

- I. Babylonian king Belshazzar invites a thousand of his officers to a great feast.
- II. **The gall** (5:2–4)
 - a. *The order* (5:2): Belshazzar asks that the vessels Nebuchadnezzar took from the Jerusalem Temple be brought to his feast.
 - b. *The outrage* (5:3–4): Both king and guests drink wine from these vessels and praise the Babylonian gods.
- III. **The wall** (5:5–6)
 - a. *The hand* (5:5): Belshazzar sees a human hand (with no arm) writing a message on the wall.
 - b. *The horror* (5:6): He's filled with fear.
- IV. **The call** (5:7–29)
 - a. *To the magicians* (5:7–9): Belshazzar promises great rewards to any who can interpret the mysterious writing. But no one is able to do so.
 - b. *To the prophet* (5:10–29)
 - c. The recommendation (5:10–12): The queen mother advises Belshazzar to call for Daniel.
 - d. The reward (5:13–16): The king offers to promote Daniel to the third highest position in the kingdom if he can interpret the writing.
 - e. The refusal (5:17): Daniel spurns the bribe but offers to interpret the message without cost.
 - f. The rebuke (5:18–23): Daniel contrasts the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.
 - g. Lessons Nebuchadnezzar learned (5:18–21): He testified to God's sovereignty after being humbled by insanity.
 - h. Lessons Belshazzar spurns (5:22–23): Although he knows history, he still chooses to defy and insult God!
 - i. The revelation (5:24–28): Daniel tells the king that his kingdom will be given to the Medes and Persians—and that he will soon die.
 - j. The robing (5:29): In a futile attempt to escape God's judgment, the king clothes Daniel in purple and proclaims him third ruler in the kingdom.
- V. **The fall** (5:30–31): That very night Darius the Mede enters Babylon, kills Belshazzar, and rules over the city.¹

¹ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Da 5:1–31.

Verse by verse:

- I. Babylonian king Belshazzar invites a thousand of his officers to a great feast.
- a. Daniel 5:1 (NASB95) *Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.*
 - b. Belshazzar is the king
 - c. He holds a great feast
 - d. A thousand nobles.
 - e. This is a huge feast.
 - f. They are drinking wine.
 - g. **NOTE:** This is a huge feast.
 - h. **When is this taking place?**
 - i. CSB: *The developments in Dn 5 occurred about twenty-three years after the events in the previous chapter. Nebuchadnezzar had died in 562 BC, shortly after his time of madness and subsequent repentance. After his death, a series of intrigues and assassinations resulted in several obscure kings ruling Babylon until Nabonidus took the throne (556–539 BC). Beginning in 1914, thirty-seven separate archival texts have been discovered documenting the existence of Belshazzar as crown prince. King Belshazzar held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, probably to bolster morale after Nabonidus had experienced a crushing defeat at the hands of the Persians. The Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon confirm that Babylon fell while a great feast was in progress (v. 5:30). Excavations have uncovered a throne room that could accommodate one thousand nobles.*²
 - j. NET: *As is clear from the extra-biblical records, it was actually Nabonidus (ca. 556–539 B.C.) who was king of Babylon at this time. However, Nabonidus spent long periods of time at Teima, and during those times Belshazzar his son was de facto king of Babylon.* This arrangement may help to explain why later in this chapter

BC before Christ

BC before Christ

v. verse

² Michael Rydelnik, “Daniel,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1333–1334.

ca. approximately (from Latin circa)

Belshazzar promises that the successful interpreter of the handwriting on the wall will be made third ruler in the kingdom. If Belshazzar was in effect second ruler in the kingdom, this would be the highest honor he could grant.³

- k. *Further, this scene of a Babylonian banquet calls to mind a similar grandiose event recorded in Esth 1:3–8. Persian kings were also renowned in the ancient Near Eastern world for their lavish banquets.⁴*

Extra info:

