

## I. The Writing on the Wall (Daniel 5:1-31)

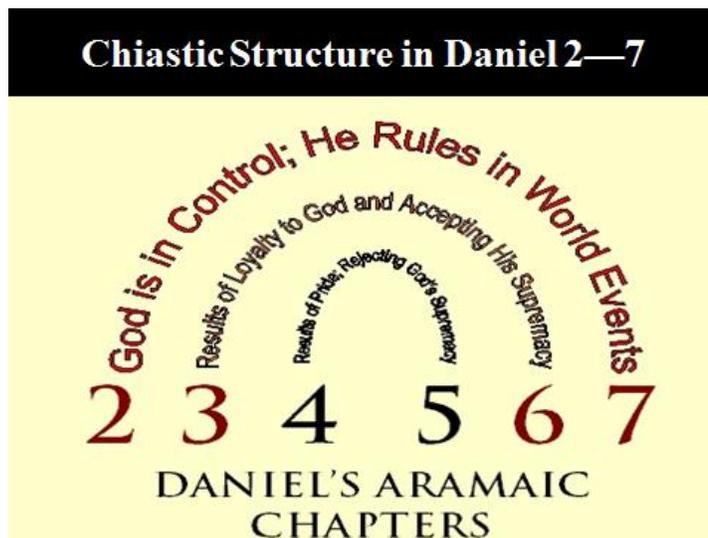
### A. Introduction

Daniel was written to the nation of Judah in captivity to encourage them that God would bring the promised Messianic Kingdom in the future and to exhort them to live faithfully until then. These are the twin purposes of the book: 1) To reveal God's prophetic program for the Gentile nations and the Jewish people in the future (2, 4, 5, 7-8, 10-12); 2) To show how God's people are to live in a godless society in the present (1, 3, 6, 9).

The structure:

- Daniel 2-7 (Aramaic) – the Prophetic History of the Times of the Gentiles
- Daniel 8-12 (Hebrew) – the Prophetic History of Israel During the Times of the Gentiles

Daniel 4 and 5 are parallel chapters in that they both show the results of pride and how God deals with those who reject His sovereignty.



In Daniel 4, God humbled Nebuchadnezzar because of his pride, arrogance, and unwillingness to acknowledge the Most High God. He was made like an animal for seven years until he came to recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes (4:17, 25, 32). Nebuchadnezzar was forced to conclude that God's dominion is an everlasting dominion and His kingdom endures from generation to generation (4:3, 34). In short, Nebuchadnezzar, learned the hard way that God is sovereign over the nations and humbles those who walk in pride.

This same message is repeated in Daniel 5 which provides an eyewitness account of the final night of the Babylonian empire. The setting of the entire chapter is that one night when God overthrew the nation of Babylon and ushered in a new world power – the Medes and the

Persians. This reality would have comforted the fearful Israelites in exile with the message that their sovereign God can bring down even the mightiest nation.

