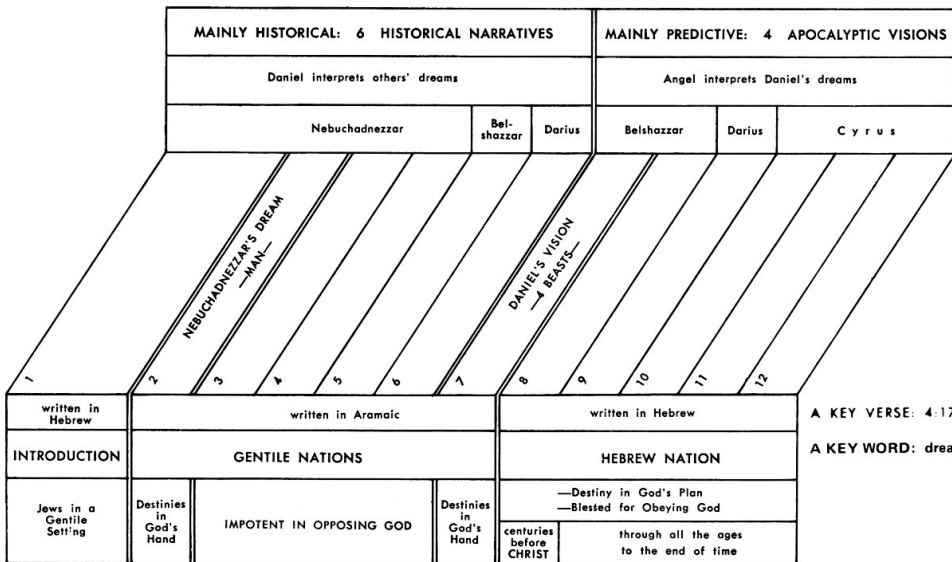
Daniel 5 Commentary

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A KEY VERSE: 4:17
A KEY WORD: dream

Daniel 1	Daniel 2:4-7:28	Daniel 8-12
Written in Hebrew	Written in Aramaic	Written in Hebrew
Daniel's "No Compromise" Stand	God's Prophetic Plan for Gentile Nations	God's Prophetic Plan for Israel

Daniel 5:1 Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.

- **Held:** Ge 40:20 Es 1:3 Isa 21:4,5 22:12,14 Jer 51:39,57 Na 1:10 Mk 6:21,22
- Youtube video - [Daniel 5 Handwriting on the Wall](#)
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE CRITICS CRIED FOUL... "BELSHAZZAR A KING?"

Donald Campbell writes that Daniel 5 is "significant for its demonstration of the trustworthiness of the Book of Daniel, and by extension, all of Scripture. One writer claimed that this chapter is "notable for its historic inconsistencies." Bible critics have stumbled over the words of the chapter, "*Belshazzar the king*," because the ancient historians cited [Nabonidus](#) as the last king of Babylon and made no mention of [Belshazzar](#). Is the Book of Daniel in error on this point? (Read on!)... When confronted with a supposed error in the Scriptures, therefore, the better part of wisdom is to withhold judgment until man's knowledge "*catches up*" with biblical statements. In every case the sacred record has been substantiated." (Borrow [Daniel, decoder of dreams](#) - well written, practical, recommended)

When does this chapter occur? About **seventy years** after the events of Daniel chapter 1 (which occurred in 605BC), during the reign of the last king of Babylon, at the juncture of **the fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver** (Da 2:32-note, Da 2:39-note) representing the passage of the Gentile kingdoms from Babylon to Medo-Persia in **539BC**, substantiating the truth that God's Word of prophecy is true and that the God of the Word is sovereign for it is He Alone Who **removes kings and establishes kings**. (Da 2:21-note).

One other detail is that the Medo-Persian army led by Cyrus had undertaken a siege against Babylon and some sources report that it had been in effect for 4 months. Belshazzar foolishly thought no one could touch him. He was going to party. After all Babylon is reported to have enough grain to feed them for 20 years and the Euphrates River provided a reliable water supply. They had a false security, just like all unbelievers. Belshazzar was like the man in Pr 18:11-note "**A rich man's wealth is his strong city, And like a high wall in his own imagination.**" As Criswell says "The rich man imagines his wealth to be a strong defense to secure him from whatever storms of life may come, but that protection is only "in his own esteem," i.e., in his own estimation. In actuality, only God is a sure refuge (Pr 18:10-note).

Proverbs 18:10,11 A DRAMATIC CONTRAST			
Righteous Pr 18:10-note	Trust in (see next) (Place faith in...) (Believe in...)	<u>Name of Yahweh</u> Jehovah	Is Safe (Fact)
Rich Pr 18:11-note		Money (mammon)	Imagines safe (Fiction)

Both proverbs speak of a **refuge** - a sure refuge in God in Pr 18:10 but a shaky refuge in wealth in Pr 18:11. Jesus warned against the snare of wealth in His Sermon on the Mount "No one (Greek = absolute negation) can (**dunamai** = has the inherent ability to continually [present tense] serve (**douleuo** = be a slave, give up your rights to the will of your master!) two masters (**kurios**); for either he will hate the one and love (**agapao**) the other, or he will hold to one and despise (kataphroneo) the other. You (absolutely) cannot serve God and mammon (**mammonas**). (Mt 6:24-note) James spoke to this humanistic mindset that characterizes all mankind "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. **You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.** Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." (James 4:14, 15)

Life is fragile but the pagan mindset says "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we will die." (cp Lk 12:19) For Belshazzar it would not be **tomorrow** but **today!**

Some commentators date this chapter at more than 20 years after the end of Daniel 4. Certainly there has been a considerable time gap because King Belshazzar does not appear to have even know Daniel personally! (cp the new Pharaoh's ignorance of Joseph - Ex 1:8) In addition Daniel was no longer the chief of the magicians. Nevertheless his reputation persisted because he had not ceased to run with endurance (Heb 12:1-note, He 12:2-note) setting an example of excellence for all generations to come (cp Heb 6:11, 12-note).

Daniel 5 is the source of several sayings that are popular in the secular culture: (1) **'the handwriting is on the wall'** speaking of impending disaster that is so obvious only a fool could not see it coming and (2) A similar expression stating that "**your days are numbered.**" (3) The description of one in great fear as **'his knees are knocking'**! (As someone once said "If your knees are knocking, kneel on them!")

Reading Daniel 5 is like seeing a catastrophic tsunami coming and not being able to do anything about it. Sin is deceptive and Belshazzar was deceived and it cost him his life and his kingdom! Do not be deceived beloved brethren!

Belshazzar the king - Da 5:30, 31 identifies Belshazzar as the last king of Babylon. Skeptics and liberal critics prior to 1853 used the reference to this king in Daniel 5 as evidence that the entire book was a fraud. They reasoned that the historical record clearly demonstrated that a man named **Nabonidus** was the last king of Babylon (Reign = 556-539BC). They were convinced they had discovered another "error" in Daniel. That is they were "convinced" until 1853 when archaeologists discovered a clay cylinder (click image to enlarge the [Nabonidus Cylinder](#)) at Ur in Mesopotamia inscribed with the following prayer...

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](#))

The inscription on the [Nabonidus Chronicle](#) (click below to enlarge) helps understand how **Belshazzar** could be considered "co-regent" with **Nabonidus**...

The king (Nabonidus) was in Tema; the king's son (Belshazzar), courtiers and army were in Babylonia.

Comment: Note that both the [Nabonidus Cylinder](#) and the Nabonidus Chronicle are inscribed in [cuneiform](#) script on clay tablets.

Nabonidus Cylinder

Daniel actually substantiates the fact that Belshazzar was a co-regent with Nabonidus by offering "**authority as third ruler in the kingdom**" (Da 5:7) to anyone who could read and interpret the handwriting on the wall. He could not offer second in command because he was not first in command!

Once again we see that the Truth of God's Word is vindicated, as if God needed anyone to vindicate Him! The Bible is correct regardless of whether "confirmatory" ruins or artifacts are unearthed or not! **It is not so much that archeology proves the Bible is correct but that the Bible proves archeology is correct.** Or stated another way, never judge the Bible by history but history by the Word of God because **History** is "**HIS-Story**"! I am reminded of Jesus' words in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, where the rich man claims that if "someone goes to (his 5 brothers) from the dead, they will repent!" (Lk 16:30), to which Abraham replied "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead." (Lk 16:31) External evidences are great, and God used apologetics in my coming to faith, but the Word of God stands unmatched as "evidence" for God, His Son Jesus Christ and His glorious Gospel of grace. Hallelujah!

Related resources on archaeology and the Bible:

- [Bible Believer's Archaeology Belshazzar and Darius the Mede](#)
- [Bible Believer's Archaeology - #2](#)
- [List of artifacts significant to the Bible - from Wikipedia](#)

Josephus quotation of [Berossus](#) (a Hellenistic Babylonian writer, a priest of Bel, who lived around 300BC) provides us with one of the best summaries of royal lines that followed the death of Nebuchadnezzar (Reigned 43 years = 605-562BC)...

After beginning the wall of Which I have spoken, **Nabuchodonosor** (Nebuchadnezzar) fell sick and died, after

a reign of forty-three years, and the realm passed to his son Evilmaraduch. This prince, whose government was arbitrary and licentious, fell a victim to a plot, being assassinated by his sister's husband, Neriglissar, after a reign of two years. On his death Nerighsar, his murderer, succeeded to the throne and reigned four years. His son, Laborosoardoch, a mere boy, occupied it for nine months, when, owing to the depraved disposition which he showed, a conspiracy was formed against him, and he was beaten to death by his friends. After his murder the conspirators held a meeting, and by common consent conferred the kingdom upon **Nabonnedus (Nabonidus)**, a Babylonian and one of their gang. In his reign the walls of Babylon abutting on the river were magnificently built with baked brick and bitumen. In the seventeenth year of his reign **Cyrus** advanced from Persia with a large army, and, after subjugating the rest of the kingdom, **marched upon Babylonia**. Apprised of his coming, Nabonnedus led his army to meet him, fought and was defeated, whereupon he fled with a few followers and shut himself up in the town of Borsippa. Cyrus took Babylon (Da 5:31), and after giving orders to raze the outer walls of the city, because it presented a very redoubtable and formidable appearance, proceeded to Borsippa to besiege Nabonnedus. The latter surrendering, without waiting for investment, was humanely treated by Cyrus, who dismissed him from Babylonia, but gave him Carmania for his residence. There Nabonnedus spent the remainder of his life, and there he died." ([Flavius Josephus, "Against Apion," in Josephus 1:221-25.](#))

SUMMARY OF THE KINGS OF BABYLON

KING (Meaning of Name)	DATE OF REIGN
Nabopolassar (Nabu-apal-usur) (Nabu protect the son)	626-605BC
Nebuchadnezzar (Nabu-kuduri-usur) (Nabu protect the boundary)	605-562BC
Evil Merodach (Amil-Marduk) (Man of Marduk)	562-560BC
Neriglissar (Nergal-shar-usur) (Nergal protect the king)	560-556BC
Labosoarchod (Labashi-Marduk)	556BC (3 months)
Nabonidus (Nabu-naid) (Nabu is exalted)	556-539BC
Belshazzar (Bel-shar-usur) (Bel protect the king)	539BC

Nabonidus the king of **Babylon** spent most of his reign (by some reports as long as 14 of his 17 years in power) in **Tema** ([See also Tayma](#)) in the middle of Arabia. In order to retain power in Babylon, he appointed his son **Belshazzar** as co-king or co-regent.

Related Resource: [Tony Garland's Chart Comparing Year, Chapter and Age of Daniel](#)

The Apologetics Study Bible adds that "Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, Belshazzar's name was unattested except for the book of Daniel and works dependent on it (Baruch, Josephus). From other sources Nabonidus was known to have been the last king of Babylon, and some critics declared Belshazzar to be fictional. However, during the past 150 years abundant evidence has come to light (at least 37 archival texts) demonstrating that **Belshazzar** was a real person, the son of Nabonidus and ruler of Babylon during his father's extended absences." (Online [The Apologetics Study Bible- Understand Why You Believe](#))

Jeremiah records a prophecy that relates to this chapter - "And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him. And 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 will make him their servant." (Jer 27:7) In Daniel 5 "the time" had come! In this same chapter Jeremiah gives another prophecy regarding the Temple vessels of Jehovah - "Yes, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem, 'They shall be carried to Babylon, and they shall be there until the day I visit them,' declares the LORD. 'Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.'" (Jer 27:21-22)

While some interpret "son and his grandson" in Jeremiah 27:7 to be Nabonidus and Belshazzar, there is a problem with this interpretation as Nabonidus does not appear to actually have been Nebuchadnezzar's son. Thomas Constable feels that this notation is a reference to Evil-Merodach (Jer 52:31) who was Nebuchadnezzar's son and to Belshazzar who was his grandson (as explained by Gaebelein below).

Gaebelein writes that Nabonidus "had a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar for wife and therefore Belshazzar from his mother's side was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar." ([The prophet Daniel - a key to the visions and prophecies](#))

Whitcomb - 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 firstborn, 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." ([Daniel- Everyman's Bible Commentaries.](#))

King Cyrus of Persia ([Cyrus the Great](#)) also refers to Belshazzar when he conquered Babylon in his writings: "A coward was put in charge as the king of this country ... With evil intents he did away with the regular offerings to the gods ... and desecrated the worship of the king of his gods, Marduk."

Thousand of his nobles (not even counting **his wives and his concubines**) - This was extravagant to the max but it was typical of the Persian kings who followed Babylon (see Esther 1:3-8-note). In fact oriental kings were notorious for their extravagant feasts, archaeological discoveries revealing that some Persian monarchs were known to dine daily with 15,000 guests at a meal. At **Alexander the Great's** marriage 10,000 guests attended his wedding dinner. **Ashurnasirpal II** had a banquet for 69,754 guests at a banquet dedicating his new capital city Calah in 1879BC. Athanasius describes the food at these banquets writing that "1,000 animals are slaughtered daily for the king. These comprise horses, camels, oxen, asses, deer, and most of the smaller animals. Many birds are consumed, including Arabian ostriches, geese, and chickens."

Showers - On such occasions it was an Oriental custom for the king to sit at a separate table on an elevated platform where all the guests could see him. ([The Most High God- A Commentary on the Book of Daniel](#))

Speaker's Commentary notes that large numbers of attendees were well known in oriental banquets "15,000 men fed daily at the king's cost in the Persian courts; Alexander the Great once invited 10,000 to a wedding feast; Ptolemy Dionysus undertook the daily nurture of 1000 soldiers of Pompey the Great. It was usually at the close of the banquet proper that the drinking began: and it was so here. Belshazzar under the influence of wine became boastful and fool-hardy." ([Speaker's Commentary](#))

Drinking wine - Security and sensuality are often harbingers of approaching ruin. The Medo-Persian army was outside of Babylon and possibly had either captured Nabonidus or at least had cut him off from returning to the city. Belshazzar, ruling in his father's place, and knowing of the threat to the city but feeling secure behind its great walls, had the hubris to hold a great feast and drink wine offering praise to Babylon's so called "gods".

Stauffer summarizes the previous chapters "God is our Judge (Daniel 1), our Revealer (Daniel 2), Igniter (Daniel 3), and Gracious King (Daniel 4)."

James M. Boice entitles this Daniel 5 "**The Sin God Will Not Tolerate**", emphasizing of course that in truth there is no sin which God will tolerate.

The Ball - Da 5:1

The Gall - Da 5:2-4

The Wall - Da 5:5-6

The Call - Da 5:7-16

The Fall - Da 5:17-31

Belshazzar's Feast, Da 5:1-31

Da 5:1-4 - Belshazzar's Contribution to the Feast: Unrestrained Sensuality,

Da 5:5-6 - God's Contribution to the Feast: Handwriting on the Wall

Da 5:7-29 - Daniel's Contribution to the Feast: Announcement of Doom

Da 5:30-31 - Darius's Contribution to the Feast: Destruction of Babylon

[\(Don Robinson - Outline of the Book of Daniel\)](#)

Sermon Starters...