The banquet is taking place in mid-October (15 Tashritu) 539. In the past few days the Persians have taken the city of Opis (fifty miles north on the Tigris) in a bloody battle and then crossed over to the Euphrates, where the city of Sippar surrendered without a fight on the fourteenth of Tashritu. It is likely that Babylon has received word of these events and that Belshazzar knows that the Persian army is on the march toward Babylon. Nabonidus had been with the army at Opis and fled when the city fell. When he was captured, it was in Babylon, but the texts are unclear about when he arrived. Berossus (third-century B.C. Chaldean historian, quoted by Josephus) claims that he was trapped in the city of Borsippa (about seventeen miles south of Babylon). In light of all of this, it appears that the banquet represents one final gathering before the momentous events that are about to transpire. Herodotus refers to a festival celebration that was taking place when the city fell. There is no reason to think, however, that the banquet reflects Belshazzar's pessimism about the outcome. Babylon was a defensible city, and they believed their gods to be strong.⁵

- I. *The name "Belshazzar" means "Bel, protect the king".⁶*

Archaeological Study Bible:

Others propose that Belshazzar may have played an active role in advancing his father to the throne — by murdering a man named Labasi-Marduk who had a better claim to succession.

³ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Da 5:1.

⁴ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Da 5:1.

⁵ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:1.

⁶ R. C. Sproul, ed., [The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version \(2015 Edition\)](#) (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015), 1473.

A Babylonian text, the Verse Account of Nabonidus, relates that Nabonidus placed the military troops under Belshazzar's command and entrusted the kingship to him before departing to the west. During the approximate ten-year reign of Belshazzar, Nabonidus remained on campaign in Tema (Arabia). Nabonidus also was apparently devoted to the god Sin; he had no interest in the worship of Marduk (the chief Babylonian god) and even ceased to observe the traditional New Year festival. He was thus despised as a heretical and negligent monarch. Curiously, Nabonidus seems to have been one of history's first archaeologists, having carried out excavations at Agade, Uruk and Ur.

Though always referred to as "son of the king" in Assyrian sources, Belshazzar exercised all the functions of kingship, including receiving tribute, granting leases and attending to the upkeep of the temples, as attested in several business letters and contracts contemporary to his reign. He was apparently as impious as his father (seen in his lack of regard for the God of Israel), and ruthless as well. As "second" ruler, he promised Daniel the position of "third" ruler (v. 16). Little is known of Belshazzar's final years in power. **Babylon was well fortified when the Persians attacked in 539 B.C., but Cyrus is said to have diverted the waters of the Euphrates and opened an access into the city. Herodotus and Xenophon relate that Cyrus found the city in celebration and took it with relative ease.** Nabonidus returned to Babylon in 539 B.C. but was captured at Borsippa and exiled to Carmania in the east.

Herodotus and the Fall of Babylon

JEREMIAH 50

The Greek historian **Herodotus (c. 480–425 B.C.)** produced one of the most famous books of ancient Greece, the History. Its focus is the series of wars between Persia and the Greeks that lasted from approximately 490 to 479 B.C. Herodotus devoted a great deal of attention to the background of the wars and in the process gave a fairly sweeping view of the eastern Mediterranean world during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.

The Greek word *historiai* (literally "investigations") aptly describes how Herodotus went about collecting and recording information about the customs and histories of the peoples he encountered. He is regarded as the father of Western history writing because he tried to confine himself to human events and to avoid myths.

At times, however, claims from Herodotus are of questionable value. It is incorrect to assert, as some have, that Herodotus simply invented his stories. He did, however, include rumor, legend and gossip in his histories and sometimes may have misunderstood his sources.

Herodotus's account of the fall of Babylon (History, 1.189–191) in 539 B.C. relates to the prophetic account in Jeremiah 50–51, as well as to Daniel's indication that Babylon fell overnight during a festival (Da 5:30–31). Herodotus began with a fantastic tale of how Cyrus's horse drowned in the Gyndes River and how he, to punish the river by making it weak and shallow, compelled his army to spend a summer diverting it into 360 channels. Arriving at Babylon, Cyrus faced the prospect of a prolonged siege. Babylon was large enough to store food for many years, so any attempt to starve the city into submission would have been futile.