## B. Expository Notes

### 1. The Debauchery of Belshazzar (vs. 1-4)

*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.*

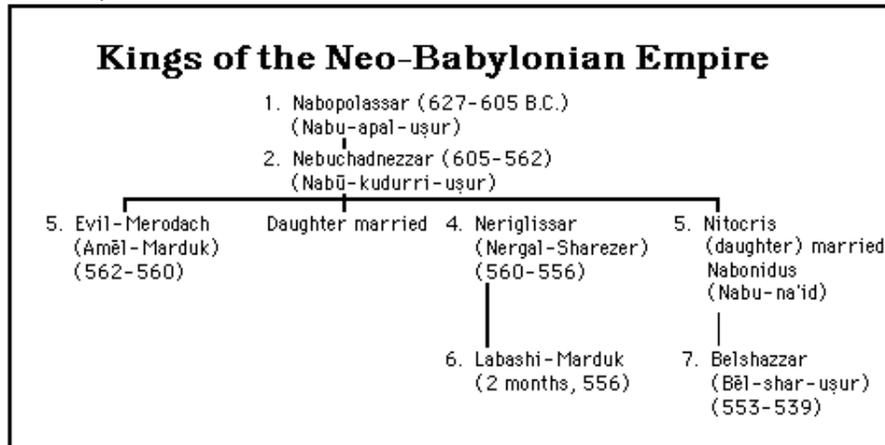
- As this chapter opens, Belshazzar (not to be confused with Daniel who was renamed Belteshazzar) was throwing a massive party in Babylon.
- This scene takes place about 30 years after God humbled Nebuchadnezzar at the end of Daniel 4.
- Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years (605 BC – 562 BC) and was succeeded by a number of successors to the Babylonian throne, none of whom matched Nebuchadnezzar's exploits.
- A number of significant events occurred between Daniel 4 and 5 which contributed to the scene in Daniel 5.
- Nebuchadnezzar had a son named Evil-Merodach (aka Amel-Marduk) who succeeded him on the throne but ruled for only two years (562-560 BC).
- He is mentioned by name in 2 Kings 25:27-30.
- He was murdered in August 560 BC by Neriglissar, Nebuchadnezzar's son-in-law and Evil-Merodach's own brother-in-law.
- Neriglissar ascended the throne in Babylon by assassinating Evil-Merodach; he ruled for four years (560-556 BC).
- Neriglissar was succeeded by his young son Labashi-Marduk who ruled for only two months (May-June 556 BC).
- Labashi-Marduk was assassinated by a group of conspirators who appointed Nabonidus to be king of Babylon.
- Nabonidus was married to Nitocris, one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters.
- Nabonidus had no direct family connection with the Babylonian royal family; he was not royalty but he married into the royal line.
- It is not known if Belshazzar was the son of Nitocris whom Nabonidus married and, in doing so, adopted Belshazzar or if Belshazzar was their son together.
- Regardless, Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus, making him the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.

- For many years, skeptical scholars believed that Belshazzar was a fictional individual invented by the author of the book.
- They believed that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon so Belshazzar must have been an imaginary character.
- But in the mid- to late-1800's, archaeologists discovered the Nabonidus Cylinders, five clay cylinders with inscriptions on them which describe the works of Nabonidus.
- They describe some of his building exploits, how he repaired three temples, and how he repaired a ziggurat.
- Notably, one of the inscriptions on one of the cylinders mentions Belshazzar, his son: "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."
- Such archeological evidence demonstrates that Belshazzar was indeed a historical figure who served as coregent of Babylon with Nabonidus.
- Nabonidus became king of Babylon in 556 BC and reigned for 17 years, until 539 BC.
- Of all the successors of Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus was probably the most capable king, doing much to restore the glory that had belonged to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar and which had faded since his death.
- His mother-in-law was the high-priestess of the moon god Sin at Haran whose temple he restored.
- He was very religious and even excavated and restored abandoned temples.
- He was more committed to the god Sin than the Babylonian god Marduk which caused problems for him with the Babylonian clergy and religious leaders.
- He even sought to replace Marduk with Sin.
- Perhaps this contributed to the fact that for 14 of his 17-year reign, he was away from Babylon in Arabia, not even visiting the capital during that time.
- Because of being absent from Babylon for many years, he appointed his son, Belshazzar, as a co-regent of Babylon.
- Although Nabonidus was the acting king, Belshazzar was the de facto king of Babylon.
- Thus, Nabonidus ruled Babylonia 556-539 BC (17 years) and Belshazzar his oldest son was co-regent from 553-539 BC (14 years).
- (See verses 7, 16, 29 which show that there were two rulers over Babylon at this time).
- Notably, Nabonidus is not referred to by name in this chapter.
- "The obvious reason that the relationship with Nebuchadnezzar is stressed (and that of Nabonidus omitted) is that only Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar are germane to

the story. Belshazzar should have learned the lesson of humility and submission to Israel’s God from the episode in the life of Nebuchadnezzar (not Nabonidus).”<sup>127</sup>

- NOTE: Nebuchadnezzar is often referred to as Belshazzar’s father in this chapter (vs. 2, 11 [3x], 13, 18) but he was actually his grandfather.
- There was no word in Aramaic for “grandfather” or “grandson,” so Nebuchadnezzar is simply referred to as his “father.”
- He was also Belshazzar’s father in the sense that he was his ancestor or predecessor.