The Fall Of A King Daniel 5

GOD REJECTED - Da 5:1-4

There was a drinking party. King Belshazzar called for the sacred vessels taken out of the Temple in Jerusalem. While desecrating the sacred vessels the people also praised their false Gods. The true God was obviously being rejected.

THE PROPHET REMEMBERED - Da 5:5-12

This was a time of fear and confusion. The fingers of a man's hand appear and write on the wall.

This was also a time when others couldn't help. The Queen Mother remembered Daniel after all the wise men of Babylon could not tell the king the meaning of the writing on the wall. Isn't it interesting how often people turn to God only after all other possible sources of help have been depleted?

THE KING REBUKED - Da 5:13-31

Compliment - Da 5:13-16 - The king had heard of Daniel and his ability. He offered great reward if Daniel would interpret the writing on the wall.

Comparison - Da 5:17-23 - Daniel tells the story of Nebuchadnezzar who had been disciplined by God and repented, humbling himself before God. (See Daniel 4.) By contrast, Belshazzar rebelled against God and hadn't repented.

Condemnation - Da 5:24-31 - The handwriting on the wall was interpreted. Belshazzar is judged and found wanting. His kingdom was taken from him.

The Party's Over - Daniel 5

We use the expression "The Party's Over" to say that whatever a person has enjoyed doing has been completed. Reality has set in, and a person must face whatever consequences are facing him.

Belshazzar, a wicked king, was literally having a party. God was announcing that the party was over for Belshazzar. The enemy armies were outside the city. The Kingdom of Babylon was about to fall to the Medes and Persians.

CORRUPTION OF THE KING Da 5:1-4

The king was committing blasphemy by drinking out of containers dedicated to God (Jerusalem temple), and praising his gods of wood and stone.

CONFUSION IN THE COURT Da 5:5-16

The mysterious fingers appear on the wall. Everyone is in a panic. Nobody could read the writing. The queen mother suggests that Daniel be called in.

CONSULTATION WITH THE PROPHET Da 5:17-24

Daniel reminds Belshazzar of Nebuchadnezzar's rebellion against God, his judgment, restoration and repentance (See Daniel 4). Although Belshazzar knew these things, he rebelled against the Lord of heaven.

CONDEMNATION BY GOD Da 5:25-31

God finished Belshazzar's kingdom that night.

father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

- **Gold** - Da 1:2 2Ki 24:13 25:15 2Ch 36:10,18 Ezra 1:7-11 Jer 27:16-22 Jer 52:19
- Da 5:11,13,18 2Sa 9:7 2Ki 8:25-27 2Ch 11:20 15:16 Jer 27:7
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LUXURY AND LICENTIOUSNESS

When Belshazzar tasted the wine - The **NRSV** translates it somewhat interpretatively (but I think accurately) "*Under the influence of the wine*" (cp paraphrase Contemporary English Version which is very interpretative = "*He got drunk*" [This highlights one of the reasons why serious Bible study should always be carried out using a more literal translation like NAS, ESV, NKJV-**See Bible Versions compared for Literalness**]). Belshazzar should have read Pr 20:1 and Pr 31:4 (cp Pr 23:29, 30, 31, 32, Hab 2:5)! Notice that this is the second mention of imbibing of "spirits" (Da 5:1, 2), emphasizing that **the Spirit** (speaking of "spirits ~ wine) clearly desires to for us to understand the background for the events in this chapter! We have spoken before about what occurs when one is "**controlled**" by various attitudes (anger, fear, etc) and agents (be they alcohol or mind altering drugs) (**Seenotes** on Da 3:17). "Do not be filled with (controlled by) wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled (continually) with the Spirit." (Eph 5:18-**note**)!

Deffinbaugh has an interesting anecdotal story - Understanding how things went from bad to worse in these verses is not difficult. As a college student, I worked several months for a caterer. One night we catered a banquet for a group of socialites in the city of Seattle. As the night wore on and the alcohol flowed freely, I saw and heard things I never would have expected or believed from people normally very proper and dignified. ([The Hand of God in History](#))

He gave orders - When wine controls us we always act the part of the fool! Belshazzar (his name means "Bel Protect the King!") shows his contempt for the Most High God (Da 3:26-**note**, Da 4:2-**note**, Da 5:18, 21-**note**). They were celebrating how powerful they were saying "We conquered the God of the Jews." This was a bad choice on Belshazzar's part and marked the "beginning of the end". Isaiah alludes to the effect of wine on one's judgment...

And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink. They are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink. They reel while having visions. They totter (waver, stumble, used of one who is incapacitated and unable to render judgments with integrity) when rendering judgment. (Isaiah 28:7, cp Isa 5:11, 22-**note**)

Instead, there is gaiety and gladness, Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, Eating of meat and drinking of wine: "**Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.**" (Isaiah 22:13)

Comment: Not tomorrow but tonight for Belshazzar!

Gold and silver vessels (see Da 1:2-**note**, 2Chr 36:7, 10) - The holy vessels obtained from sacking the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and which Nebuchadnezzar had placed in the treasure house of his god (Da 1:2). The holy vessels were eventually returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:7, 8, 9, 10, 11).

Belshazzar's goal was to demonstrate the superiority of the Babylonian "gods" over the God of the Hebrews. This costly mistake was his foolish attempt to mock the Lord God, the very One who had given the holy vessels into Nebuchadnezzar's hand (Da 1:2-**note**). Paul spoke of the deceitfulness of such the foolishness of mocking God writing...

Do not be deceived (**plano** in the **present imperative** with a negative = Stop being deceived!), God is not mocked (**mukterizo** from **mukter** = the nose, nostril) literally means to turn up one's nose and thus pictures the idea of **scorn!**); **for** (**term of explanation**) whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. **For** (**term of explanation**) the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption (**phthora** = decay, not a sudden destruction owing to external violence, but a dissolution brought about by internal decay), but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life (in this life and the life to come, cp 1Ti 4:8-note). (Gal 6:7, 8-note)

His father (6x in 4v - Da 5:2, 11, 13, 18, 2Chr 36:10, Jer 52:19) - Belshazzar was almost certainly the grandson of **Nebuchadnezzar** through his mother's line. As discussed elsewhere his biological father was **King Nabonidus**. The word **father** was often used more generically in Scripture to indicate an ancestor, as for example when David is referred to as the "**father**" of Jesus (Lk 1:31, 32). Gaebelein adds that in the Semitic languages there was no word for "grandfather" or "grandson." ([Ref](#))

And his concubines - As described in Da 5:4 they were practicing brazen **idolatry** and as we see so often in Scripture, **idolatry** is usually associated with **immorality** (see Paul's command in Col 3:5-note) The cause of **immorality** is that men **do not know God**

(1Thes 4:5-note) which in turn is the key (i.e., knowing God) to overcoming the sin of sexual immorality (as is gratefulness to God - see the power of "giving thanks" to counter immorality in Eph 5:3-note, Eph 5:4-note). When you have a god of your own making ("no God" instead of "know God!"), you have **no** accountability and easily give yourself over to the licentious passing pleasures of the world, especially the sensual, seductive pleasures of sexual immorality. The concubines were most likely present for the purpose of sexual immorality (orgy = excessive sexual indulgence).

[The Apologetics Study Bible- Understand Why You Believe \(Online\)](#) - "His predecessor" literally reads "his father" in the Aramaic text. Nebuchadnezzar is called Belshazzar's predecessor six times in this chapter (vv. 2,11,13,18), and the king is designated as the "successor" (literally, "son") of Nebuchadnezzar once (v. 22). Babylonian sources record that Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus. The apparent discrepancy may be explained by the use of the terms predecessor (or father) and successor (or son) in the Semitic languages. "Predecessor" could refer to one's immediate father, grandfather, ancestor, or as in the case of kings, the immediate predecessor. Likewise "successor" may mean one's immediate offspring, grandson, descendant, or the immediate successor. An example of the latter is Jehu's designation as the "son of Omri" in the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. It is likely that Nabonidus wed a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, making the great king both Belshazzar's "predecessor" and grandfather.

Daniel 5:3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.

- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the Temple, the House of God (See Da 1:2-note) - For almost 70 years God's Holy vessels had been stored away (never used by Nebuchadnezzar as far as we know).

Gaebelein comments that "This feast of wickedness and blasphemy needs no further annotations. But it shows the great decline morally in the great Babylonian empire. Nebuchadnezzar, no doubt, had handled the golden vessels of the house of the Lord most carefully. He had stored them away, fearing to misuse them. The grandson sent for these vessels to drink out of them wine with his harlots and to praise his idols."

The king and his nobles, etc - It is worthy of note that one individual of some renown did not receive an invitation to the "Babylonian Ball (Brawl)". That man's name was Daniel. In fact as we discover, the king was oblivious to the existence of this great prophet and confidant to his ancestor Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel wasn't invited to the party, but when God intervened and no one had the answer, suddenly Daniel is the one man the king wants to hear from.

Here is the application - When the world throws a wild party, the **children of God** (Jn 1:12, 1:13, 1Jn 3:1-note, 1Jn 3:2-note, 1Jn 3:10, Ro 8:16-note, Php 2:15-note) are not invited (cp 1Pe 4:3, 4, 5-note), because **darkness** runs from the **light** (Jn 3:19, 20, 21, cp Jn 1:5!). We don't fit in (2Co 6:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 2Co 7:1-note) and our values only serve to irritate the revelers in their blatant debauchery - i.e., saints are "spoil sports"! We are not to be party goers, but "party showers" (lights exposing the folly and finality of darkness). Jesus exhorted us to be **salt** (which impedes corruption, but also can be an irritant! - Mt 5:13-note) and **light** (which exposes darkness and corruption - Mt 5:14, 15-note), but we are not to expect the world to love us (Jn 15:18-21) as we fulfill our purpose by carrying out our God appointed, God enabled "**good works**" in Christ Jesus (Ep 2:10-note, Mt 5:16-note)!

Belshazzar and his band of carousers remind me of Paul's description of unbelievers in his letter to the Philippians (see esp v19)...

For (term of explanation) many walk (**peripateo**), of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies (**echthros**) of the cross of Christ, **whose end is destruction (apoleia)**, **whose god is their appetite**, and **whose glory is in their shame (aischune)**, who **set their minds (phroneo) on earthly things**. (Php 3:18, 19-note)

Rich Cathers draws a pithy application from this picture of Belshazzar's abuse and misuse of **God's holy vessels**, writing...

Don't abuse God's vessels - You (believers) are those special, holy vessels. God wants you for special things, not drunken parties. (1Pe 1:15-16NLT) But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God--who chose you to be his children--is holy. {16} For he himself has said, "You must be holy because I am holy."

The word "**holy**" means "set apart". It means that something has been set apart for a special use. We usually consider our toothbrush to be "holy". Most people would gag at the idea of using someone else's toothbrush. God considers you "holy". He wants you to be "holy". He wants you to be used for His purposes. There was an old bumper sticker that read, "You touch-a my truck, I break-a you face". The truck is meant for it's owner's use. God wants your body to be used for what He wants it used for.

Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality (fornication)

It is God's will that we be "holy". Sanctification is that process where we become more and more like Jesus. Sanctification is the process of "holiness". Fornication is defined as "sex outside of marriage".

That each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification (holiness) and honor, (1Th 4:1, 2note4 1Th 4:3-note, 1Th 4:4 KJV)

Our "vessel" is our **body**. **Belshazzar abused the "vessels" of the Temple. God doesn't want us to abuse our "vessels"**. ([Daniel 5](#))

As an aside look at the next **verse**...

not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God (1Th 4:5-note)

Comment: So what's the best "defense" against the strong lure of immorality? Look at the verse again. How do the Gentiles behave? Lustful passion, right? But the question is "why" do they behave this way? Paul says they "**do not know God**". So what the best defense against the offense of immorality? **KNOW GOD!** (Click for more discussion of this spiritual dynamic)

Daniel 5:4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone

- **praised:** Da 5:23 4:37 Jdg 16:23,24 Isa 42:8 Ho 2:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 Rev 9:20,21
- **gold:** Da 3:1-7,8-18 Ps 115:4-8 135:15, 16, 17, 18 Isa 40:19,20 42:17 46:6,7 Jer 10:4-9 Hab 2:19 Ac 17:29 19:24, 25, 26, 27, 28 Rev 9:20
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

UNDER THE INFLUENCE... BEWARE!

Praised the gods - The probably struck up the royal band for some music praising their pagan gods! What irony -- they praise all the gods that are not really gods and blaspheme the only true and living God! But isn't that the way the world often does it! In this case only did the pagans show contempt of God by drinking from His holy vessels, but they go a step further to use God's sacred vessels in the worship of **idols**! This is a praise service that is going to have a bad ending! How patient is our God! He is patient, but He has His limit as Daniel 5 illustrates. Belshazzar was soon to have the surprise of his life. **The Judge was standing right at the door** (cp Jas 5:9) (and He had rolled up His sleeves and was getting ready to write a farewell message to the king of Babylon!)

As an aside, you get a good clue as to what you worship by noting those things to which you devote the most time. It could be a football team (being from Texas, this is not uncommon) that the person lives for and looks forward to enjoying. But suddenly when the bottom drops out, where are the gods now. It's amazing that they very "**gods**" Belshazzar is worshiping are not the **gods** he turns to when the handwriting appears on the wall. Yes, he does go to his wise men, but their godless false religion offers no answers.

Over 100 years earlier the prophet Isaiah (740-680BC) had recorded God's clear warning that relates to Belshazzar's blasphemous act...

I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another (cp Da 5:23), nor **My praise to graven images**. (Is 42:8)

It is interesting that several centuries earlier the Spirit records a similar bacchanalia (festival of Bacchus celebrated with dancing, song, and revelry) with similar results (!)...

Now the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice, for they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hands." When the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said, "**Our god has given our enemy into our hands, Even the destroyer of our country, Who has slain many of us.**" **It so happened when they were in high spirits, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may amuse us."** So they called for Samson from the prison, and he entertained them. And they made him stand between the pillars... 30 And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he bent

with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life. (Jdg 16:23, 24, 25, 30-see notes)

Comment: Samson was to have been Jehovah's "vessel", His instrument to liberate His people from Philistine tyranny in the days of the judges (Jdg 20:25-note). God drew the line when these pagan revelers exalted their gods (as did Belshazzar) and impugned and denigrated the Name of Jehovah by mocking one of His chosen "vessels". God is simply not mocked!

And as **John** records in the **Revelation of Jesus Christ** the hearts of men do not get better (man is not evolving but devolving!) in the last days (during the "Tribulation" - Daniel's Seventieth Week). Even as idolatry was one of the main reasons for Babylon's fall, so too it will be one of the main reasons for the outpouring of God's final wrath...

The rest of mankind (Context = The sounding of the 6th Trumpet, equating with the 2nd Woe, announces the death and destruction of 1/3 of the earth's remaining population and in this passage John highlights the incomprehensible recalcitrance and hardness of heart of the surviving **Earth Dwellers!** ~ "*Stone hearts and Stone Idols*" [Henry Morris]), who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent of the works of their hands** (problem is not their hands as much as their God opposing will - cp Ro 1:25-note), **so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk**; and they **did not repent** of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their **immorality** (Note the frequent association of idolatry with immorality! When you create a "god" of your own making, you soon create a "moral government" in which your deceived heart [Jer 17:9] establishes the rules of "*right and wrong*"! And most of them are *wrong* in God's eyes!) nor of their thefts. (Rev 9:20-note, Rev 9:21-note)

Comment: Tony Garland notes that "In the end, without God's Holy Spirit, men become **creative perverts, dangerous geniuses** (Ge 11:6 - note that the context is the "birth" of the "first" Babylon [Babel - Nimrod's kingdom in Ge 10:10]), bent on creating their own hell in pursuit of what they incorrectly perceive to be wisdom and intelligence. "Professing to be wise, they became fools" (Ro 1:22-note)." **It is almost as if the story of Belshazzar's experience of the Lord's wrath against the king's blasphemous sin and the decadent kingdom of Babylon was a foreshadowing of the outpouring of His righteous wrath on all the godless kingdoms of the world** culminating (like Daniel 5) in the sudden, shocking, final and complete destruction of that blasphemous "prostitute" **Babylon the great** (Rev 14:8-note, Rev 16:19-note, Rev 17:5-note, Rev 18:2-note, Rev 18:21-note; See also **Babylon of Old**)

As we see later in this chapter, Belshazzar knew about God and His workings in Nebuchadnezzar's life (see Da 5:18, 19, 20, 21, especially Da 5:22 - it makes the point that knowing "*about*" God does not equate with truly knowing Him personally!), but here we see the foolish king using God's holy vessels of God in an act of overt defiance toward Him. God has a limit to how far He will allow men to go in their sin. In His longsuffering and mercy, God may allow men to continue in their sin for a time (cp Eccl 8:11 with Nu 32:23b). But there is a time for judgment. With this sin of blasphemy against God, Belshazzar had crossed the line. Christians are not immune from "crossing the line", the apostle John teaching that...