But, Herodotus noted, the city had one peculiar characteristic: The Euphrates River ran through the middle of Babylon and divided it into two parts. Cyrus decided that the river channels under the walls provided the only chance of gaining entry, but the volume of water and the strength of the current were too great. Yet the Persian king hatched an ingenious plan: He posted soldiers at the points at which the Euphrates entered and left the city and instructed his men to move through the river when it became fordable. Meanwhile, the noncombatants went upstream and diverted much of the river into an artificial marsh. When the water level had dropped sufficiently, the Persian soldiers made their way in and captured the Babylonian capital.

What are we to make of this account? Most historians believe that Herodotus's version of events is at least to some degree confused and misleading. **In his actual conquest of Babylonia, Cyrus's forces proceeded down from the north and rapidly overcame resistance. A second front was opened against Babylon by a certain Ugbaru, governor of Gutium. Ugbaru proceeded to capture Babylon for Cyrus with astonishing speed, and Cyrus himself entered the city shortly thereafter.**

Several factors may have contributed to the Persian victory. First, Cyrus may have kept the bulk of the Babylonian forces occupied with his army while Ugbaru came in from the rear. Second, the Babylonian regime was unpopular, and the people seem to have welcomed Cyrus as a liberator. Third, Ugbaru appears to have entered Babylon by subterfuge (as is reflected in the version of the story about the diversion of the Euphrates).

It is certain, however, that Babylon fell suddenly. **Herodotus is correct in stating that the Euphrates bisected the city, and the Nabonidus Chronicle confirms that it fell without a battle. Thus the account about diverting the Euphrates may be true.** Both Daniel 5 and Herodotus indicate that Babylon fell during a rowdy festival. Herodotus stated: "Owing to the sheer size of the city, so say the inhabitants, those in the outlying areas were captured without those in the center knowing about it."

II. The gall (5:2–4)

- a. *The order (5:2):* Belshazzar asks that the vessels Nebuchadnezzar took from the Jerusalem Temple be brought to his feast.
- b. Daniel 5:2 (NASB95) *When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his 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.*
- c. Nebuchadnezzar had taken the gold out of the temple (2 Kings 24:13; 25:15; Daniel 1:2; Ezra 1:7-11 the gold is brought back).
- d. Nebuchadnezzar was more likely his grandfather.

- e. The Aramaic word translated “father” could refer to a grandfather, ancestor, or even a predecessor to a king without any lineal tie whatsoever.⁷
- f. King, nobles, wives, and concubines will drink from them.
- g. *gold ... that Nebuchadnezzar ... had taken from the temple.* In the eighth year of his reign (597 BC; see 2Ki 24:12–13 and note on 24:12).⁸
- h. IVP BBC: *Everyone in the ancient world understood the significance of sacred vessels. The fact that these had not been melted down suggests that they had been preserved because of their sacred character. Since the god of Babylon was seen as the conqueror, the things that belonged to the “conquered” gods would have been taken as booty into the temple of Marduk. Perhaps the use of the vessels was a way of calling to remembrance the god’s previous victories (see comment on 5:4).*⁹

Extra info:

Belshazzar was known to be the son of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, with whom he was coregent. Nabonidus has no firmly established relationship to Nebuchadnezzar. As early as Herodotus (fifth century B.C., see sidebar at Esther 1), Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus had the same name (Labynetos) and were at times confused. Additionally, however, in the ancient world, successive monarchs were often identified as sons of famous predecessors even when there was no dynastic or genealogical connections. So, for instance, on the black obelisk of Shalmaneser III, Jehu, king of Israel, is identified as “son of Omri,” even though he had been responsible for wiping out the line of Omri and was no relation (a fact probably well known to the Assyrians).¹⁰

- i. **Moody:**
- j. *By drinking libations to Babylonian gods with vessels devoted to the true God of Israel, Belshazzar was acting in an unusually aggressive and blasphemous way. Nebuchadnezzar was called Belshazzar’s father, even though Nabonidus was his*

⁷ Michael A. Rydelnik, “Daniel,” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1293.