BKC [OT] p. 1326)



- At the time of the events in Daniel 5, the Medo-Persian army was besieging Babylon.
- On October 10, 539 BC, Nabonidus was defeated at Sippar and fled to Borsippa being pursued by Cyrus’ troops.
- The Medes and the Persians continued to march their way through Babylon and soon the city of Babylon was under siege by thousands of Medo-Persian troops.
- Specifically, the events that take place in this chapter occurred on October 12, 539, just two days after Nabonidus was defeated.
- On that day, verse 1 indicates that Belshazzar held a “great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.”
- This was a massive party, probably held in one of Nebuchadnezzar’s palaces.
- Archaeologists have excavated a large hall in Babylon that is 55 feet wide and 165 feet long (9,000 square feet), large enough to house a gathering of this size, complete with a white plastered wall.
- “In Assyria, Babylon, and Persia great banquets were considered to be an important means of demonstrating the glory of kings. When Ashurnasirpal II dedicated his new capital city of Calah in 879 BC, he claimed to have 69,574 guests at a banquet.

<sup>127</sup> Miller 1994: 150.

Persian monarchs frequently had as many as 15,000 guests at daily feasts. There were 10,000 guests at the marriage feast of Alexander the Great.”<sup>128</sup>

- “‘Drank’ is a rendering of an Aramaic participle (*sateh*) that in this context probably carries the idea of continuous drinking. The king’s actions encouraged those attending the party to participate in consumption of the wine, and it may safely be assumed that within a short period the king and his guests were well on their way to inebriation. With inhibitions relaxed, the affair probably degenerated into a drunken orgy.”<sup>129</sup>
- Why would Belshazzar throw a party at the time the city was on the brink of being captured?
- Perhaps it was to allay the people’s fear about the Medo-Persians, to boost their morale, and to alleviate their anxiety about the enemy outside the very walls of the city. It may have meant to inspire courage in the leaders and boost their pride in their defensive strength by showing Belshazzar’s own bravado.
- Perhaps it was because they sought to honor their gods and enlist their aid against the besieging army.
- Perhaps it was because he felt invincible and had little cause for concern, knowing that the city had enough supplies to sustain it for 20 years and that a continual supply of water was provided by the Euphrates River which flowed right through the city.
- Perhaps it was because he had a false sense of security from the structures constructed around the city to fortify it – a water-filled moat, double walls, an inner wall which was 21 feet thick and reinforced with defense towers every 60 feet.
- But little did Belshazzar know that the city was in imminent danger of falling at that very moment.

*Daniel 5:2-4 ~ 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. 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. 4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.*

- The party that Belshazzar threw was a grand one, with copious amounts of wine.
- In a state of intoxication, Belshazzar added a level of blasphemy to this bash by ordering the vessels stolen from the temple in Jerusalem to be brought out and filled with wine (vs. 2), committing a great act of sacrilege.
- When Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah 50 years earlier, he took sacred vessels from the house of God and carried them back to the temple of the Babylonian god, Bel-Merodach (see 1:2) where they remained until this evening.

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<sup>128</sup> Whitcomb 1985: 73.

<sup>129</sup> Miller 1994: 151.