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. **There is a sin leading to death** (cp Ananias and Sapphira - Acts 5:1-11); I do not say that he should make request for this. (1Jn 5:16)

Gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone (cp Dt 4:28; 2Ki 19:18; Ps 115:4-note; Ps 135:15-note; Is 2:8-note; Is 17:8; 37:19; 44:10-20; Jer 1:16; 10:3, 4, 5; 25:6; Acts 7:41; 19:26) - It is fascinating and surely more than just a coincidence that the descending order of the metals of these manmade idols is similar ("wood" being the "outlier") to that found in the statute in Daniel 2.

Belshazzar thought his great city Babylon was impregnable. And from a humanistic viewpoint he had good reason to feel secure, for the square city was some 40 miles (or greater) in outer dimensions (some reports say it was 15 miles on each side) and enclosed by 2 sets of walls each 25 feet thick (25' thick--then a 40' space and then 25' thick) and reportedly as high as 350 feet (taller than a football field!). The walls were thick enough, that four chariots abreast could be driven around the tops of the walls. Just inside the outer walls was a moat, and inside the moat was another system of inner walls. And on top of the wall all around Babylon were towers that rose another 100 feet. The Euphrates River ran through the center of the city, from north to south, through great brass gates. In short, Babylon was one of the most imposing walled cities in the history of the world.

Belshazzar was indifferent to the imminent danger because he had placed his trust in "**Babylon the great**" city rather than in the **Most High God** Who had "won" the trust of his ancestor, King Nebuchadnezzar.

Belshazzar is a perfect picture of men and women in the last days just before God's wrath falls Paul writing "While they are saying,

"Peace and safety!" then **destruction will come upon them suddenly** like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape." (1Th 5:3-note; see John's description above in Revelation 9)

Belshazzar felt like nothing could shake his world or his kingdom. This was very much the attitude many in America held prior to September, 2001 when "9/11" Attacks occurred. It is also the way some of us feel if we have never been laid off from work or never experienced a serious illness. We can all become a bit self deceived when things are going well. Smug. Confident. Self sufficient. Self satisfied... the list goes on. For all unbelievers there is no security that is 100% for only one breath separates them from an eternal separation from their Creator. For believers our security is certain because it is **not** founded upon this present world which is passing away, but upon Christ Jesus our Rock and our Redeemer. **And yet we all need to be careful to not fall into the "Belshazzar mindset"!**

Showers has an interesting analysis of Da 5:1-4 - 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." Once again a pagan king was providing God with a splendid opportunity to demonstrate His sovereignty. ([The Most High God- A Commentary on the Book of Daniel](#))

Daniel 5:5 Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.

- **Suddenly** - Da 4:31,33 Job 20:5 Ps 78:30,31 Pr 29:1 Lk 12:19,20 1Th 5:2,3
- **Writing** - Da 5:8,15,24, 25,2 6, 27, 28 Col 2:14 Rev 20:12, 13, 14, 15
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**FROM
REVELRY
TO REVELATION
TO RETRIBUTION!**

As **Campbell** phrases it "The night of **revelry** became a night of **revelation**" (and then a night of **retribution!**) (Borrow [Daniel, decoder of dreams](#))

Below is **Rembrandt's** famous painting "**The Writing on the Wall**"...I would title this "Woe! Woe! Woe!"

Comment on Rembrandt's painting - Click the painting to see the detail better. Notice that the hand inscribing the writing on the wall is seen disappearing into a cloud on the left, indicating that the text has been written from right to left as was typical of Aramaic (and Hebrew). Moreover, the words appear in vertical columns, rather than horizontal lines. Instead of 1000 nobles, Rembrandt concentrates on a small group of figures staring at the wall and centers the attention on the profaning of the sacred gold vessels plundered from God's Holy Temple in Jerusalem. It was this act of desecration that led to his downfall but interestingly most contemporary depictions of this scene are principally concerned with the lavishness of the banquet but miss this vital theological point! **Kudos to Rembrandt!**

Suddenly (KJV = "in the same hour") - Can you picture this scene? **Talk about instant sobriety!**

Proverbs 29:1 A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will **suddenly** be broken beyond remedy.

Comment: The classic example is the antediluvian generation that rejected 120 years of Noah's preaching. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," God had said (Ge 6:3), and finally they were suddenly destroyed in the great Flood.

Paul described another "**suddenly**"...

For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them **suddenly** like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (1Th 5:2, 3-note)

Compare the sudden humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar - ""While the word (of proud boasting - Da 4:30) was in the king's mouth, a

voice came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'" (Da 4:31-32-note)

Hand - Babylonian hands had taken God's vessels (mentioned twice) and now they held them in contempt to dishonor and in so doing were in essence "issuing a challenge" to the Most High God. Now in Daniel 5:5 we find **the Hand that controls all men**, and which none can restrain, challenged them (Da 4:35-note). God's answer to their challenge was clear Da 5:23-28.

Maclaren - There is something blood-curdling in the visibility of but a part of the hand and its busy writing. Whose was the body, and where was it? No wonder if the riotous mirth was frozen into awe, and the wine lost flavor. ([Daniel 5:17-31 Mene, Tekel, Peres](#))

Dead idols are no match for the **Living God**, Who is ever able to vindicate His Holy Name, even as He did in 1Sa 5:1-5 when the **Ark of the Covenant** was placed in the Temple of **Dagon** (1Sa 5:6 explains that this was due to "the hand of the LORD" which was "heavy" on these pagans! Read 1Sa 5:6-7) The psalmist writes that idols "have hands but cannot feel" (Ps 115:7). In fact "the finger of God" is all He needs to accomplish His purposes! (cp Ex 8:19, Ex 31:18, Lk 11:20 referring to the power of the Spirit Mt 12:28 - *finger of God equates with Spirit of God*).

When I was in medical training at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas, Texas, there were a number of occasions I interviewed individuals who claimed to have seen various things on the walls of their hospital room. These patients usually received the diagnosis of "DT's" (delirium tremens)! Belshazzar was suffering from a case of "**Divine DT's**"!

Whitcomb remarks that "Joyce Baldwin's (a famous writer on OT books! Be a Berean with her books - Acts 17:11+) attempt to eliminate the supernatural element in the handwriting on the wall (in an otherwise basically conservative commentary) is both shocking and unconvincing." (Ibid)

Plaster of the wall - This was the same plaster on which the Babylonians would write about their great conquests and victories. God announces His impending judgment right at the place these pagans would otherwise look at and feel good about themselves. It is interesting that the skeptics (they simply can't leave this book alone!) write that plaster walls were unheard of in ancient Babylon. **Robert Koldewey** (1855-1925) was a German archeologist who been excavating at the site of Babylon in southern Iraq in 1899 and continued this work for 18 years. In addition to his discovery of a **Ziggurat** identified as the temple of the Babylon false god **Marduk**, also found a huge room (55' x 169') big enough to house Belshazzar's party and remarkably, the room had walls made with plaster. At the end of the room was a niche in the wall where he believed the king sat so he would be elevated above and visible to all the party guests. (From "[The Excavations At Babylon](#)" - Read Online - Hint: click dropdown for Page 104 and scroll back a couple of pages to read Koldewey's comments on this room including his comments on Belshazzar! - For description of plaster on the walls see [Page 88-89](#). [London: MacMillan, 1914]).

Opposite the lampstand - What's so important about this detail? This would make it very easy to see the writing hand. The point is that before God brings judgment, He always gives a clear warning. Not only that but the lampstand was quite likely the golden sacred candlestick, which was made of solid gold and place in the holy place. God's light shines on the sin of man as Jesus says...

And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God. (Jn 3:19, 20, 21)

What light did Belshazzar possess? Daniel leaves no doubt that Belshazzar had been exposed to the light declaring...

Yet you, his son (Nebuchadnezzar spoken of as his "father" - the truth in Da 5:20, 21), Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart (cp Da 4:37), even though you knew all this, 23 but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified. (Da 5:22, 23)

Belshazzar knew about God but he refused to bow to Him, like everyone who refuses to believe in Jesus.

Matthew Henry - God's written word is enough to put the proudest, boldest sinner in a fright. **What we see of God, the part of the hand that writes in the book of the creatures, and in the book of the Scriptures, should fill us with awful thoughts concerning that part which we do not see.** If this be the finger of God, what is His arm when made bare? And what is He? The king's guilty conscience told him that he had no reason to expect any good news from heaven. God can, in a moment, make the

heart of the stoutest sinner to tremble; and there needs no more than to let loose His own thoughts upon him; they will give him trouble enough. No bodily pain can equal the inward agony which sometimes seizes the sinner in the midst of mirth, carnal pleasures, and worldly pomp. **Sometimes terrors cause a man to flee to Christ for pardon and peace; but many cry out for fear of wrath** (Rev 6:16, 17-[notes](#)), who are not humbled for their sins, and who seek relief by lying vanities. The ignorance and uncertainty concerning the Holy Scriptures, shown by many who call themselves wise, only tend to drive sinners to despair, as the ignorance of these wise men did.

Daniel 5 reminds us of **Jesus'** sobering words in Luke 12...

And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' "And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, "**Soul**, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, **eat, drink and be merry.**" (cp Jas 4:13, 14, 15) "But God said to him, 'You fool!**This very night** (cp Pr 27:1) your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' "**So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.**" (Luke 12:16-21)

Comment: Notice Jesus' "definition" of a "**fool**" (literally without understanding especially in practical matters) = One who lays up treasure for self and is not rich toward God! **Who among us has not at one time or another played the fool, deceptively trusting in the temporary treasures of this world instead of the eternal security in Christ?**

Play the Gospel song [Handwriting on the Wall](#). Here is also an old hymn...

Handwriting on the Wall

by Knowles Shaw

At the feast of Belshazzar and a thousand of his lords,
While they drank from golden vessels, as the Book of Truth records,
In the night, as they reveled in the royal palace hall,
They were seized with consternation—'twas the Hand upon the wall!

Refrain

*'Tis the hand of God on the wall!
'Tis the hand of God on the wall!
Shall the record be "**Found wanting!**"
Or shall it be "**Found trusting!**"
While that hand is writing on the wall?*

See the brave captive, Daniel, as he stood before the throng,
And rebuked the haughty monarch for his mighty deeds of wrong;
As he read out the writing—'twas the doom of one and all,
For the kingdom now was finished—said the Hand upon the wall!

Refrain

See the faith, zeal and courage, that would dare to do the right,
Which the Spirit gave to Daniel—'twas the secret of his might,
In his home in Judea, or a captive in the hall,
He understood the writing of his God upon the wall!

Refrain

So our deeds are recorded—there's a Hand that's writing now:
Sinner, give your heart to Jesus, to His royal mandates bow;
For the day is approaching—it must come to one and all,
When the sinners' condemnation will be written on the wall!

Refrain

Daniel 5:6 Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began

- **the king's:** Da 5:9 2:1 3:19 Job 15:20-27 20:19-27 Ps 73:18-20 Isa 21:2-4
- **Face:** Da 5:9
- **and his thoughts:** Da 5:10 4:5,19 7:28) (Ps 69:23 Isa 13:7,8 21:3,4
- **joints:** Isa 5:27
- **knees:** Isa 35:3 Eze 7:17 21:7 Na 2:10 Heb 12:12
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

How quickly man bravado and boasting wilts in the presence of the Lord.

The king's face grew pale - The ESV says "His color changed"! The NLT says "His face turned pale with fright!" I guess it did! The Aramaic literally reads (the king's) "brightness changed for him." If we did not know the sequence of events in Daniel 5, one might have diagnosed a massive heart attack, and in a sense it was a "massive attack" on the hardened heart of Belshazzar by the Most High God.

Gaebelein - The feast of licentiousness became suddenly a feast of gloom and consternation. [\(The Prophet Daniel\)](#)

His hip joints when slack (KJV = his loins were loosed). The Aramaic reads "his loins went slack". Literally this reads "joints of his loins." The Septuagint translates the Aramaic word for "loins" is osphus which Friberg's Analytical Lexicon says can be a Hebraism for one's private parts. An interesting description of a man frightened out of his wits! Compare King Saul's reaction upon hearing the words of Samuel who had been brought up from the dead (1Sa 28:1-25).

Belshazzar's reaction to this "divine disturbance" reminds one of the reactions unbelievers will display during the **Day of the Lord (which is really an extended period of God's judgment of mankind)**...

Wail, for the **Day of the LORD** is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will fall limp, and every man's heart will melt. They will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them. They will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame. (Isa 13:6, 7, 8)

His thoughts alarmed him - Frightened out of his mind! Why did his thoughts alarm him? He knew about his grandfather's judgment. When God's judgment comes it will be the most surprising, frightening time of their life! Clearly this supernatural hand alarmed and frightened Belshazzar and yet the king remained unrepentant (Da 5:29). We see a similar resistance to repentance in passages in Jer 38:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and when **Paul** was before **Felix**...

But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, **Felix became frightened** and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you." (Acts 24:24, 25)

Knees began knocking - Instability because of fear. Before Belshazzar was so drunk he couldn't stand up. Now he's so sober and frightened that he can't stand up! It's too bad Belshazzar didn't respond as one person wisely advised...

**If your knees are knocking,
kneel on them!**

Wayne Barber refers to Belshazzar's folly as prototypical of "The Peril of the Unbeliever."

Daniel 5:7 The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom."

- **aloud:** Chal, with might, Da 4:14
- **bring:** Da 2:2 4:6 Ge 41:8 Isa 44:25,26 47:13
- **be clothed:** Da 5:16,29 2:6 Ge 41:42-44 Nu 22:7,17 24:11 1Sa 17:25
- **necklace:** Pr 1:9 Song 1:10 Eze 16:11
- **third:** Da 2:48 6:2,3 Es 3:1 10:2,3
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Called aloud (2 Aramaic words - qera = call or shout) - Literally he "called with power!" Baker writes the word for **aloud** "can mean a loud or powerful voice, such as Nebuchadnezzar's herald (Dan. 3:4); a messenger from heaven (Dan. 4:14[11]); and King Belshazzar to his enchanters (Dan. 5:7).

Clothed with purple - This was the color of royalty in the ancient world (cp Lam 4:5)

Third ruler in the kingdom - As explained earlier (Ruler #1) = Nabonidus, (Ruler #2) = his son Belshazzar, (Ruler #3) = The decipherer of the handwriting. See the Jew **Mordecai's** exaltation (after the evil **Haman** was exposed) to second in authority under **Ahasuerus**, the Persian king (Esther 3:1-note, Esther 10:2, 3-note)

The Apologetics Study Bible- Understand Why You Believe (Online) - The fact that Belshazzar could offer only the "third highest position in the kingdom" (Da 5:16,29) is evidence that the author of Daniel had accurate knowledge of Nabonidus. Nabonidus was first in rank, followed by his son Belshazzar and then the decipherer of the handwriting would be third in rank.

Daniel 5:8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.

- Da 2:27 4:7 Ge 41:8 Isa 47:9,12, 13, 14, 15
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

We see a similar scene in throne room of another world ruler (Pharaoh)...

Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but **there was no one who could interpret** them to Pharaoh. (Ge 41:8)

History repeats itself for the third time in Daniel (cp. Da 2:27-note; Da 4:7-note). Human wisdom is futile and has no ability to discern the mind and will of God.