⁸ Kenneth L. Barker, ed., *NIV Study Bible*, Fully Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 1471.

⁹ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:2.

¹⁰ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:2.

*father. Most likely, Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus, married Nebuchadnezzar's daughter to establish his own claim to the throne of Babylon, making Nebuchadnezzar the grandfather of Belshazzar. The Aramaic word translated "father" could refer to a grandfather, ancestor, or even a predecessor to a king without any lineal tie whatsoever.*¹¹

- k. *The outrage (5:3–4): Both king and guests drink wine from these vessels and praise the Babylonian gods.*
- l. *Daniel 5:3–4 (NASB95) 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. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.*
- m. **This now shows that they did what they planned to do in the previous chapter.**
- n. *Idolatry in verse 4: they praise the gods of gold and of silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone.*
- o. *IVP BBC OT: Belshazzar and his administration are well aware that the empire hangs by a thread and that the next several days will be of utmost significance. They are hoping that their gods will bring victory for them as they had in the days of Nebuchadnezzar's great conquests. To that end they are "toasting the gods" and celebrating their past victories. It is also possible, though not explicitly stated, that libations were poured out to the gods from these vessels. They are not only making their supplications to Marduk, the patron of Babylon, but to the gods of other cities of the region whose images had been gathered into Babylon during these troubled times.*¹²

III. The wall (5:5–6)

- a. *The hand (5:5): Belshazzar sees a human hand (with no arm) writing a message on the wall.*
- b. *Daniel 5:5–6 (NASB95) 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. Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.*
- c. *I wonder what this looked like.*

¹¹ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1293.

¹² Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:4.

- d. It happened suddenly.
- e. The king sees this.
- f. The king even sees the back of the palm that is doing the writing.
- g. It was a human hand- could this have been the preincarnate Jesus?
- h. Interesting from the BBC OT: ***A lifeless, detached hand would have suggested a defeated enemy. Casualty counts were made by cutting off the right hands of all of the dead (recall the broken-off hands of Dagan in 1 Sam 5:3–4). By drinking from the vessels the Babylonians were recalling the defeat of Yahweh (perhaps along with other gods and nations), but this is no lifeless, severed hand of a dead god at all. It is quite animated and has a message to give. The effect might be similar if the head of a decapitated victim began to speak.***¹³
- i. Location: The statement that the writing was on the plaster wall near the lampstand is a curious detail since one might have expected plaster all around the room, which would be illuminated by many lampstands. The excavation of the throne room in Babylon can offer some explanation. It was a 170-by-55-foot hall entered through three spacious courtyards that led from the entrance just inside the Ishtar Gate. Some of the wall space was covered with blue enameled brick, while other parts were plaster. **The word used for lampstand is an unusual one and may be a Persian loan word.** As such it likely represents a distinct, singular lampstand, perhaps of a special type.¹⁴
- j. *The horror* (5:6): He's filled with fear.
- k. Verse 6: the king's face changes: pale
- l. No strength in the king...

IV. The call (5:7–29)

- a. *To the magicians* (5:7–9): Belshazzar promises great rewards to any who can interpret the mysterious writing. But no one is able to do so.
- b. Daniel 5:7–9 (NASB95) *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*

¹³ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:5.

¹⁴ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:5.