- Bringing back the artifacts of worship from the defeated country was done by the conquering king to show the impotence of that god to defend his people.
- Ezra 1:9-11 indicates that there were 30 gold dishes, 1,000 silver dishes, 30 gold bowls, 410 silver bowls, and 1,000 other articles, totaling 5,400 vessels in Babylon that were taken from the temple in Jerusalem.
- Belshazzar ordered some of these brought and used in the celebration (vs. 3-4).
- While it may seem harmless to drink wine from the temple vessels, it was a great sacrilege, an act of desecration, blasphemy, and open defiance against the God of Israel.
- Contempt for God's things is the same as contempt for God himself.
- Thus, this amounted to a profane, blasphemous act by Belshazzar.
- That Belshazzar intended to blaspheme the Most High God is evident from verses 4 and 23.
- To use those vessels in that manner in that kind of environment was the height of desecration.
- Belshazzar wanted nothing to do with the God of the Jews.
- He knew how the God of Israel had made Nebuchadnezzar a raving maniac for seven years.
- He knew how the God of Israel had been able to reveal dreams and visions through Daniel.
- He knew the God of Israel was a great and glorious God.
- But he had no regard for God; he and his leaders honored their gods, exalting them above the God of Israel.
- This entire party was a challenge to the true and living God who was being insulted and belittled.
- He thumbed his nose at God by not only desecrating the temple vessels but by combining such blasphemy with idolatry (vs. 4).
- He used God's holy vessels to toast the lifeless idols of his false religion.
- "Toasts were offered to the pagan gods of Babylon represented by idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone."<sup>130</sup>
- "[L]ikely on the evening in question Belshazzar desecrated the holy objects of other nations as well as those of Israel in an attempt to demonstrate the superiority of the gods of Babylon over the deities of the nations. This would have been an act of propaganda intended to bolster the confidence of his citizens in light of the presence of the Medo-Persian armies outside of the city walls. Belshazzar is assuring his subjects that the gods of Babylon, and he as their earthly representative, were capable of protecting them."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 154.

## 2. The Destruction of Belshazzar (vs. 5-31)

*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.*

- It didn't take long to figure out how God would treat those who mock Him.
- The hand of God (most likely God Himself since God is a spirit and has no body) suddenly appeared and wrote on the wall where the king could see it clearly.
- It is nearly impossible to imagine this scene – suddenly in the midst of this massive party, near one of the lampstands that illuminated the banquet hall, fingers of a human hand wrote on the plastered wall.
- It would have been clearly visible being by the lampstands.
- The white plaster walls would have highlighted the inscription.
- The revelry of Belshazzar's party came to a screeching halt and everyone stopped in their tracks.
- Belshazzar would have understood this as something supernatural.



*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 knocking together.*

- The scene must have been a shocking one. The king saw the hand writing on the wall. Others saw it. Eventually all heads turned to see it. The drinking stopped. The singing stopped. The room which had been drowned with noise became deathly silent.
- Perhaps some in the room made the immediate connection between the handwriting on the wall and the blasphemous act of drinking from God's holy vessels.
- So shocking was it that Belshazzar, having stood to see what was happening, fell to his knees.

- The blood drained from his face and he went white as a ghost.
- His knees knocked together in terror.
- His “hip joints went slack.” Literally, the phrase is “the knots of his loins were loosened” and some commentators think that he actually soiled his pants.
- He was utterly shaken, emotionally and physically; he was totally undone by this experience.
- “The clear sight and sheer spookiness of those writing fingers produced paralyzing terror.”<sup>132</sup>
- A moment before, the drunken king felt brave enough to hurl insults in the face of the living God, but with a flick of the hand, he was reduced to a quivering mass of terror.
- Although he could not read the words of the inscription, he knew that it must mean bad news.