For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (1Cor 1:19, from Isa 29:14, 1Co 1:20, 21)

Wise men - These men represent the wisdom of the world which useless when it comes to God's will and way (1Cor 2:14-note) just as they had been in previous encounters with divine mysteries (cp. Da 2:27-note; Da 4:7-note). This was their third attempt to decipher the divine but for them the third time was still not the charm and in fact this was their third strike for they would soon be out of business this very night! well. The principle is that the worldly wise are utterly unable to understand the mind of God and His revealed Word. That privilege belongs to those who know Him for we have the mind of Christ and His Spirit our indwelling Teacher!

They could not read the inscription - Four words in Aramaic, the trade language of that day. Commentaries speculate on why they could not even read their own language, but the reason is not clear. Whatever the reason, this truth clearly demonstrates the utter failure of the unbelieving world's ability (these were the best and brightest "spiritual" folks in the land and they fell flat on their face) to understand God's revelation of truth (1Co 2:14-note).

Rich Catthers has a humorous but practical insight...

Not everyone can give you the right advice. This is a spiritual thing. This is a "god-thing". Only people who really know about God can tell you what's going on. **Illustration** - Bob went to a psychiatrist. "Doc," he said, "I've got trouble. Every time I get into bed, I think there's somebody under it. I get under the bed; I think there's somebody on top of it. Top, under, top, under... you gotta help me, I'm going crazy!" "Just put yourself in my hands for one year," said the shrink. "Come to me three times a week, and I'll cure your fears." "How much do you charge?" "A hundred dollars per visit" the psychiatrist said. "I'll sleep on it," said Bob. Six months later the doctor met Bob on the street. "Why didn't you ever come to see me again?" asked the psychiatrist. "For a hundred buck's a visit? A friend cured me for free!" "Is that so! How?" "He told me to cut the legs off the bed!"

Be careful where you get your advice from. When it comes to making important decisions about your life, make sure you are trying to find out what God thinks. Our friends can mean well, but if they don't know the Lord and don't know God's Word, we ought to be careful about listening to their advice. It is not an uncommon thing to

hear about some couple getting a divorce because one spouse is asking their friends for advice, and their friends are giving them bad advice. Find a friend who knows God's Word. Better yet, YOU get to know God's Word. ([Daniel 5](#))

Daniel 5:9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.

- **greatly:** Da 5:6 2:1 Job 18:11-14 Ps 18:14 Rev 6:15
- **face:** Da 5:6 10:8
- **Perplexed:** Ps 48:6 Isa 13:6-8 21:2-4 Jer 6:24 30:6 Mt 2:3
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Alarmed - This Aramaic word is a key word in this "Gentile" section of Daniel, Da 2:4-Da 7:28 (11x in 10 verses - Da 2:25; 3:24; 4:5, 19; 5:6, 9, 10; 6:19; 7:15, 28)

Face - Interesting meaning in Aramaic is brightness.

Grew even paler - This is difficult to imagine.

Richard Baxter applies the handwriting image to all unregenerate men and women noting...

What trembling, then, should seize on thee, who hast the hand of God himself against thee, not in a sentence or two, but in the very scope of the Scriptures, threatening the loss of an everlasting kingdom!

Daniel 5:10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale.

- **Not let:** Ge 35:17,18 1Sa 4:20-22 Job 13:4 21:34
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The queen entered - This cannot be Belshazzar's wife for we see him celebrating with his wives and concubines (Da 5:2,3). Most commentators believe this is either the elderly surviving wife of Nebuchadnezzar or the wife of Nabonidus. In either event, she was old enough to have knowledge of the prophet Daniel. And also wise enough (and chaste enough) to not be in attendance of the king's sensual orgy. Other commentaries speculate that the **queen** was probably Nitocris, the queen-mother, widow of Evil-Merodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar.

Because of the words of the king and his nobles - The NET Bible renders it "Due to the noise caused by the king and his nobles."

O king, live forever (Da 2:4. 3:9. 6:6, 21, CP 1Ki 1:31) - In a bit of divine irony, king Belshazzar would not even live through this very night!

Do not let your thoughts alarm you - In essence she is saying "Pull yourself together!"

Daniel 5:11 "There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners.

- **Your father** or, grandfather, Da 5:2
- **Illumination:** Da 2:11 2Sa 14:17 Ac 12:22 14:11 Rev 3:9
- **chief:** Da 2:48 4:9 Ac 16:16
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

A man (Da 2:47, Da 4:8, 9, 18) - The **queen** functioned much like the Egyptian cupbearer when Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret (Ge 41:11, 12, 13, 14, 15)

In whom is a spirit of the holy gods (cp Ge 41:38 Pharaoh alluding to Joseph) - Like Nebuchadnezzar (Da 4:8, **9note**) she saw

something different, even something divine about Daniel. **It's not so much what a man is born with, but what determines our usefulness is what God gives to those men who choose to walk with Him.** The queen attributes Daniel's wisdom not to the Most High God, but to the holy gods of the pagans, suggesting she is not a believer in the one true God but only has respect for His prophet Daniel.

Ray Pritchard - When the party started, Daniel was nowhere to be found. No doubt he was in his room resting and praying. And why would they want Daniel in the first place? The world never invites the people of God to an orgy. After all, if you invite one of those narrow-minded, legalistic fundamentalists, sooner or later they are going to be offended and probably make a big scene. Better to leave them off the guest list altogether. But as we shall see, Daniel soon becomes the life of the party. ([God's Graffiti - January 2000](#))

It is fascinating the the **queen** recognized something "different" about Daniel. **Stortz** has an interesting note that **even unbelievers can recognize superior wisdom** (cp Ezekiel 2:4, 5-note) writing...

I think of the men who were involved in the founding of our nation. Not all the Founding Fathers were Christians, but there was a reverence for and acceptance of the wisdom of the Word of God. They established a government based on the Scriptures. They based the laws of the land upon the Word of God. Many acknowledged the wisdom of God in the Scriptures even though they did not believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. (Stortz, R., & Hughes, R. K.. Daniel : The Triumph of God's Kingdom. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

We as believers need to be salty salt and bright beacons in our Christian witness, so that those lost in the moral corruption and spiritual darkness of this present evil age know that one of God's children has been in their midst. God encouraged his prophet with these words...

I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' As for them, whether they listen or not—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them. (Ezek 2:4, 5-note)

Rich Cathers - Be a light in your world. **Illustration** - This is a story about a little girl who, on the way home from church, turned to her mother and said, "Mommy, the Preacher's sermon this morning confused me." The mother said, "Oh! Why is that?" The girl replied, "Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. Is that true?" "Yes, that's true," the mother replied. "He also said that God lives within us. Is that true, too?" Again the mother replied, "Yes." "Well," said the girl. "If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn't He show through?" God wants people to see Him through us. God wants us to have a reputation of integrity. ([Daniel 5](#))

Nebuchadnezzar, your father - Nebuchadnezzar was an ancestor of Belshazzar but not his literal father. The term **father** in Hebrew and Chaldee is frequently used to denote a progenitor, or ancestor, however remote.

Courage To Stand Alone - It was a morally dark night in Babylon—darker than your workplace, school, or community. King Belshazzar had willfully blasphemed God by desecrating the sacred goblets looted from the temple in Jerusalem. Now Babylon and Belshazzar were about to face God's judgment.

Yet in the midst of this gross darkness shone the light of a single witness—the prophet Daniel. Because of his reputation as a man with "the Spirit of the Holy God" (Da 5:11), he was summoned to interpret the mystifying message on the wall.

Daniel could have softened God's warning to give it a meaning the king and his court would rather hear. He could have omitted the part about judgment and death. But instead of muddling the message to please the king, Daniel remained true to God. Standing alone before Belshazzar and his drunken court, he boldly spoke the whole truth.

It took enormous courage for Daniel to do that, but the threat from an earthly king was nothing compared to his allegiance to the King of heaven. Daniel feared Belshazzar so little because he feared God so much.

When we share Daniel's heavenly perspective, we too will find that God gives us the courage to stand alone. — Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

In need of strength, we melt into the crowd
And find that strength grows more elusive still;
Our courage gone, we call upon the Lord
And find our strength renewed to do His will.

**When we know God stands with us,
it doesn't matter who stands against us.**

Daniel 5:12 "This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."

- **an extraordinary:** Da 5:14 6:3 Ps 16:3 Pr 12:26 17:27 Col 1:29
- **interpretation of:** Da 5:16 1Ki 10:1-3 2Ch 9:1,2
- **whom:** Da 1:7, 4:8,19
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

An extraordinary spirit (Aramaic = **excellent** as rendered in ESV) - How would you like this to be your reputation with the pagans? Peter alludes this "Daniel type behavior" exhorting the believers...

Keep your **behavior** (anastrophe) excellent among the Gentiles, (**Why?**) so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your **good deeds**, as they observe them (Know that the unbelievers have their eyes on you looking for a chink in your armor, but also seeing the indisputable evidence of a supernatural life!), **glorify God** in the day of visitation. (1Pe 2:12-note)

Keep in mind that Daniel is now probably in his 80's and is still running his race with endurance (Hebrews 12:1-note, cp Ps 92:12, 13, 14-[note](#)). He had begun well, had run well and would finish well, like Paul who with his last words testified...

I have **fought** the good fight, I have **finished** the course, I have **kept** the faith. In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing (like Daniel - see Da 12:3, 13). (2Ti 4:7-note, 2Ti 4:8-note)

Explanation of enigmas (KJV = Showing of hard sentences) In Da 1:17-note recall that "And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every [branch of] literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all [kinds of] visions and dreams."

Solving of difficult problems (KJV = and dissolving of doubts)

Let Daniel be summoned - "I do not know everything the king was thinking. But I do know this—a drowning man will grasp at anything. So the king called for Daniel and he came. Enter Daniel, a former slave, once a teenage hostage. Now he is an old man. All his life he has served in the court of the king of Babylon. More than once he had pulled Nebuchadnezzar out of a jam. Evidently he had been faithful to God all his life. Never once had he compromised his values even though he lived his entire adult life in a pagan land serving in a pagan government. Somehow he managed to keep his values intact while serving in Babylon. Now he is called for his last act of service to a Babylonian king" ([Ray Pritchard](#))

Vance Havner - Daniel was not present as a guest at the feast of Belshazzar. He did not belong to the club and had no complimentary ticket to the orgy. He did not even drink ginger ale among the alcoholics! But he ended up the most honored of all because he was where he belonged until he was sent for. If more prophets stayed where they belong, they would be summoned when God writes on the wall. It is fashionable nowadays for the clergy to attend the suppers of Sodom and the grog-fests of Babylon, but they cannot decipher the heavenly hieroglyphics in the hour of doom.

Daniel 5:13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?"

- **Are you** - Da 5:11 1:21 2:48 8:1,27
- Da 2:25 6:13 Ezra 4:1 6:16,19,20 10:7,16
- **father or, grandfather** - Da 5:2,11,18
- **Judah** - Jn 7:1,3
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Whom my father - In context this is a reference to Nebuchadnezzar. As discussed this really means "forefather" not biological father.

God always has His man, His messenger in the right place at the right time to bring the warning of judgment. True servants of God never abandon their call but are always available to respond to "in season, out of season" (2Ti 4:2-note).

Are you that Daniel... one of the exiles - Belshazzar exhibits a condescending attitude toward Daniel reminding him of his "roots" (an exile).

TSK note. - Though Daniel was one of the chief ministers of state, who did "the king's business" in the palace (Da 8:27), yet Belshazzar seems to have known nothing of him. This shows 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.

Whitcomb - After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel may have been demoted from his high position. Thus, instead of referring to him as "chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon" (Da 2:48-note), Belshazzar speaks of him simply as **'one of the exiles of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah.'** (Ibid)

Daniel 5:14 "Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you."

- Da 5:11,12
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE POWER OF A GODLY LIFE

Belshazzar was afraid. Before he had not even deigned to consult with this Hebrew exile! But now he was desperate and he was ready to listen to anyone who could help! Daniel was his last resort! How often we as believers find our unbelieving friends pay such little attention to us until they encounter an overwhelming life adversity or tragedy. Then they seek us out for prayer and counsel (And we are glad they do so! See Joseph Parker's note below). I am always reminded of the first words out of the mouth of individuals thrown into a sudden catastrophic situation for what you usually hear is something like "Oh God please. Oh God help!"

I have heard about you (cp "heard" Da 5:16) - The point is that Belshazzar knew about Daniel and his works, but to the king's shame he did not know him personally.

Belshazzar had no excuse. He knew **about** God's prophet Daniel. He knew **about** the prophet's God and what He had done in Nebuchadnezzar's life (see Daniel's concluding statement = Da 5:22). Belshazzar's problem was that he did not **know** either the prophet or His God! (cp Jn 17:3)

Wiersbe notes that "Daniel had "done the king's business" in the third year of his reign (Da 8:1, 27), which would have been 554BC. What a tragedy that the ruler of the mighty city of Babylon should ignore one of the greatest men in history and turn to him only in the last hours of his life when it was too late. ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#)).

A spirit of the gods is in you - This could be translated "the Spirit of God is in you," but I doubt if Belshazzar had any concept of the Holy Spirit, so it almost certainly refers to his belief in pagan spirits. Remember that Daniel was just a man. We can admire him but we are not to be enamored with Daniel but with Daniel's God. Daniel was a man who knew God and upon whom God had bestowed the ability to understand **"all kinds of visions and dreams."** (Da 1:17) So this story is not about Daniel as much as it is about God and God's using "a vessel of honor" (2Ti 2:21) named Daniel. And so He chooses to warn the king through His prophet Daniel. God always has His people at the right place and the right time.

Ray Pritchard - We never know our influence until a crisis comes. What an encouragement this is. You may be stuck in an office or a classroom or a factory or a neighborhood or a club or a family gathering where you are the only Christian. And you may feel overlooked and taken for granted, or possibly ridiculed and misunderstood. Bide your time, my Christian friend, and do not despair. Soon enough life will come tumbling in and the people who have no time for you will turn to you for answers. **You may not be invited to every party, but you will get the call when trouble comes. When it happens, be bold to speak the truth in love. Never underestimate the power of a godly life.** ([God's Graffiti - January 2000](#))

THOUGHT - Perhaps you dear reader are the "Daniel" in someone else's life. They have heard about God

over and over and so they know ABOUT Him and yet still they refuse to humble themselves and bow before Him and truly KNOW Him. Perhaps God desires to use you to (in love) warn them that if they do not bow, judgment is assuredly coming.

Joseph Parker comments on this event - Preachers of the Word, you will be wanted some day by "Belshazzar;" you were not at the beginning of the feast, but you will be there before the banqueting hall 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. Abide your time. You are nobody now... Midway down the program to mention pulpit, or preacher, or Bible, would be to violate the harmony of the occasion. But the preacher, as we have often had occasion to say, 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 made a medium through which divine communications can be addressed to the listening trouble of the world... O Daniel, preacher, speaker, teacher, thunder out God's word, if it be a case of judgment and doom; or whisper it, or rain in gracious tears, if it be a message of sympathy and love and welcome ([Daniel 5 The People's Bible](#)).

Daniel 5:15 "Just now the wise men and the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message.

- Da 5:7,8 2:3-11 Isa 29:10, 11, 12 47:12
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

They could not declare - Belshazzar explains the problem and failure of his wise men. They could not declare it because it was a supernatural message from the Spirit of God and they were natural men. Paul writes "But a **natural man** does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." (1Cor 2:14+) He then goes on to offer the same reward.

THOUGHT - God's supernatural revelation cannot be understood with natural intellect! Men might think they can understand it but the fact is they cannot unless they possess the Holy Spirit to illuminate the meaning (See). Are you having difficulty comprehending the Bible? Are you born again? If you are born again, you have the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ro 8:9+) and while there will always be some sections of Scripture which are difficult to understand for even the most mature Christian (cf Dt 29:29+), you will be able to understand much of the Scripture and with time and maturation will "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.." (2 Peter 3:18+)

Daniel 5:16 "But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom."

- **interpretation:** Ge 40:8
- Da 5:7 Ac 8:18
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DANIEL'S REPUTATION PRECEDES HIM

Heard about you - Belshazzar had only heard of Daniel suggesting he had been more or less ignored during the 22 years or so since the death of Nebuchadnezzar.