- in the kingdom.” Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king. Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.*
- c. Verse 7: the king wants the conjurers, the Chaldeans, the diviners.
 - d. The king tells the wise men:
 - e. Any man who can read and interpret this inscription shall be clothed in purple, have a necklace hung around his neck, and have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom (This will not matter because in verse 30, we see the kingdom is taken over.)
 - f. Verse 8: all the wise men came, but they could not interpret the inscription.
 - g. IVP BBC OT: *Though some have suggested that the inscription was written in an obscure language (such as Old Persian cuneiform), there is no indication in the text that it is written in anything other than the native Aramaic.* Aramaic, like Hebrew, is written without vowels and at times without word divisions, yielding srplqt)nm (mn)tlpr). Confusion over where to make the word divisions and which vowels to supply was sufficient to undermine their confidence in reading the words and offering an interpretation. In another case of an inscribed and perhaps cryptic message, the seventh-century Lydian king Gyges saw the name “Ashurbanipal” written out in a dream that was accompanied by a voice urging him to battle against the Cimmerians.¹⁵
 - h. Verse 9: the king is alarmed, his face grew more pale, his wise men perplexed.
 - i. Drunken orgy
 - j. Fear in the king
- v. *To the prophet (5:10–29)*
- a. The recommendation (5:10–12): The queen mother advises Belshazzar to call for Daniel.
 - b. Daniel 5:10–12 (NASB95) *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. “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. “This was because an extraordinary*

¹⁵ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:8.

- 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.”*
- c. I wondered if this is Belshazzar’s mother—
 - d. **The queen who entered the banquet hall** was the Queen Mother, not the wife of King Belshazzar since all his wives were already present with him (cf. 5:3).¹⁶
 - e. **See Moody:** Daniel was approximately 80 years old at this point and was either retired or forgotten. **The Queen Mother, who was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, remembered Daniel’s extraordinary spirit** and his abilities to interpret **dreams**, explain **enigmas**, and solve **difficult problems** during her father’s reign. Therefore, she advised her son to call Daniel to **declare the interpretation** of the writing on the wall.¹⁷
 - f. **IVP BBC OT gives more info:** Nabonidus’s mother, Adad-Guppi, was a very influential person and the quintessential queen mother. Her 104 years, however, had come to a close about 546, so she was no longer alive at this time. Nabonidus’s wife, Belshazzar’s mother, identified by Herodotus as Nitocris, is more likely referred to here.¹⁸
 - g. Verse 11: “a spirit of the holy gods”
 - h. In the days of Nebuchadnezzar...
 - i. Illumination, insight, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods
 - j. Daniel was chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners
 - k. Verse 12:
 - l. An extraordinary spirit was upon him

cf. compare or consult

¹⁶ Michael A. Rydelnik, [“Daniel,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1294.

¹⁷ Michael A. Rydelnik, [“Daniel,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1294.

¹⁸ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:10.

- m. Knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems.
- n. Let him be summoned
- o. Again:
- p. *Daniel's Babylonian name, **Belteshazzar**, probably means "O Lady [wife of the god Bel], protect the king!" It is similar to Belshazzar, which means, "O Bel, protect the king!"*¹⁹

VI. The reward (5:13–16): The king offers to promote Daniel to the third highest position in the kingdom if he can interpret the writing.

- a. Daniel 5:13–16 (NASB95) **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? "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. "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. "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."*
- b. Verse 13: the king asks Daniel if he is one of the exiles from Judah...
- c. Verse 14: Review of what the queen had said regarding Daniel
- d. Verse 15: the wise men, the magicians, the conjurers could not interpret the message
- e. Verse 16: if you can interpret the message: you shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace hung around your neck and have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.
- f. Moody:
- g. *When Daniel was brought before the king, he did not demonstrate the same level of respect that he had consistently shown to Nebuchadnezzar. Instead, he rebuked Belshazzar for his brazen attitude and failure to learn from Nebuchadnezzar. Rather*

¹⁹ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1596.