*Daniel 5:7-9 ~ 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.” 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. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.*

- In panic, Belshazzar summoned his advisors.
- “‘Called out’ is a participle but used as a narrative sense and is usually accompanied by the verb ‘to be’ to indicate continuous action. The Aramaic adds that the king called out ‘with strength’...meaning ‘loudly.’ Evidently Belshazzar was screaming for his ‘wise men.’”<sup>133</sup>
- He promised to reward them if they could interpret the handwriting on the wall (vs. 7).
- But he ran into the same problem as Nebuchadnezzar did (vs. 8).
- Not only could they not interpret it, they could not even read it.
- Although it was written in Aramaic, the common language of the day, they were not able to read it.
- It is likely that, though they might have understood the words, its meaning was unknown to them.
- This only leads to the king’s terror, fear, and consternation (vs. 9).

*Daniel 5:10-12 ~ 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. 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. 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 Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation.”*

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<sup>132</sup> Davis 2013: 74.

<sup>133</sup> Miller 1994: 156.

- Once again the stage was set for God’s man, Daniel, to enter the scene and he did so at the suggestion of the queen.
- Although the queen might have been a wife of Belshazzar, that is unlikely since his wives were with him in the banquet hall for the party (cf. vs. 2).
- Most likely, she was either the king’s mother or possibly even his grandmother.
- If his grandmother, she would have been a surviving wife of Nebuchadnezzar, possibly Amytis, the one he built the Hanging Gardens for.
- More likely, she was Belshazzar’s mother, king Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter, Nitocris, the one who married Nabonidus.
- In the ancient world, the queen mother had a great deal of authority, a fact clearly evident here in that she entered the hall uninvited and spoke directly to the king.
- Clearly, she knew about Daniel’s character, his integrity, his wisdom from God, and his ability to interpret dreams.
- If she is Nitocris, Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter, she would have grown up seeing Daniel’s ministry firsthand and would clearly remember his ability to interpret such events.
- “The fact that the queen twice referred to the prophet by his personal Hebrew name, Daniel, may indicate an intimate knowledge of the man.”<sup>134</sup>
- She used a number of descriptive adjectives to affirm Daniel (vs. 11-12).
- Twenty three years have passed since Nebuchadnezzar’s death and, by this time, Daniel would have been about 80 years old.
- Daniel was possibly relegated to a minor role and moved from his high position to some lesser one with the change of administration. This would explain why Belshazzar does not himself think of him or seem to know him (vs. 13).
- But Daniel was still in some aspect involved in the king’s business.
- Possibly he was no longer over the wise men as in 4:9 (“chief of the magicians”) but in some other governmental post.

***Daniel 5:13-16 ~ 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? 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. 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. 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.”***

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 160.

- Belshazzar doesn't seem to be that excited to talk to Daniel whom he referred to as "one of the Jewish exiles."
- After mocking the God of the Jews, he apparently was not too happy about calling a Jew to solve his predicament.
- The irony is evident – Daniel is the only one who can help Belshazzar and yet he was one of the captives from Judah, a servant of the God whom Belshazzar had spent the night mocking.
- Daniel was Belshazzar's last resort but in his highly agitated state, he was willing to call anyone who might help him.

*Daniel 5:17-28*

- Daniel addressed the king and didn't mince his words.
  - He wanted nothing to do with the gifts and rewards the king offered (vs. 17).
  - Godly people can't be bought and men/women of character are not swayed by offers of materialism.
- Daniel confronted Belshazzar's pride by showing him how different he was from his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar (vs. 18-21).
  - Nebuchadnezzar didn't acknowledge that God was sovereign and ruled over nations and appointed kings according to His own will.
  - He failed to acknowledge the fact that he was brought to his position of power by divine appointment (vs. 20).
  - So, God humbled him and stripped him of his throne while he lived like an animal (vs. 20).
  - As a result, he came to see that "the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that he sets over it whomever he wishes" (vs. 21).
  - He admitted his pride and arrogance and submitted himself to the Most High God.
- But not Belshazzar (vs. 22-23); he refused to humble himself before God.
  - Daniel confronted him on four levels, evident in the "you have" statements:
    1. Vs. 22 ~ Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this.
      - That's prideful arrogance!
      - Even though Beshazzar knew what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, he failed to take them seriously for himself.
    2. Vs. 23a ~ 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.
      - That's profane sacrilege!