"This silly and shallow prince hath nothing to say but what was put into his mouth by his wiser grandmother." (Trapp)

Maclaren goes a step farther describing this as "craven-hearted flattery addressed to Daniel by the king, who apparently had never heard of him till the queen spoke of him just before." ([Daniel 5:17-31 Mene, Tekel, Peres](#))

Third ruler - Belshazzar's absent father, **Nabonidus**, was first ruler. He himself was second in command. Thus Belshazzar could not have made Daniel the second ruler as Pharaoh had done for Joseph (Ge 41:40, 41, 42, 43)

Daniel 5:17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone

else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him.

- **Keep** - Da 5:29 Ge 14:23 2Ki 3:13 5:16,26 Ac 8:20
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DANIEL PROCEEDS TO GIVE...
A HISTORY LESSON
A THEOLOGY LESSON
A READING LESSON!

Daniel's "sermon" was short but not sweet, but it was pithy and penetrating! It is also noteworthy that Daniel behaved very differently before Belshazzar than he had before Nebuchadnezzar when the latter had experienced an alarming dream (Da 4:19-note). **Why such a different reaction to these two pagan kings?** Belshazzar had that very night insulted the God of heaven in the most daring manner; and the venerable prophet, as God's delegate, dutifully denounced the despot in the following passages (Da 5:18-22).

Keep your gifts (Nebuchadnezzar's offer Da 2:6-note) - Daniel is not interested in the temporal reward from a pagan king, but only desires the eternal reward from the King of kings (cp Da 12:13-note). Daniel had no desire for material gain and would not let himself be deterred from speaking the absolute, divine truth. God's men cannot be bought off by offering them the passing pleasures (or "trinkets") of this present evil age (see Abram's refusal to accept gifts from the king of Sodom - Ge 14:21, 22, 23, 24 and Elisha's refusal of the offer by the Syrian Naaman - 2Ki 5:15, 16).

Guzik - Remember that Daniel was troubled when he had to give Nebuchadnezzar bad news (Daniel 4:19). This isn't the case here. (**Ed**: God will not strive with rebels forever [Ge 6:3, cp 2Cor 6:2]. There comes a day when the door of the ark is closed and all outside must perish eternally [Ge 7:16-17]. King Herod learned this truth. Acts 12:21-23) ([Daniel 5 Commentary](#))

Rich Cathers- Lesson - Ministry is free. Jesus told His disciples: (Mt 10:8KJV) "*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*" I think this goes beyond whether or not you get "paid" for ministry or for helping others. Why do you help others? Do you expect to get something in return? Sometimes we can find ourselves serving others to gain "respect". And then when someone doesn't show us any "respect", we act surprised and think about quitting.

I will read the inscription to the king - The psalmist writes...

I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed. (Ps 119:46+).

Comment: This is part of his liberty; he is free from fear of the greatest, proudest, and most tyrannical of men. David was called to stand before kings when he was an exile; and afterwards, when he was himself a monarch, he knew the tendency of men to sacrifice their religion to pomp and statecraft; but it was his resolve to do nothing of the kind. ([note](#))

A Profile of Courage - One of the most tragic, unforgettable nights in the Bible is described in Daniel 5:30, "That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain."

It took courage for Daniel to confront the king that night. The prophet had good reason to hedge a bit about the interpretation of the words supernaturally scrawled on the wall of the banquet room. A lesser man might have been bought off by the huge reward or intimidated by the threat of the king's vengeance. It would have been easier to go along with the national council of prophets of Babylon and plead ignorance about the inscription. Or, since the king was bewildered by the writing, Daniel could have read only part of it and left out the pronouncement of death and doom.

But Daniel was a profile of courage. With Belshazzar and a thousand drunken lords and dignitaries for his congregation, the brave old prophet declared God's whole counsel. What was the source of such courage? Daniel knew that he wasn't just standing before the king of Babylon; he was standing before the King of kings.

With God as our audience and Christ as our companion, we can say and do anything we ought. — Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Some will hate you, some will love you,
Some will flatter, some will slight;
Cease from man, and look above you,
Trust in God and do the right.

**It's easy to stand with a crowd;
it takes courage to stand alone.**

Daniel 5:18 "O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father.

- **O king:** Da 3:17,18 4:22 6:22 Ac 26:13,19
- **Most:** Da 2:37,38 4:17,22-25,32 De 32:8 Ps 7:17 9:2 47:2 92:8 La 3:35,38 Ac 7:48
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE INDICTMENT... FAILURE TO LEARN FROM HISTORY!

The Most High God granted (See study of Most High God) - God is sovereign even in granting sovereignty! (cp Da 1:2, Da 2:21, Da 2:37, 38, 4:17, Da 4:25, Da 4:32) Daniel begins his discourse as all godly discourse should begin -- with the Most High God!

Maclaren sets the stage for the indictment of this arrogant king - Daniel's tone is noticeably stern. He has no reverential preface, no softening of his message. His words are as if cut with steel on the rock. He brushes aside the promises of vulgar decorations and honors with undisguised contempt, and goes straight to his work of rousing a torpid conscience. ([Daniel 5:17-31 Mene, Tekel, Peres](#))

Daniel 5:19 "Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled.

- **Bestowed:** Da 3:4 4:22 Jer 25:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 27:5, 6, 7 Hab 2:5 Ro 13:1)
- **whomever he wished:** Da 2:12,13 3:6,20,21,29 Pr 16:14 Jn 19:11
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

GOD'S GRANDEUR GIVEN TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR

He bestowed on him - The emphasis is again on [God's sovereignty](#) over men and nations (Da 2:21-note), even the most powerful men on earth! The implication of course is that even Belshazzar's kingship was a gift of the Most High God, whether the king acknowledged that truth or not.

Paul echoes the **Most High God's sovereignty** of rulers in the NT writing that...

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. (Ro 13:1-note)

Jesus reminded **Pilate** of where his authority came from declaring...

Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." (Jn 19:11)

He killed... he spared alive - This is only part of the "equation" for as Daniel explains to Belshazzar God is ultimately the One **in whose hand are your** (and every other person ever born!) **life-breath and your ways** (Da 5:23).

Hannah's song eloquently speaks of God's sovereignty - "The bows of the mighty are shattered, But the feeble gird on strength. "Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, But those who were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven, But she who has many children languishes. The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. "The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts."He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor; For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, And He set the world on them. "He keeps the feet of His godly ones, But the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; For not by might shall a man prevail. (1Sa 2:4-9+)

Moses writes "See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal; And there is no one who can deliver from My hand." (Dt 32:39+)

Job 5:18 "For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands also heal.

Ps 68:20 God is to us a God of deliverances; And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death.

Jesus declares to John "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." (Rev 1:17-18)

Daniel 5:20 "But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him.

- **When:** Da 4:30-33,37 Ex 9:17 18:11 Job 15:25-27 40:11,12 Pr 16:5,18 Isa 14:12-17 Lk 1:51,52 18:14
- **Lifted up:** 1Sa 6:6 2Ki 17:14 2Ch 36:13 Jer 19:15 Heb 3:13
- **deposed:** Chaldean = made to come down, Isa 47:1 Jer 13:18 48:18 Eze 30:6
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD

Heart lifted up - Puffed up or hardened (cp Ex 7:13, Isa 2:12-note, Pr 28:14). It is interesting that this same Aramaic verb (*rum* - 4x = Da 4:37, 5:19, 20, 23) is used in Da 4:37 where Nebuchadnezzar's declared "I Nebuchadnezzar... **exalt**... the King of heaven". One king (Nebuchadnezzar) was humbled and responded by lifting up the Most High God. The other king (Belshazzar) refused to be humbled instead and instead exalted himself over the Most High.

Everyone who is proud (high, exalted, haughty) in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished. (Pr 16:5, cp Pr 18:12, Isa 5:15)

You save an afflicted people; but Your eyes are on the **haughty** whom You **abase** (bring down, humiliate, describes God's action of making one's heart and mind low, which is the best position for reception of His grace). (2Sa 22:28)

James 4:6+ But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

His heart... lifted up... spirit... proud... behaved arrogantly - God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble (Jas 4:6-note) so before Nebuchadnezzar could receive grace, he had to be humbled by the hand of the Almighty. Such is the testimony of every person who repents and believes in Christ. God had to bring us in one way or another to that point in our lives where we realized that we were desperately sin sick and needed the provision that could only be obtained from God by grace through faith. Yes, we all had a "bit" of Belshazzar in us before God's Spirit granted us repentance, regeneration and rebirth, making us new creatures in Christ.

His spirit became so proud (KJV = "his mind hardened in pride") - Literally the idea is his spirit became strong or grew strong.

He was deposed from his royal throne - Why? Because of his pride and arrogance, the very sin of which Belshazzar was guilty. Belshazzar's sin of pride was against a "flood of light" for he was aware of the what and why that had befallen his pride filled grandfather! Sin is deceitful (cp Heb 3:13) and Belshazzar was deceived by the pride in his own heart!

Where Is Your Heart? - When a Michigan man entered the hospital for tests, he never would have guessed what the doctors would find. A routine chest x-ray revealed that the man's heart was on the wrong side of his chest. Because of a rare reversed-organ condition, his heart was not where it should be.

In Daniel 5, we read of a different kind of heart problem—one that is all too common. This chapter reminds us that pride is a spiritual condition in which the heart is in the wrong place.

Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, two kings of Babylon, were told that they had misplaced hearts of arrogance and pride (Da 5:20,22). As a result, God judged both of them. Nebuchadnezzar was made low until he recognized that the Most High God ruled over all (Da 5:21), and Belshazzar was slain (Da 5:30).

We need to examine ourselves often to see if our heart is in the right place. Do we depend on God daily? Do we acknowledge that all we have and are is by His mercy and grace? Do we live as His grateful servants, yielding to His will? Only as we recognize the importance of genuine humility and acknowledge our dependence on Him can we have a heart that's "in the right place."

Where is your heart? — Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, pride, that fearful enemy,
So quickly takes control;
I plead, this day, Your pardoning grace
To cleanse my heart and soul. —DJJ

Pride is the mother of all sins.

Daniel 5:21 "He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.

- **driven:** Job 30:3-7
- **his heart was made like:** Da 4:17,25,32,35,37 Ex 9:14, 15, 16 Ps 83:17,18 Eze 17:24
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

He was also driven away (Da 4:25,32,33-note) - Divine humiliation in preparation for divine exaltation (1Pe 5:6-note)

Dwelling place with wild donkeys - New fact not mentioned in Daniel 4.

Until - What an important time phrase (see **expressions of time**). Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar both deserved eternal separation from God (2Th 1:8, 9) but because of the longsuffering grace and mercy of God, Nebuchadnezzar came to a point of personal recognition that God is the only God, the only One deserving of the title **Most High God**. So in this tale of two kings, one repented and the other rejected! And such is the tale of every man ever born (Ro 5:12-note, Ep 2:1-note).

Ruler over the realm of mankind... He sets over it whomever He wishes - This same phraseology is repeated 3 times in Daniel 4 (Da 4:17, 25, 32-note all answering to Da 2:21-note).

Daniel 5:21 Power Struggle - The president of a company in Michigan had suffered a minor stroke, and he was not spending much time at the office. He didn't know that one of his sons, with the help of two vice presidents, was scheming to take over the firm. He learned of their plot just in time, though, and was able to retain control.

In some parts of the world, power struggles result in assassinations, bloody coups, or civil wars. We see power struggles in politics all the time. They also occur in neighborhoods, families, and even in churches.

Adonijah made a power move to grab the throne of Israel (1Ki 1:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). But God had other plans. Bathsheba (David's wife) and Nathan the prophet were able to stop the takeover (1Ki 1:11-31), and God's appointed leader, Solomon, soon became king (1Ki 1:38-40; 2:12).

We need to remember that God rules over the kingdoms of earth (Dan. 5:21). He raises up leaders and brings them down, whether in politics or in the church. Sometimes it's necessary to replace an ineffective leader, but we must pursue that option only after careful thought and earnest prayer for God's direction. We should never become part of a move that serves the ambition of some power-hungry person instead of honoring the Lord who rules over all. — David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Most High still rules over kingdoms of men,
He gives the control to whomever He will;
All people must bow to His sovereign plan,
And know that His purposes He will fulfill. —Hess

**The most powerful position on earth
is kneeling before the Lord of the universe.**

Daniel 5:22 "Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this,

- **You:** Da 5:18 Ps 119:46 Mt 14:4 Ac 4:8-13
- **have:** Ex 10:3 2Ch 33:23 36:12 Isa 26:10 Mt 21:32 Ac 5:29-33 1Pe 5:5,6
- **though:** Lk 12:47 Jn 13:17 Jas 4:6,17
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

This seems to be one of the key verse in Belshazzar's life.

The key verse in Nebuchadnezzar's life was Belshazzar's (and every man's) only hope...

Da 4:37-note... all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.

Yet you - This presents a striking contrast between Nebuchadnezzar's willingness to surrender his heart to God (Yes, admittedly God was somewhat instrumental in bringing him to the end of himself) versus Belshazzar's steadfast refusal to humble his heart.

Ray Pritchard - You should have known better, Daniel said. You should have learned from the past. But you managed to forget it, and thus the lessons of history were lost to you. (([God's Graffiti - January 2000](#)))

There is a saying that "**Those Who Forget History Are Doomed to Repeat It**" but it can be more accurately abbreviated in Belshazzar's case as "Those who fail to respond to **"HIS-story"** are Doomed!"

You... have not humbled your heart (Just like Pharaoh - Ex 10:3) - The Septuagint translate the Aramaic word for **humbled** (shepel = to be low, Da 4:37, 5:19, 22, Da 7:24) with the verb **tapeinoo**. which means to be bowed down, made low, humbled. Note the marked contrast with Belshazzar's failure to bow low, with his desire to exalt or elevate himself!

Notice how different Daniel's interaction was with Nebuchadnezzar when he interpreted his "Tree Dream" ("**appalled for a while**" = Da 2:19, called him to "**break away from**" his sins = Da 2:27). Daniel had developed a relationship with Nebuchadnezzar and saw a heart that was, while not yet repentant, at least willing to hear the hard truth which would eventually bring about repentance. With Belshazzar the message God gives through the handwriting and His prophet's interpretation is clearly a message of judgment, for the time of repentance has passed. God (as He always does for He is full of mercy and lovingkindness) **had given Belshazzar time to repent** (the king knew what had happened to his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar) but he did not want to repent. God is longsuffering, but He is also just and eventually must judge sin. Before the worldwide flood Jehovah declares...

My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years. (Ge 6:3)

Comment: Notice that God would give man 120 years before the judgment of the Flood would fall and He even provided them with His "Noah, a preacher of righteousness" (2Pe 2:5-note), the right man at the right time.

To the angel of the church at Thyatira (Rev 2:17-note) Jesus spoke directly even to wicked "Jezebel"...

I gave her time to **repent**; and she does not want to **repent** of her immorality. 'Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they **repent** of her deeds. (Rev 2:21-note, Rev 2:22-note)

Paul's words could be aptly spoken to Belshazzar and his proud, unrepentant spirit...

Or do you think lightly (Like Belshazzar!) of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God (Ro 2:4-note, Ro 2:5-note).