*than remembering the lesson of humility before the God of Israel that his father had learned, Belshazzar had brazenly mocked the true God.*²⁰

- h. The refusal (5:17): Daniel spurns the bribe but offers to interpret the message without cost.
- i. Daniel 5:17 (NASB95) *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.*
- j. Don't we love this?
- k. Daniel would not care about the money.
- l. The rebuke (5:18–23): Daniel contrasts the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.
- m. Daniel 5:18–23 (NASB95) *"O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. 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. 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. 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.*
- VII. Lessons Nebuchadnezzar learned (5:18–21): He testified to God's sovereignty after being humbled by insanity.
 - a. Daniel goes back to the time of Nebuchadnezzar
 - b. Daniel has great respect for the gifts given to Nebuchadnezzar, but he credits them to God.
 - c. Verse 18- look at how he talks about Nebuchadnezzar:
 - d. Sovereignty
 - e. grandeur
 - f. Glory
 - g. Majesty

²⁰ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1294.

- h. Verse 19: Because of what God had given Nebuchadnezzar, the other nations feared him.
- i. Every language
- j. People lived or died based on his decision
- k. People were humbled or exalted based on his decision.
- l. Verse 20: Daniel moves to Nebuchadnezzar's pride leading to his lesson
- m. His heart was lifted up
- n. He was taken from his throne
- o. His glory was taken from him
- p. Verse 21:
- q. Nebuchadnezzar lives like an animal
- r. He had to recognize that the Most High is God and ruler over all the realm of mankind, and He sets over it whomever He wishes (Daniel 4:32ff)
- s. Verse 22: Daniel is direct
- t. Moody:
- u. *Daniel reviewed for Belshazzar that **the Most High God** had **granted sovereignty** to **Nebuchadnezzar**, Belshazzar's predecessor. Also, that God had humbled Nebuchadnezzar when **his spirit became ... proud** by afflicting him with boanthropy **until he recognized** the sovereignty of the God of Israel. Daniel reprimanded Belshazzar because he had not **humbled his heart, even though he knew all this.** According to ancient Babylonian texts, Belshazzar had served in the government of King Neriglissar (who ruled Babylon from 560–556 BC) in 560 BC indicating that he had been old enough to be aware of the events at the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life. Instead of learning to submit to the Almighty, he used the temple vessels to blaspheme God and so **exalted himself against the Lord of heaven.** The specific sins Daniel cited were pride, blasphemy, idolatry, and failure to glorify the true God. For*

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BC before Christ

*this reason, the **inscription was written** on the wall with a message of judgment and doom.*²¹

VIII. Lessons Belshazzar spurns (5:22–23): Although he knows history, he still chooses to defy and insult God!

- a. Daniel 5:22–23 (NASB95) 22 “Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, 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 all your ways, you have not glorified.
- b. Daniel challenges Belshazzar for not humbling himself
- c. Verse 23:
- d. Belshazzar has:
- e. Exalted himself against the Lord of Heaven
- f. Brought the vessels of the Lord’s house before himself, concubines, wives, nobles
- g. Drinking wine from them
- h. Praised the gods of silver, gold, wood, bronze, iron, and stone
- i. He hasn’t glorified the God in whose hands are your life and breath and ways.
 - i. → This is a strong statement. He did not glorify God.
 - ii. → He was worshipping false gods with the Lord’s treasure
 - iii. → all our ways are in God’s hands; this is true regardless of whether or not we realize it.
- j. Compare with Daniel 4:37: Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”²²
- k. The revelation (5:24–28): Daniel tells the king that his kingdom will be given to the Medes and Persians—and that he will soon die.

²¹ Michael A. Rydelnik, [“Daniel,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1294.

²² *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Da 4:37.

