

Daniel Chapter Five

- The “king” of Babylon is now Belshazzar [5:1].
 - After ruling over Babylon for 43 years, King Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C.
 - The kingdom experienced gradual decline, intrigue and even murder until 539 B.C. when the Medo-Persians conquered Babylon under Cyrus the Great.
 - Nebuchadnezzar’s son (Evil-merodach, Man of Marduk) ruled from 562-560 B.C. (2 Kings 25:27-30; Jer 52:31-34).
 - Neriglissar, Nebuchadnezzar’s son-in-law, murdered Evil-merodach in August of 560 B.C.
 - Neriglissar ruled Babylon until 556 B.C. and is referred to in Scripture as Nergal-sar-ezer (Jer 39:3, 13).
 - After Neriglissar died, his young son Labashi-Marduk took over, but ruled the kingdom for only two months because he was assassinated by Nabonidus.
 - Nabonidus ruled until 539 B.C. (17 years) and, to a degree, helped to restore Babylon to the greatness it had known under King Nebuchadnezzar.
 - Belshazzar was Nabonidus’ eldest son and was appointed by his father as his co-regent.
 - Nabonidus was absent from the kingdom for 10 of the 17 years he reigned (conquests, lived in Arabia) which explains why Belshazzar was referred to as the king.
 - Nebuchadnezzar is called Belshazzar’s “father” in this chapter [5:2, 11, 13, 18, 22] even though he is not Belshazzar’s biological father.
 - It is quite possible that Belshazzar’s mother was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, making him a grandson.
 - It is also possible that this term is used to refer to the succession of the throne (this was quite common in ancient times) and has nothing to do with ancestry.
- Belshazzar was holding a massive feast [5:1]. He was arrogantly “partying down” while the Medo-Persian army was attacking Babylon because...
 - The walls of Babylon were far too massive to be breached.
 - 20 years of food was stored within these walls.
 - A river flowed through the city providing a constant water supply.
- He used the holy vessels which had been taken from the Hebrew temple as drinking glasses [5:2-4].
- God interrupted the festive proceedings by manifesting His “hand” before everyone present and writing a message on the wall [5:5].
- Belshazzar got scared, summoned his “cabinet” of spiritual advisors and promised that anyone who could interpret the message would be made triumvir (third ruler) of the kingdom [5:6-7].

- Belshazzar’s advisors were unable to make sense of the inscription on the wall [5:8].
- Belshazzar completely panicked at this point [5:9].
- The queen (most likely his mother) entered and advised Belshazzar to call Daniel since she knew of what he had done for Nebuchadnezzar [5:10-12].
- Daniel was brought before the king who explained the situation and offered the same reward to Daniel that he had offered his “cabinet” [5:13-16].
- Daniel graciously rejected the offer, but agreed to interpret the writings for Belshazzar [5:17].
- Daniel witnessed to Belshazzar by making sure he knew that the Most High God had granted King Nebuchadnezzar his authority [5:18-19].
- Daniel reminded Belshazzar of Nebuchadnezzar’s mistakes so that he might learn from them [5:20-23].
- Daniel then addressed the inscription [5:24-25].
 - The inscription read מְנֵא מְנֵא תִּקֵּל וּפְרָסִין (Mene, Mene, Teqel, Upharsin (from Perēs) [5:25].
 - Literally: numbered, numbered, weighed & divided.
- Daniel then interpreted the inscription [5:26-28].
 - Numbered – God has numbered the days of your kingdom and they have expired [5:26].
 - Weighed – God has weighed your service as steward and has found you to be deficient [5:27].
 - Divided – God has taken your sovereignty away from you and divided your kingdom up between the Medes and Persians [5:28].
- Belshazzar ignored Daniel’s wishes and promoted him to the position of triumvir [5:29].
- The fulfillment of Daniel’s interpretation did not take very long to come to pass as Belshazzar was killed that very night [5:30].
- Verse 31 of chapter 5 in our English Bible is actually verse 1 of chapter 6 in the Hebrew text, so we will examine the appointment of Darius the Mede as king of Babylon in our study of Daniel Chapter 6.