Campbell remarks that "**Belshazzar** knew all about his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar's experience, but he did not learn from it. He did not profit in any way, did not heed the warning, did not learn from history and humble himself before God. As a sad result, judgment would fall very soon on this king and his kingdom. **God expects men to respond to the light He gives. When they do not, judgment is the only alternative... God holds men responsible for the truth He reveals to them.** To Belshazzar, only a comparatively small amount of truth was revealed, and he was held responsible. How much greater the responsibility and accountability of men today who are exposed to the Word of God by radio, television, the printed page, in churches, camps, conferences, and seminars—and yet do not believe!" (Borrow [Daniel, decoder of dreams](#))

When a person knows about God and yet repeatedly refuses to humble himself or herself and bow his or her heart to God's will, the final verdict is inevitable and judgment is certain as we see here with Belshazzar. Nebuchadnezzar had heard about God, had seen His great signs and wonders and had seen the holy life of His prophet Daniel and finally he was willing to bow. Now in Daniel 5, some 25 years later, we see that Belshazzar knew about God but in his pride he rejected Him. Belshazzar for reasons not stated did not have a personal relationship with Daniel until this chapter, but it was one chapter too late! Where the Scripture is silent, we must use caution, but Belshazzar's failure to associate with Daniel would seem to reflect his personal choice, for royal Queen was well aware of Daniel's holy reputation. The story of Belshazzar's rejection of God is but a picture of the saddest story ever told, for every man who knows and defiantly refuses His kindness (cp Ro 2:4) will one day suffer Belshazzar's fate of death followed by eternal separation from God. **These two kings are in a sense representative of all mankind. One person like Nebuchadnezzar has a heart that is tender, that is willing to hear, that is willing to bow, while the other person like Belshazzar is defiantly and steadfastly resistant to God and His kindness.**

Even though you knew all this (All the history of Nebuchadnezzar's humbling and restoration - Da 5:18, 19, 20, 21) - As James taught centuries later, its not the hearing of the word but the doing of the word which is important (Jas 1:22-note)

Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin. (Jas 4:17)

Jesus said that the...

Slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, (Lk 12:47)

Belshazzar had been exposed to the light of Nebuchadnezzar's humbling and exaltation by God. Greater light always brings greater degree of judgment/punishment as Jesus Himself taught...

Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for [the] land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. (Mt 10:15)

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 "Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in [the] day of judgment, than for you. 23 "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. 24 "Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in [the] day of judgment, than for you." (Mt 11:21, 22, 23, 24, cp Lk 11:31, 32, Mt 12:41, 42, Lk 10:12, 13, 14, 15)

Wiersbe - Like King Belshazzar and his guests, many people in our world today are unmindful of the lessons of the past, unintelligent when it comes to interpreting the present, and totally unprepared for the consequences that lie in the future. ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#)).

Belshazzar is a tragic picture of so many indifferent, arrogant men and women today who foolishly honor the "gods" of plenty, possessions, prestige, etc, which are "gods" that cannot see, hear, or understand. On the other hand they choose to dishonor the living and true God Who holds their life and their ways in His omnipotent hand! And for them, like Belshazzar, the **handwriting is on the wall!**

The **writer of Hebrews** echoes Jesus' stern warning writing...

How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:29-note)

Comment: His point is how much greater punishment for the one who knows and tramples on the knowledge of God, and in so doing sins against a flood of divine light!

Daniel 5:23 but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified.

- **exalted:** Da 5:3,4 2Ki 14:10 Isa 2:12 33:10 37:23 Jer 50:29 Eze 28:2,5,17 Eze 31:10 Hab 2:4 1Ti 3:6 Rev 13:5,6

- **the Lord:** Da 4:37 Ge 14:19 Ps 115:16
- **and they:** Da 5:2-4 1Sa 5:1-9
- **praised:** Jdg 16:23
- **which:** Ps 115:4-8 135:15-17 Isa 37:19 46:6,7 Hab 2:18,19 1Co 8:4
- **in whose:** Ge 2:7 Job 12:10 34:14,15 Ps 104:29 146:4 Isa 42:5 Ac 17:25,28,29
- **in whose:** Job 31:4 Ps 139:3 Pr 20:24 Jer 10:23 Heb 4:13
- **You have not glorified:** Ro 1:21, 22, 23
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

But you - Stark contrast with Nebuchadnezzar.

Notice the three charges by Daniel against Nebuchadnezzar - (1) He had not humbled his heart even though he knew about God and His good works through the life of Nebuchadnezzar. (Da 5:22). (2) He deliberately mocked God by desecrating God's holy vessels... this was sin that reflected willful defiance and not ignorance! (3) He worshiped idols.

"If God held Belshazzar responsible, my friend, for the ray of light which shone across his pathway, what will He say to men living in the blaze of light which illuminates the world today? Every unconverted man in this country has more light than Belshazzar had." (Talbot)

Exalted yourself (Same word Nebuchadnezzar used in Da 4:37!) - How? He exalted the gods, the dead idols, over the Living God and in so doing exalted as it were, SELF over SAVIOR. Belshazzar imagined that he was master of his own fate and captain of his own soul.

Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling. (Pr 16:18)

Praised the gods of silver and gold... which do not see, hear or understand - Daniel was not timid (cp 2Ti 1:7) but bold and therefore gives a scorching sarcastic assessment of the worthlessness and vanity of idol worship! **Do you see the irony? Belshazzar's gods were mute, but Daniel's God was communicating with written words on the plaster wall!**

God is whose hand are your life-breath (Somewhat interpretative = NIV "God who holds in his hand your life"; Even more interpretative = "God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny!") - Remember **hand** usually refers to power, so Belshazzar's very ability to take a breath was as the result of the power of God! The same **hand** that warned of judgment is the same hand that gives **breath** to every person alive, whether they be sinner or saint.

Note the striking contrast between the absolute power of living God and the abysmal powerlessness of the dead idols! Little wonder that the OT often uses a Hebrew word (**hebel** - see below) for "idols" which means **vanity!** (cp Dt 32:21, 1Ki 16:13, 26, 2Ki17:15; Je2:5; 8:19, Je10:8, 15; 51:18; Jonah 2:9; Ps 31:6). **Beloved, why do we persist (I'm speaking to us as believers in this exhortation) in chasing after the wind? Vanity, vanity all is vanity!** Note that **Vanity** = Hebrew word "**hebel**" = vapor, breath, emptiness, transitory, unsatisfactory (unsatisfying!)

Notice the juxtaposition of **man's responsibility** (and accountability) (**exalted yourself... God... you have not glorified**) and God's sovereignty (in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways)! This should cause all of us to walk humbly with our God.

Many Scriptures echo this truth that our life is in the hands of the Most High God's sovereign control (truth that can either frighten or comfort)...

Man's steps are ordained by the LORD, How then can man understand his way? (Pr 20:24)

Since his (man's) days are determined, The number of his months is with Thee, And his limits Thou hast set so that he cannot pass. (Job 14:5)

Who among all these does not know That the hand of the Lord has done this, **In whose hand is the life of every living thing,** And **the breath of all mankind?** (Job 12:9, 10)

Ps 139:16 Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, **The days that were ordained for me,** When as yet there was not one of them.

These truths should cause us to have a reverential awe (holy fear) of God but can also give one a blessed assurance when our loved ones die, for we know that God has determined each of our days. Rest in this great truth about God and don't let thoughts like these bother you when a loved one dies - "If only I'd done this or that"... "If only I had prayed more." Simply bow before the sovereignty of God and know that God holds everyone's life-breath in His hand.

Guzik - The breath of the creature should praise the Creator, but Belshazzar blasphemed God with his breath. The ways of the

creature should glorify the Creator, but Belshazzar used his ways to mock and offend God. Every creature owes something to the Creator. ([Daniel 5 Commentary](#))

Have not glorified (God) (cp Ps 115:1) - Instead they ridiculed Him with their drunken orgy and their pagan praise of idols.

The most famous question in the **Westminster Shorter Catechism** is the first...

Q. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

Belshazzar failed the glory test! Contrast Nebuchadnezzar acknowledgement even though a pagan king when he **gave glory to God**..

Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings (Da 2:47, cp Da 4:30)

Whitcomb adds that "No pardon was available at all (contrast Da 4:27 for Nebuchadnezzar), for his conscience had become hopelessly seared, and his heart was judicially hardened." (Ibid)

How do we as believers glorify God? (cp Mt 5:16-note). When we carry out the **good works** that He prepared for us in eternity past (Eph 2:10-note) in Christ, the world will see those supernatural works and will be given a proper opinion of our supernatural God and Father. The world is watching and is in desperate need to see our Great God in and through our lives as we allow Christ in us to flow through us in our thoughts, words and deeds. The world is watching! (Cp 1Co 6:18-note, 1Co 6:19-note, 1Co 6:20-note)

Daniel 5:24 "Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.

- Da 5:5
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The hand was sent from Him - The **hand** writing on the wall was a divine messenger sent from the same God in **whose hand are your life-breadth**.

This inscription was written out - The reason for God's judgment could not be denied as it was easily visible and then interpreted by His prophet Daniel.

Donald Campbell - Daniel proceeded to explain the handwriting that still remained on the wall. It has been said that Daniel could read it because he knew his Father's handwriting! (Borrow [Daniel, decoder of dreams](#))

Daniel 5:25 "Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.'

- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Adam Clarke - "It should be observed, that each word stands for a short sentence; mene signifies NUMERATION tekel, WEIGHING and peres, DIVISION."

· God had Belshazzar's number, and it fell short

· God weighed Belshazzar, and he came up light

· God would therefore divide Belshazzar's kingdom to the Medes and the Persians (Guzik [Daniel 5 Commentary](#))

UPHARSIN (Parsin) -The "U" means "and". **Peres** is the singular of **parsin** which means "divided," but "peres" can mean either "divided" or "Persia." The word **Parsin** contains a wordplay on the name "**Persian**" and even conveys a prophetic nuance as the Babylonian kingdom gave way to a kingdom of the Medes and the Persians (Medo-Persia).

Cathers has an interesting comment (that I have read in several commentaries which make the point that Aramaic had no vowels which potentially could lead to a different reading) noting that...

The inscription was written in Aramaic, a language that the people understood. It wasn't as if the message was in a foreign language; it was that they just didn't understand it. To the person in the room looking at this, it looked as if a series of monetary values were being written on the wall.

Mene is the mina, about 50 shekels.

Tekel is the shekel

Upharsin is the half-shekel

Totaling 101 ½ shekels.

Daniel 5:26 "This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE'--God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.

- **God:** Da 9:2 Job 14:14 Isa 13:1-14:32 21:1-10 47:1-15 Jer 25:11,12 Jer 27:7 50:1-51:64 Ac 15:18
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

"YOUR NUMBER IS UP!"

Or we could subtitle it "[I've got your number!](#)"

MENE - Aramaic noun referring to a measure of weight. It appears twice for emphasis (cp the doubling of Pharaoh's dream in Ge 41:32)

God has numbered your kingdom - Not just numbered but finished for he would not see the light of the next day (Da 5:30) Even as God had allowed the wicked Amorites to survive until their iniquity was "full" (Ge 15:16), so the total number of days allotted to the Babylonian kingdom had been reached (cp Da 2:37, 38, 39).

And put an end to it - Belshazzar had crossed the line. The "jig" was up! There is no longer time for repentance. "Your number is up!"

C H Spurgeon Sermon Notes

- A Man troubled by His Thoughts - His thoughts troubled him. — Daniel 5:6

TO many men thinking is an unusual employment.

Yet it is a distinction of man that he can think.

No wonder that when thought is forced on some men they are troubled.

This trouble from thought is salutary: by it conviction and conversion may come; and, in any case, troubled thought is as the sounding of the tocsin, arousing the mind, and warning the soul.

Let us think of Belshazzar, and of ourselves. Of us, too, it may have been said, "His thoughts troubled him." We must be in a bad way if we dare not face our own thoughts about ourselves. What must God's thoughts of us be?

I. IT DID NOT APPEAR LIKELY THAT HIS THOUGHTS WOULD TROUBLE HIM.

1. He was an irresponsible and reckless monarch. He came of a fierce nation, and was born of a father who had been punished for his haughty spirit.

2. He had hardened his heart with pride (verses 22 and 23). Daniel said, "thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven."

3. He was drinking wine, and it had worked upon him (verse 2).

4. He was rioting in gay company: "his princes, his wives, and his concubines." Such comrades as these usually chase all thought away, and help their leader in his recklessness.

5. He was venturing far in profanity (verse 3); daring to abuse the sacred vessels, in his banquets, as an expression of his contempt for Israel's God, whom he despised in contrast with his "gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." Perhaps he had mentioned these in detail as the gods who had triumphed; at any rate, the prophet brings them forward with detestation in verse 4.

No man is rendered wise or thoughtful by the wine-cup.

No man is out of the reach of the arrows of God.

No conscience is so dead that he cannot arouse it.

Many other men in far lower positions exhibit equal pride of station and success; this is stimulated in much the same manner, and exhibited with much the same contempt for the things of God.

A parallel is easily drawn between Belshazzar and other proud ones.

II. YET WELL MIGHT HIS THOUGHTS TROUBLE HIM.

1. For what he saw was appalling: "fingers of a man's hand over against the candlestick" (verse 5).

God sometimes gives men warnings which they must notice.

2. For what he could not see was suggestive. Where was the hand?

Where was the writer? What had he written? What did it mean? A terrible mystery was involved in his vision.

God gives men hints of something behind, which is yet to appear.

3. For what he had done was alarming.

His own past flashed before him. His cruel wars, oppressions, blasphemies, and vices.

What he knew of his father's career increased his terror.

What he had himself failed to do came before him: "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (verse 23).

What he was then in the act of doing startled him. He was wantonly defying Jehovah, the God of Israel.

See him trembling before whom all trembled.

He has drunk a strange draught out of those holy cups.

III. AND MIGHT NOT YOUR THOUGHTS TROUBLE SOME OF YOU?

1. You are careless, riotous, fond of feasts, given to much wine. Does wantonness ever end well?

2. You are prosperous. Are not beasts fattened for the slaughter?

3. You are trifling with holy things. You neglect, or ridicule, or use without seriousness the things of God. Will this be endured? Will not the Lord be provoked to avenge this contempt?

4. You mix with the impure. Will you not perish with them?

5. Your father's history might instruct you, or at least trouble you.

6. The sacred writing "over against the candlestick" is against you.

Read the Holy Scripture, and see for yourself.

7. Specially, you have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Conscience beholds the scales in the hand of the infallible Judge.

Take heed that you do not fall into Belshazzar's condition, to whom Daniel gave no counsel, but simply interpreted the sentences which sealed his doom.

As yet we dare preach the gospel to you, and we do. God's thoughts are above your thoughts. He bids you repent of sin, and believe in his Son Jesus; and then your thoughts will cease to trouble you.

Thoughts and Facts

Such mystery of iniquity within,

That we must loathe our very thoughts, but for the cure

He hath devised — the blessed Tree

The Lord hath shown us, that, cast in, can heal

The fountain whence the bitter waters flow.

Divinest remedy

Whose power we feel,

Whose grace we comprehend not, but we know.

— Miss Havergal

Conscience, from inaction, is like a withered arm in the souls of many; but the Lord of conscience will one day say to it, "Be thou stretched forth, and do thine appointed work."

As the ant-hill, when stirred, sets in motion its living insects in every direction, so the conscience of the sinner, disturbed by the Spirit, or judgments of God, calls up before its vision thousands of deeds which fill the soul with agony and woe. — McCosh

The Duke of Wellington once said that he could have saved the lives of a thousand men a year, had he had chaplains, or any religious ministers. The uneasiness of their minds reacted on their bodies, and kept up continual fever, once it seized upon their frames. It is our blessed office to tell of One who can "minister to a mind diseased;" whose grace can deliver from "an evil conscience," and through whom all inward fear and trouble are removed.

Charles IX of France, in his youth, had humane and tender sensibilities. The fiend who had tempted him was the mother who had nursed him. When she first proposed to him the massacre of the Huguenots, he shrunk from it with horror: "No, no, madam! They are my loving subjects." Then was the critical hour of his life. Had he cherished that natural sensitiveness to bloodshed, St. Bartholomew's Eve would never have disgraced the history of his kingdom, and he himself would have escaped the fearful remorse which crazed him on his death-bed. To his physician he said in his last hours, "sleep or awake, I see the mangled forms of the Huguenots passing before me. They drip with blood. They make hideous, faces at me. They point to their open wounds, and mock me. Oh, that I had spared at least the little infants at the breast!" Then he broke out in agonizing cries and screams. Bloody sweat oozed from the pores of his skin. He was one of the very few cases in history which confirm the possibility of the phenomenon which attended our Lord's anguish in Gethsemane. That was the fruit of resisting, years before, the recoil of his youthful conscience from the extreme of guilt. — Austin Phelps

Daniel 5:27 " 'TEKEL'--you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.