- l. Daniel 5:24–28 (NASB95) 24 “Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out. **25** “Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENĒ, MENĒ, TEKĒL, UPHARSIN.’ 26 “This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENĒ’—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. 27 “ ‘TEKĒL’—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. 28 “ ‘PERĒS’—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”
- m. Verse 24 is interesting:
- n. The hand was sent from Him—from the Lord
- o. Remember verse 5: The king saw part of the hand. It was a human hand- could this have been the preincarnate Jesus?

p. Daniel was prepared: 5:25-28

- q. Describes what was written
- r. *The words can be taken as verbs for weighing and assessing, or as nouns for the various weights that are used with the balance scales that were the ancient cash registers—necessary at every place of business. Archaeologists have discovered many such weights, sometimes inscribed with these Aramaic labels. Scales and weights were also used to depict divine evaluation and judgment (as in the Egyptian Book of the Dead). Daniel appears to have used both noun and verb forms in his interpretation. Wordplay was a common means used to interpret omens in this period. An example of this is Nabonidus’s interpretation of a lunar eclipse as a directive to install his daughter as a priestess.*²³
- s. Moody:
- t. The three words on the wall were Aramaic as follows: **MENE** (numbered), **TEKEL** (weighed) and **UPHARSIN** (divided). They indicated that Belshazzar’s days were numbered and his kingdom would come to an end, that his reign had been weighed and **found deficient**, and that Babylon would be **divided** among **the Medes and Persians**.
- u. *Although the third word was written on the wall in the plural form (**UPHARSIN**), Daniel explained its meaning by using the singular form (**PERES**). The prediction that Belshazzar’s kingdom has been divided does not indicate that the Babylonian Empire would be divided equally by two kingdoms (**Medes and Persians**) but rather that Babylon would be destroyed or dissolved and taken over by the Medo-Persian Empire. The third word on the wall (**UPHARSIN**) has the same letters as the Aramaic word for*

²³ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:25–28.

*"Persian," and was used as a play on words, indicating that the kingdom would fall to a Persian army.*²⁴

- v. Verse 26: Mene: God has numbered your kingdom and finished it.
- w. Verse 27: you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting
- x. Verse 28: Peres: Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians.
- y. → Daniel was bold to interpret and say this to the king. (See 1 Samuel 3:18)
- z. Isaiah 13:17 prophesies that Babylon will fall to the Medes;

Jeremiah 51:11 and 31:

Sharpen the arrows, fill the quivers!

The LORD has aroused the spirit of the kings of the Medes,

Because His purpose is against Babylon to destroy it;

For it is the vengeance of the LORD, vengeance for His temple.²⁵

Jeremiah 51:31-32:

One courier runs to meet another,
And one messenger to meet another,
To tell the king of Babylon
That his city has been captured from end *to end*;
32 The fords also have been seized,
And they have burned the marshes with fire,
And the men of war are terrified.²⁶

aa. The robing (5:29): In a futile attempt to escape God's judgment, the king clothes Daniel in purple and proclaims him third ruler in the kingdom.

bb. Daniel 5:29 (NASB95) **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.*

²⁴ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1294.

²⁵ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Je 51:11.

²⁶ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Je 51:31–32.

IX. The fall (5:30–31): That very night Darius the Mede enters Babylon, kills Belshazzar, and rules over the city.²⁷

- a. Daniel 5:30–31 (NASB95) **30** That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. **31** So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.
- b. NET:
- c. *The year was 539 B.C. At this time Daniel would have been approximately eighty-one years old. The relevant extra-biblical records describing the fall of Babylon include portions of Herodotus, Xenophon, Berossus (cited in Josephus), the Cyrus Cylinder, and the Babylonian Chronicle.*²⁸
- d. Moody:
- e. *Having lost a brief skirmish outside the walls of Babylon, Belshazzar had retreated to the city and made light of the coming Persian siege. The Babylonians had 20 years of provisions, and the city was a seemingly impregnable fortress. Nevertheless, Darius diverted the waters of the Euphrates and entered below the water gates. He took the city **that same night** without a battle and killed Belshazzar. Xenophon noted that the city fell while the Babylonians were in the midst of a drunken feast. The kingdom of Babylon fell just as foretold by Daniel in his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue (2:39). The head of gold (Babylon) had fallen and was replaced by the chest and arms of silver (Medo-Persia) (2:40).*²⁹
- f. IVP BBC OT:
- g. *There are several ancient traditions concerning the fall of Babylon represented in Persian and Greek sources. Herodotus (see sidebar on Esther 1) tells of a siege of Babylon by the Persians that ended when Cyrus diverted the Euphrates and sent a company inside the wall where the river had flowed through. Cyrus's account in the Cyrus Cylinder reports that Marduk allowed him to enter Babylon without a battle, where he was received as a liberator. The Chronicle of Nabonidus, a pro-Persian contemporary account, offers a similar view.*³⁰