- **You:** Job 31:6 Ps 62:9 Jer 6:30 Eze 22:18-20
- **Have been weighed:** Mt 22:11,12 1Co 3:13
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WEIGHED AND WANTING!

Weighed on the scales - God's Word Weighs My Life. God had weighed Belshazzar's life in the scales of justice and found that he came up short. His life did not "measure up" to God's standard of righteousness.

In first Samuel we read these words uttered by **Hannah** in her prayer...

Boast no more so very proudly. Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth, for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and **with Him actions are weighed.** (1Sa 2:3)

Job knew this great truth that God would one day weigh" the actions (including every thought, word and deed) and asked...

Let Him weigh me with accurate scales (Let Him weigh me in balances of justice), and let God know my integrity. (Job 31:6)

Let's not skip over God's scales too quickly thinking "poor Belshazzar"! God's searching eye weighs every heart (Pr 15:3, 2Chr 16:9, 1Sa 16:7, etc) including the heart of believers and we will one day stand before Christ's **Bema Seat** to...

be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what (we have) done, whether good or bad (not referring to sinful but worthless deeds). (2Co 5:10-note)

Whitcomb writes that "The Egyptian Book of the Dead pictured men being weighed in balances after death to determine whether their sins outweighed their worthy deeds. But Scripture makes it plain that salvation is never determined that way, for none are worthy (Ro 3:23). Nevertheless, men are weighed by God to determine degrees of reward or punishment (1Sa 2:3; Job 31:6; Ps. 62:9; Pr 16:2). (Ibid)

Found deficient - Campbell says "Belshazzar had been weighed in the balance of God and found too light in view of the blessings God had bestowed upon him. He was "found wanting" because he had not fulfilled what God expected of him as an earthly ruler. He had misused his position and privileges and had failed to acknowledge and glorify God. Solemn words again, "Belshazzar, you did not measure up!... The night of **revelry** and **revelation** became a night of **retribution**. (Borrow [Daniel, decoder of dreams](#))

John Walvoord sees the events in Daniel 5 as a foreshadowing of the end of the times of the Gentiles when the King of kings returns "In many respects, modern civilization is much like ancient Babylon, resplendent with its monuments of architectural triumph, as secure as human hands and ingenuity could make it, and yet defenseless against the judgment of God at the proper hour. Contemporary civilization is similar to ancient Babylon in that it has much to foster human pride but little to provide human security. Much as Babylon fell... so the world will be overtaken by disaster when the Day of the Lord comes" ([Chapter 5 Belshazzar's Feast And The Fall Of Babylon](#))

Daniel 5:27 C H Spurgeon Faith's Checkbook Weighed and Found Wanting

'TEKEL'-- you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient

Some of you are hurting. Your earthly prospects grow dark, and it is midnight. Your business is failing. You have sickness in the house. Your darling wife languishes before your weeping eyes. Your children, by their ingratitude, have wounded your spirit.

You are a believer, and you know that God is testing and trying you. God wants you to know that a summertime religion is not sufficient. He wants you to see if your faith can stand the test of trial and trouble. Remember Job? What a scale he was weighed on! What weights of affliction were cast on him! He was a mountain of sore trouble, and yet he could bear them all. He came out of the scales as proof against all the weight that Satanic strength could hurl.

Is it this way with you? Can you say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21)? Can you submit to His will without murmuring? Can you still say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15)? Remember, if your religion will not stand in adversity, it will not give comfort in the storm. You would be better without it; for with it, adversity deceives you. Without it, you might discover your true condition and seek the Lord as a penitent sinner. If a little adversity breaks you, what will happen when all God's storms are let loose on your soul? "If you have run with the footmen, and they wearied you ... how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan" (Jer. 12:5)? If mere trials distress and grieve, what will you do when all the hurricanes of divine vengeance sweep across the earth and shake its pillars?

Dear friend, I want you to see how you handle your trials and troubles. Does your faith stand? Can you see God's right hand even when it is wrapped in clouds? Can you discover the silver lining of tribulation's black clouds? God help you to come out of the scales, for many are weighed in them and found wanting (Dan. 5:27).

Daniel 5:27 C H Spurgeon Morning and Evening

'TEKEL'-- you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.

It is well frequently to weigh ourselves in the scale of God's Word. You will find it a holy exercise to read some psalm of David, and, as you meditate upon each verse, to ask yourself, "Can I say this? Have I felt as David felt? Has my heart ever been broken on account of sin, as his was when he penned his penitential psalms? Has my soul been full of true confidence in the hour of difficulty as his was when he sang of God's mercies in the cave of Adullam, or in the holds of Engedi? Do I take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord?" Then turn to the life of Christ, and as you read, ask yourselves how far you are conformed to his likeness. Endeavour to discover whether you have the meekness, the humility, the lovely spirit which he constantly inculcated and displayed. Take, then, the epistles, and see whether you can go with the apostle in what he said of his experience. Have you ever cried out as he did—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Have you ever felt his self-abasement? Have you seemed to yourself the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints? Have you known anything of his devotion? Could you join with him and say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"? If we thus read God's Word as a test of our spiritual condition, we shall have good reason to stop many a time and say, "Lord, I feel I have never yet been here, O bring me here! give me true penitence, such as this I read of. Give me real faith; give me warmer zeal; inflame me with more fervent love;

grant me the grace of meekness; make me more like Jesus. Let me no longer be 'found wanting,' when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, lest I be found wanting in the scales of judgment." "Judge yourselves that ye be not judged." (Morning and Evening)

Daniel 5:28 " 'PERES'--your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."

- **Your:** Da 5:31 6:28 8:3,4,20 9:1 Isa 13:17 21:2 45:1,2
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

PERES - This is the singular form of the plural upharsin.

The Aramaic word is **perea** which a Hebrew/Aramaic lexicon says "is probably used as a word play in Da 5:25, in the handwriting on the wall. "**Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.**" The words can be taken to mean mina, a shekel and a half mina (or half shekel). This makes little sense and Daniel interpreted it as the verbs number, weigh and divide. The last verb may have a double word play in its similarity to Persia, which was about to conquer Belshazzar. The word "upharsin" is the conjunction "and" plus the plural of peres."

Has been divided - Notice Daniel does not say "will be" but speaks of it as if it has already happened, so certain is the judgment (and in fact it is possible that it might have been literally happening as they were speaking -- at this very moment it is highly likely that the Euphrates River was being diverted to provide access into the city under the mammoth walls).

Given over - **By whom?** Clearly the Most High God (Da 2:21)

To the Medes and Persians - see Da 6:28.

Guzik - Given to the Medes and Persians: The ancient Greek historian Herodotus relates that the Persian King Cyrus conquered Babylon by diverting the flow of the Euphrates into a nearby swamp. This lowered the level of the river so his troops marched through the water and under the river-gates. They still would not have been able to enter had not the bronze gates of the inner walls been left inexplicably unlocked. This was exactly what God predicted in Isaiah 44:28 to Isaiah 45:7 and Jeremiah 51:57-58. God opened the gates of the city of Babylon for Cyrus, and put it in writing 200 years before it happened! "In October 539 BC, Cyrus advanced into lower Mesopotamia and, leaving Babylon till last, conquered and occupied the surrounding territory. Seeing which way the wind was blowing, Nabonidus of Babylon deserted his city, leaving it in the charge of his son Belshazzar ... the taking of Babylon was as bloodless and effortless as Daniel 5:1-31 implies." (Motyer, in his commentary on Isaiah) The fall of mystery Babylon will be like the fall of real Babylon - sudden, sure, and in the midst of her worst blasphemies. "Empires do not stand by human might, man-made machines and missiles. There is not a wall high enough nor thick enough to prevent a nation from falling when God pronounces that nation's doom." (Strauss). ([Daniel 5 Commentary](#))

Stortz comments "Think how risky it would be to tell a proud, rebellious king in front of all of his nobles that his kingdom is about to end. Belshazzar could have been so angry at the message that he would kill the messenger. If Daniel had that fear, he could have made up an interpretation of the handwriting on the wall that would have been more favorable, and no one would have ever known. He could have said, "That inscription means God loves you, and so do I." But Daniel accepted the judgment of God as true and just; so he did not hide the message. I wish preachers today would not hide the message of God's judgment upon the sins of men. Many must not believe God's judgments are true or just, because they do not warn the people of the coming wrath of God. God's coming judgment upon this nation ought to be resounding from the pulpits of our land. What nation can exist very long whose laws call evil good and good evil? (Ibid)

Rich Cathers...

Lesson - How does your "kingdom" measure up? There is a sense in which this is true of all of us. We are all found "wanting". We all come up a "bit short" to God's standards. Jesus said,

(Mt 5:20KJV-note) For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The Pharisees were the most strictly religious people that were around in Jesus' day. Perhaps they were some of the most religious people ever. Jesus said you had to "out do" the Pharisees. Even they weren't good enough.

He also said,

Mt 5:48KJV-note) Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Jesus said that the standard was perfection. We aren't measured by our own standards, we are measured by

God's standards. We aren't measured by comparing ourselves to other human beings. We are measured by comparing ourselves to God's standards.

(Ro 3:20, 21, 22, 23 ICB - notes) because no one can be made right with God by following the law. The law only shows us our sin. {21} But God has a way to make people right with him without the law. And God has now shown us that way which the law and the prophets told us about. {22} God makes people right with himself through their faith in Jesus Christ. This is true for all who believe in Christ, because all are the same. {23} All people have sinned and are not good enough for God's glory.

Every single one of us can be measured to God's standards and found "wanting".

(Ro 3:24-note, Ro 3:25 ICB-note) People are made right with God by his grace, which is a free gift. They are made right with God by being made free from sin through Jesus Christ. {25} God gave Jesus as a way to forgive sin through faith. And all of this is because of the blood of Jesus' death. This showed that God always does what is right and fair. God was right in the past when he was patient and did not punish people for their sins.

Instead of trying to measure up to God's standards on our own, God offers us help. He offers to pay for our sins if we will learn to trust Him. **How do you measure up? (Daniel 5)**

Daniel 5:29 Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.

- Da 5:7,16
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Then Belshazzar - It is sad it did not read "Then Belshazzar repented" which would have honored God, but instead he sought to honor Daniel! His bestowal of honor was as they say "too little and too late." Judgment was already upon this deceived, foolish, hard hearted unrepentant king. Most of us relish the thought of a "promotion", but there are some promotions we do best to ignore and this is a prime example!

Put a necklace of gold - Such necklaces could only be worn by the king's authority. In a way, this would have made Daniel a "marked man" and yet we know he survived and thrived under the reign of Darius the Mede. God's man is immortal until God has fulfilled that man's purpose for his life on earth! We see this principle in the Revelation, where the two witnesses are "immortal" until their job is done (their "job description" specified 1260 days)...

And **when (not before!)** they have finished their testimony (Rev 11:3, 4, 5, 6^{note}), the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. (Rev 11:7^{note})

Wiersbe - There are times when God gives warnings in order to bring sinners to repentance, such as when he sent Jonah to Nineveh (Jonah 3:1-10); but there are also times when His warnings are final and divine judgment is determined (**Ed**: Compare His declaration of judgment on Nineveh only 100 years later - Nahum 1:8-9). When God warned Nebuchadnezzar about his pride and unconcern for the poor, He gave the king a year in which to repent and seek God's forgiveness (Da 4:28-33^{note}). The king refused to humble himself and judgment fell. But when Daniel confronted Belshazzar, he offered him no way of escape. ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#)).

Guzik - Daniel held this post for only a few hours. This shows how temporary the awards and accolades of this world are. In the kingdom that succeeded Belshazzar Daniel was also promoted, but that was due to God, not to Belshazzar. ([Daniel 5 Commentary](#))

Daniel 5:30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.

- Da 5:1,2 Isa 21:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 47:9 Jer 51:11,31,39,57
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

That same night - This resonates with "**suddenly**" (Da 5:5). What God decrees will come to pass!

Solomon has an apt description of this prideful king...

A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will **suddenly** be broken beyond remedy. (Pr 29:1)

Belshazzar was

... Warned by God...
... Found guilty by God
... Sentenced by God

That same night - God's justice and judgment were swift and sure. His Spirit will not strive with us forever (Ge 6:3)

Pastor Ray Pritchard emphasizes that "Sinners like to believe that God will never punish them, or if punishment is coming, it is so far off in the distant future that they have plenty of time to repent and be ready to meet the Lord (cp Ec 8:11). This is a dangerous and even deadly attitude. God is not obligated to continually send his Spirit to convict us of our sin. The time may come when God says, "You have crossed the line," and the Holy Spirit no longer works in a person's heart. No one knows when that time is coming, and no one but God knows when the line has been crossed. But of this much we may be sure. The opportunity to get right with God ends with our death. After we die, there is only the judgment to come (He 9:27-note). It is foolish to presume upon the grace of God. He owes you nothing at all. If you reject his offer of salvation, there remains no other sacrifice for sin (He 10:26-note). **If you turn away from Jesus, or if you put off trusting Him, where else will you go to have your sins forgiven? Those who take God's grace for granted will end up eternally disappointed.** ([God's Graffiti - January 2000](#))

Solomon writes "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil." (Ec 12:13,14)

As the **writer of Hebrews** says...

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,
was swift. (Heb 9:27-note)

Comment: Belshazzar will have to give an account for his party--Party now, pay later. Since he had not humbled himself before God and did not know Him, he was assigned to the temporary "holding tank" of Sheol (Hell) and he will be resurrected one day to stand before the Judge of both great and small at the Great White Throne (Rev 20:11, 12, 13, 14, 15-note - note especially Rev 20:12-note where Belshazzar is "judged... according to his deeds", specifically his blasphemous toasting of his idols with God's holy vessels!)

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (He 10:31-note)

As **Solomon** warns that "The Lord has made everything for its (or His) own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. Assuredly, he will not be unpunished. (Pr 16:4, 5, cp Ec 8:11)

Ray Pritchard sums up the message of Daniel 5...

- (1) Babylon became great because of the **sovereign blessing of God**.
- (2) When they became great, their **pride made them forget God**.
- (3) When they forgot God, they began to **take Him for granted**.
- (4) When they took Him for granted, **God judged them** and they were no longer a great nation

Daniel 5 is in the Bible for a very particular reason—so that we will know that what happened to Babylon may also happen to us. Search through the rubble of history. See the great nations come and go: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome. And in the last hundred years the Communist empire and the Third Reich of Hitler have both come and gone.

The tendency of every great nation is the same:

To begin to believe that we will always be a superpower, to slowly push God out of the picture, to take him out of public life, to forbid the mention of his name, to ridicule those who still believe in him, to promote those who exalt man and down play God, to chafe at the absolutes, to rewrite the rule book, and to live by our own set of rules. Over time we take God for granted, turn to our own idols of technology, and begin to worship the things we make with our own hands.

In the end God judges that nation and it is no longer great. And note this biblical fact. Judgment often comes at the hands of another nation God raises up for that very purpose. ([God's Graffiti - January 2000](#))

Compare the quick and sure judgment of **ancient Babylon** with the coming future judgment of **Babylon the great city** (Da 4:30,

Rev 18:21-[note](#))...

For this reason **in one day** her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong. And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For **in one hour** (repeated in Rev 18:17-[note](#), Rev 18:19-[note](#)) your judgment has come.' (Rev 18:8, 9, 10-[note](#))

The Apologetics Study Bible...Xenophon mentions that Babylon's Medo-Persian invaders "avenged themselves upon the wicked king" ([Cyropaedia - go to page 261 to read Xenophon's detailed description of Babylon's fall](#)), meaning they executed Belshazzar. (Online [The Apologetics Study Bible- Understand Why You Believe](#))

The fall of Babylon as recorded by the ancient historians Herodotus, Berosus and Xenophon verifies this - "Cyrus then dug a trench and diverted the flow of the Euphrates river into the new channel which led to an existing swamp. The level of the river then dropped to such a level that it became like a stream. His army was then able to take the city by marching through the shallow waters ... The Babylonians at the time were celebrating intensely at a feast to one of their gods and they were taken totally by surprise."

Rich Cathers draws the following lesson from this pathetic ending of a powerful but prideful man...