Extra info:

The Archaeological Study Bible:

Darius the Mede

²⁷ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Da 5:1–31.

²⁸ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Da 5:30.

²⁹ Michael A. Rydelnik, [“Daniel,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1294.

³⁰ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:30.

DANIEL 6

Daniel 6 informs us that after the Persian conquest of Babylon, the city was ruled by a king called “Darius the Mede.” This statement poses a problem: There is no record of such an individual outside of the Bible — a fact that has brought the historicity and authorship of Daniel into question. Many believe that an unknown author wrote Daniel hundreds of years after the fall of Babylon and that the figure Darius the Mede, like most of Daniel, is pure fiction. But is it appropriate to patently dismiss Darius the Mede on the assumption that he never existed?

- Darius the Mede cannot be the Persian king known as Darius I, since this later Darius was the successor of Cyrus, not his predecessor. **Furthermore, Darius the Mede, who was purported to be sixty-two years old at the time of the fall of Babylon (5:31)**, was born in 601/600 B.C., whereas history indicates that Darius I only began to reign in 522 B.C. Those who believe that Daniel is not a historical book sometimes suggest that the author was simply confused about Persian history and thought that Darius I preceded Cyrus the Great. If this were the case, however, the author’s ignorance would truly be astounding; Cyrus the Great, the creator of the Persian Empire, is a prominent figure in the Old Testament. Also, Darius I is always presented as a Persian, but Darius the Mede is obviously asserted to be a Mede.
- Darius the Mede could have been Cyrus the Great. Daniel 6:28 might, according to this theory, be translated, “Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, that is, in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” Normally, however, this would be translated simply, “and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (emphasis added), as most versions render it. Though a possibility, this interpretation is not persuasive.
- **Darius the Mede could also have been a subordinate king appointed by Cyrus to rule over Babylon. The Hebrew of 9:1 supports this position, stating that Darius was made king, using a passive verb. Also, the Aramaic of Daniel 5:31 states that Darius “received the kingdom (NIV “took over the kingdom”).”** Normally an author would not speak of a conqueror “receiving” a kingdom. Thus, it may be conjectured that Darius the Mede was not a “king” of the same standing as Cyrus but rather a subordinate. It is important to note that the book of Daniel never refers to this Darius as the king either of Persia or of the Medes but simply as the ruler of Babylon. Darius the Mede’s personal name might have been Gubaru, that of a governor appointed by Cyrus. Gubaru is mentioned in cuneiform documents, including the Nabonidus Chronicles.

Extra info: IVP BBC OT:

A. Wolters has pointed out that the imagery of the scales may also find an astronomical connection to the constellation Libra, represented in Babylonian astronomy as scales. Babylon fell on the sixteenth of Tashritu (September-October), October 12 or 13, 539, so the banquet took place the evening of Tashritu 15/October 11 or 12. The Babylonians traditionally related the month of Tashritu to the constellation Libra, and the annual rising of Libra was associated in the manuals with the fifteenth of that month. This would have been well known to the astrologers of Babylon’s court, specialists in celestial divination, who were counted among the

*wise men. This would have importance since the Babylonians often sought linkage between classes of omens to confirm a message.*³¹

³¹ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 5:27.