Lesson - It's not too late for you. You don't have to resign yourself to thinking that it's too late for you, that all his hopeless.

(2Co 6:1, 2 NLT) As God's partners, we beg you not to reject this marvelous message of God's great kindness. {2} For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, God is ready to help you right now. Today is the day of salvation.

Illustration - Those inventive people, the Italians, have a custom. As midnight on New Year's Eve approaches, the streets are clear. There is no traffic; there are no pedestrians; even the policemen take cover. Then, at the stroke of 12, the windows of the houses fly open. To the sound of laughter, music and fireworks, each member of the family pitches out old crockery, detested ornaments, hated furniture and a whole catalogue of personal possessions which remind them of something in the past year they are determined to wipe out of their minds. -- House & Garden

Today, God is giving you a chance to throw out the old and bring in the new.

(2Cor 5:17KJV) Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. ([Daniel 5](#))

Daniel 5:31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

- Da 6:1, 9:1
- Daniel 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

As has been said, Daniel 5's description of the passing of the baton from the golden to the silver kingdom of Medo-Persia came to pass just as God had predicted. The point is that God's Word is sure (2Pe 1:19-note). God's Word never fails (Josh 21:45, 23:14). No Word from God is devoid of power (Lk 1:37ASV). If God says it, that settles it regardless of whether we believe it, understand it or agree with it!

Beloved of the Lord, Daniel 5 should cause all of us as believers...

to have a more stable, sure faith (Ro 10:17note)

to have a greater knowledge of the greatness of our God that we might do exploits for His Name and His glory (cp Da 11:32b)

to daily determine to live in holy conduct and godliness (enabled by the Spirit) (2Pe 3:11note)

Darius the Mede - The identity of [Darius](#) is uncertain. Clearly he was a ruler and clearly he was a **Mede**. He is mentioned again with [Cyrus the Persian](#) in Daniel 6:28 where both are classified as ruling over the Medo-Persian kingdom.

Guzik interprets Darius "as a sub-king under Cyrus the Persian. He is referred to in secular history as Gubaru (See [Gobryas - Wikipedia](#))."

At about the age of sixty-two - Why mention the age? While one cannot be dogmatic, it is possible that his age is given to allow one to differentiate this **Darius** from another Darius who some have postulated was the king. Many scholars have noted that the name **Darius** may have been a title of honor much like the term **Caesar** or **Augustus** was in the Roman Empire. The other **Darius** who some have considered might have been king was named **Darius I Hystaspes** who began to reign in 522BC. **Darius I Hystaspes** would have been a relatively young man at this time, surely under age 30, and so the fact that this **Darius the Mede** was 62 would effectively exclude him as the ruler at the beginning of the Medo-Persian empire. Now are you really confused? See the Table below and note that Cyrus (who defeated Babylon) and **Darius the Mede** were apparently in effect "co-regents" over the Medo-Persian empire (see Criswell's note below).

Daniel mentions this **Darius** in chapter 9 recording that "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans." (Da 9:1-note)

[The Apologetics Study Bible- Understand Why You Believe](#) (online) - According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians on the sixteenth of the month Tishri, in the autumn of 539 B.C. The Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon supply fascinating details about Babylon's fall. The Nabonidus Chronicle and the Cyrus Cylinder both agree with Daniel that Babylon was captured without a major battle and that the citizens readily accepted Persian rule (Da 6:1-3).

Darius was "made king" presumably as result of Cyrus granting him his regency. This would definitively exclude [Darius I Hystaspes](#) who in fact was of Persian not Median descent.

SUMMARY OF THE EARLY MEDO-PERSIAN RULERS		
539 Cyrus	530 Cambyses	522 Darius I Hystaspes
539 Darius the Mede (?Gubaru) 525	-----	

So how do we resolve Da 5:31, which liberal, unbelieving critics have called an obvious "error" and further evidence of the fraudulent nature of this book? First note that Da 5:28 says the kingdom will be **divided and given over to the Medes and Persians**. Darius is a Mede and Cyrus is a Persian and Da 6:28 says **Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian**. So the Spirit choose to mention **Darius the Mede** here even though historically it was **Cyrus the Persian** who defeated Babylon. There is no discrepancy or conflict for the one who has eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit is saying! (cp this phrase used seven times in addressing the churches in the Revelation = Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22)!

W A Criswell has a lengthy explanatory note stating that...

At this point the most difficult historical problem in the book is confronted. None of the ancient historians and none of the cuneiform inscriptions have thus far confirmed the existence of a leader at that time named **Darius**. Our knowledge of the administration of Babylon following the Persian conquest is sketchy. It was made a Persian satrapy consisting of Babylonia and the Babylonian Empire west of the Euphrates ("Ebernari"). Cambyses, Cyrus's son, was declared king of Babylon but was shortly removed. An individual named **Gubaru** (not the same as Cyrus's general [**Ed**: his somewhat similar name Ugbaru has caused some confusion], who died in November, 539 B.C.) served as satrap. One named **Gubaru** is said to have appointed governors under him. Cyrus was soon engaged in military affairs that occupied him for most of the remainder of his reign. **He consequently entrusted the administration of the empire to Gubaru** It may be Gubaru whom Daniel identifies as "**Darius the Mede**." Darius I ("the Great" = **Darius I Hystaspes**) was in his twenties when he began to reign in 522BC, and was not Median but Persian. Daniel intentionally distinguishes the Darius of his book by calling him "the Mede"... We know, however, that at least two of Cyrus's generals were Medes, and that he appointed Medes in administrative positions. The phrase "**received the kingdom**" (Da 5:31) can be translated "took over kingship." It has been suggested that "**Darius**" may have been a title meaning "The Royal One." ([Believer's Study Bible: New King James Version. 1991. Thomas Nelson](#))

**A FEW OF GOD'S
MANY PROPHECIES
CONCERNING
BABYLON**

As described below in the extra-biblical account by the ancient historian **Xenophon**, **Cyrus the Persian** proved to be God's instrument of judgment against **Belshazzar** and **Babylon the great** just as God's Word had prophesied through Isaiah over 150

years before Cyrus was even born...

Thus says the Lord to **Cyrus His anointed** (Masiyah - gives us our word "messiah"), whom I have taken by the right hand (Pr 21:1), to subdue nations before him and **to loose the loins of kings** (cp Da 5:6); **to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut** (cp Da 5:30 - read below how this was fulfilled): I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, **so that you may know that it is I, The Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.** (**Why does God anoint Cyrus to be His instrument of judgment?**) For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name (**What amazing mercy and grace** - Israel was in exile because of her idolatry and failure to keep the Sabbath years, and yet God still had concern for them! He had not forsaken them because of His faithfulness to keep His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. cp Nu 23:19). I have given you (**Cyrus**) a title of honor though you have not known Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these. "Drip down, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down righteousness. Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, and righteousness spring up with it. I, the Lord, have created it (This speaks of the time with His Righteous Branch, the Messiah, reigns during the Millennium). (Is 45:1-8)

Comment: What does this fulfilled prophecy say about the trustworthiness of the Word of God and the God of the Word? (cp Josh 23:14+, Josh 21:45+, Pr 30:5)

Jeremiah gives another prophecy (~605BC cp Jer 25:1, cp Da 1:1 = remember 3rd year by Babylonian reckoning which did not count first year of a king's rule) regarding Israel, Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon...

Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Because you have not obeyed My words, 9 behold, **I will send** (Notice Who is in control!) and take all the families of the north, 'declares the LORD,' and I will send to **Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant** (Jer 27:6, 43:10), and will bring them against this land (Israel, specifically the Southern Kingdom of Judah and Benjamin), and against its inhabitants, and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them (This is exactly what happened to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem!), and make them a horror, and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. 'Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 'And this whole land (of Israel) shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations (Israel as well as the Gentile nations) **shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.** (cp Lev 23:3, 4, 5, Lev 26:33, 34, 35, 2Chr 36:20, 21) 12 'Then it will be **when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,**' (as we see here in Da 5:30, 31) declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation. (Jer 25:8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

In spite of Babylon's great defenses, it fell in **one day's time** just as the sovereign, Most High God had foretold over 150 years earlier...

"Now, then, hear this, you sensual one, who dwells securely, who says in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me. I will not sit as a widow, nor know loss of children.' But these two things will come on you **suddenly in one day:** Loss of children and widowhood. They will come on you in full measure In spite of your many sorceries, In spite of the great power of your spells. "You felt secure in your wickedness and said, 'No one sees me,' Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you; For you have said in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me.' "But evil will come on you which you will not know how to charm away and disaster will fall on you for which you cannot atone and **destruction about which you do not know will come on you suddenly.** (Is 47:8, 9, 10, 11)

According to the [Nabonidus Chronicle](#), Babylon fell to the Medo-Persian empire on the 16th of the month Tishri, in the autumn of 539BC.

XENOPHON'S DESCRIPTION OF BABYLON'S FALL

Here are excerpts of **Xenophon's** historical account of the **fall of Babylon**...

(From page 261) When Cyrus appeared before Babylon he stationed his whole fore about the city and then rode around it himself in company with his friends and the staff-officers of the allies; but when he had taken

survey of the walls, he prepared to draw off his arm from the city. But a deserter came out and told him that they were going to attack him as soon as he began to draw his army off. "For," the man went on, "your lines looked weak to those who observed them from the walls." And it was no wonder that they appeared so; for, encompassing walls of such extent, the lines necessarily had but little depth... (From the Index - "The walls of Babylon, according to Herodotus, were 40 miles in circumference, 335 feet high and 85 feet wide at the top, and were broken by 100 gates-25 on each side.")

When they had encamped, Cyrus called together his staff-officers and said: "Friends and allies, we have viewed the city on every side. But I am sure I cannot see how any one could take by storm walls so massive and so high; but the more men there are in the city, the sooner they can, I think, be brought by famine to capitulate, seeing that they will not come out and fight. Therefore, unless you have some other method to suggest, I propose that we use this method of laying siege to those gentlemen."

"But," said Chrysantas, "does not this river flow through the midst of the city? And it is more than two stadia in width."...

(Cyrus) erected many... towers (around the outside of the walls of Babylon)... so that he might have as many watch-towers as possible. Thus, then, his men were employed, while the enemy upon the walls (**the Babylonians**) **laughed his siege-works to scorn**, in the belief that they had **provisions enough for more than 20 years**. Upon hearing of this, Cyrus divided his army into 12 parts as if intending each part to be responsible for sentry duty during one month of each year; but the Babylonians, in their turn, when they heard of that, laughed much more scornfully still, at the thought of Phrygians and Lydians and Arabians and Cappadocians keeping guard against them for they considered all these to be more friendly to them than to the Persians. At last the ditches were completed. 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. 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. When the problem of the river was thus solved, Cyrus gave orders to the his Persian colonels, infantry and cavalry, to marshal their regiments two abreast and come to him, and the rest, the allies, to follow in their rear, drawn up as before. They came, according to orders, and he bade his aides, both foot and horse, get into the dry channel of the river and see if it was possible to march in the bed of the river. And when they brought back word that it was, he called together the generals of both infantry and cavalry and spoke as follows:

"My friends," said he, "the river has made way for us and given us an entrance into the city. Let us, therefore, enter in with dauntless hearts, fearing nothing and remembering that those against whom we are now to march are the same men that we have repeatedly defeated, and that, too, when they were all drawn up in battle line with their allies at their side, and when they were all wide awake and sober and fully armed; whereas now we are going to fall upon them at a time when many of them are asleep, many drunk, and none of them in battle array. And when they find out that we are inside the walls, in their panic fright they will be much more helpless still than they are now... But come, to arms! And with the help of the gods I will lead you on. And do you, Gadatas and Gobryas, show the streets, for you are familiar with them. And when we get inside the walls, lead us by the quickest route to the royal palace."

"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. Still, we shall find a guard before the gates, for one is always posted there."

"We must lose no time, the," said Cyrus. "Forward, that we may catch the men as unprepared as we can."

When these words were spoken, they advanced. And of those they met on the way (Babylonians), 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-revelers. They advanced as fast as they could and were soon at the palace.

And Gobryas and Gadatas and 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 blazing fire, and without waiting they dealt with them as with foes. 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.

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.

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 the their houses that they should stay there, for if any one should be caught outside, he would be put to death.

While they were thus occupied, Gadatas and Gobryas came up and first of all they did homage to the gods, seeing that they had avenged themselves upon the wicked king (Belshazzar), and then they kissed Cyrus' hands and his feet with many tears of joy.

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...

(Cyrus) furthermore ordered the heralds to make proclamation that all Babylonians deliver up their arms; and he ordered that wherever arms should be found in any house, all the occupants should be put to the sword. ([Cyropaedia - see pp 261-277 for full description of Babylon's fall](#)),

Herodotus has a parallel account of the fall of Babylon in *The History of the Persian Wars* written about 430BC...

He (Cyrus) turned the Euphrates by a canal into the basin, which was then a marsh, on which the river sank to such an extent that the natural bed of the stream became fordable..... Hereupon the Persians who had been left for the purpose at Babylon by the, river-side, entered the stream, which had now sunk so as to reach about midway up a man's thigh, and thus got into the town. Had the Babylonians been apprised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for they would have made fast all the street-gates which gave upon the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy, as it were, in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and so took the city. Owing to the vast size of the place, the inhabitants of the central parts (as the residents at Babylon declare) long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing of what had chanced, but as they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and reveling until they learnt the capture but too certainly. Such, then, were the circumstances of the first taking of Babylon." ([Herodotus on Cyrus' capture of Babylon](#))

Dr Charles Dyer who has written extensively on **Babylon** in **Scripture** and in **history** remarks that...

If our tale of two cities (Jerusalem and Babylon) ended when Judah fell, it would seem as though the **city of man** had triumphed over the **City of God**. But the same prideful rebellion that caused confusion at **Babel** also brought about the fall of Babylon's kings. Babylon was like a haughty princess, tossing her head and proclaiming, "**I did it my way**"!

Babylon occupied the world's center stage for only about two generations. The city rose to fame in 612 B.C. when Babylonian armies destroyed the city of Nineveh, and Babylon supplanted Assyria as the dominant power in the Middle East. Less than a century later, in 539 B.C., Babylon was conquered by Medo-Persia and gradually slipped back into obscurity.

Seventeen days after Babylon fell to Cyrus's general, Cyrus himself entered the city. The average person in Babylon would not have noticed any major changes in daily affairs. Cyrus established Babylon as one of his capital cities and assumed the title "King of Babylon." (*James B. Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 3d ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p316*) He wisely tried to establish peace and to restore a sense of normality and order in the city (*A K Grayson: Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles, Texts from Cuneiform Sources*)

When I (**Cyrus**) entered Babylon as a friend and [when] I established the seat of the 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 endeavoring to worship him. My numerous troops walked around in Babylon in peace, I did not allow anybody to terrorize [any place] of the [country of Sumer] and Akkad. I strove for peace in Babylon and in all his [other] sacred cities. **CYRUS, King of Babylon** (*Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, p316*)

Babylon remained at peace throughout the reign of Cyrus and his successor, Cambyses. Following the death of Cambyses, Darius I assumed control of the Medo-Persian Empire. The citizens of Babylon rebelled against Darius, and he was forced to recapture the city on two separate occasions. After his second suppression of a

revolt, Herodotus reports that "Darius destroyed their walls and reft away all their gates, neither of which things Cyrus had done at the first taking of Babylon." (*Herodotus 3.159*)

Though Babylon had fallen into difficult times, it continued to be an important and active city under the reign of the Medo-Persians. (Borrow [The rise of Babylon : is Iraq at the center of the final drama?](#))

Wiersbe - Belshazzar forgot the Word of God and the lessons of history and lost his kingdom and his life. May we not make the same mistakes today! ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

Considering the brevity of our life and the "longevity" of eternity, it behooves each of us to not ignore God's "handwriting" in our lives but to...

Redeem (**exagorazo** in the = continually, as the habitual practice of our life!) the time (kairos - see word study) for the days are evil (Eph 5:16-note)

See related study - Redeem the Time

Let us all ask God to...

Teach us to number our days so that we may present to Him a heart of wisdom (Ps 90:12[note](#))

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