- ““It was a sign indeed that he believed that this God, whose vessels he was abusing and whose name he was insulting, had now in Babylon no reality or power. Belshazzar had counted him out’...Belshazzar’s demeaning of Yahweh’s vessels was his way of demeaning Yahweh.”<sup>135</sup>
3. Vs. 23b ~ and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand.
    - That’s pagan sacrifice!
    - He praised lifeless gods but failed to honor the living God.
  4. Vs. 23c-24 ~ But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified. Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.
    - That’s personal glory!
    - Perhaps Daniel intended an interesting wordplay by adding that God, who held Belshazzar’s life in His hand, sent a hand to write him a message.
- Belshazzar knew what Nebuchadnezzar had experienced and should have learned from it.
  - However, Belshazzar had not done so; in fact, he openly challenged the Most High God.
  - This taught Belshazzar that he had the opportunity to humble himself but he had been proud.
  - “Therefore his judgment and doom were sealed. No pardon was available at all...for his conscience had become hopelessly seared, and his heart was judicially hardened.”<sup>136</sup>
  - While the king’s advisors could not read or interpret the handwriting, Daniel could (vs. 25).
  - Just as God had judged Nebuchadnezzar’s pride by removing him from the throne, He would do the same to Belshazzar by taking his kingdom away and giving it to another people.
  - This pronouncement of judgment was written in the words which the hand had written on the wall.
  - The message, written in Aramaic, contained only 3 words, the first of which was repeated twice for emphasis.
  - “[N]o vowels were included in the mysterious inscription, so that it probably appeared like this: MN’MN’TKLPRS (except that it would have been written from right to left as in Hebrew). So terse and enigmatic is this arrangement of words, that

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<sup>135</sup> Davis 2013: 74.

<sup>136</sup> Whitcomb 1985, 77.

it is little wonder that the Babylonian wise men could not interpret it, even if they did understand Aramaic.”<sup>137</sup>

- Each of these Aramaic verbs is in the perfect tense indicating that the matter had already and firmly been decided by God.
- The interpretation (vs. 26-28):

MENE, MENE – a noun referring to a weight of 50 shekels (a *mina*, equal to 1.25 pounds); from the verb *menah* which means “to number, to reckon.” The meaning: “God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it” (vs. 26).

TEKEL – a noun referring to a shekel (2/5 of an ounce); from the verb *teqal* which means “to weigh.” The meaning: “you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient” (vs. 27).

- With God’s standard on one side and Belshazzar on the other, he is shown to come up short and to be a spiritual lightweight.
- He did not measure up to God’s standard of righteousness.
- cf. 1 Sam 2:3; Psalm 62:9; Prov 16:2.

UPHARSIN – a noun referring to half a mina (25 shekels, equal to about 2/3 of a pound); from the verb *peras* which means “to break in two, to divide.” The meaning: “your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians” (vs. 28).

- In interpreting the third word, Daniel changed the plural (*parsin* – vs. 25) to the singular (*peres* – vs. 28).
  - Daniel apparently intended a play on words (the word *peres* contains the same consonants as the word “Persia”).
  - God was not just saying “your kingdom will be divided up” but “your kingdom will be Persianized.”
  - In other words, God would bring Babylon to an end through the Persians.
- “The inscription was an announcement of the divine evaluation of Belshazzar’s reign and a pronouncement of imminent judgment.”<sup>138</sup>
  - This is the literal message: Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided!
  - Or in the modern vernacular:
    - MENE MENE = Your number is up!
    - TEKEL = You don’t measure up!
    - UPHARSIN/PERES = You will be divided up!

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>138</sup> Miller 1994: 165.

*Daniel 5:29-30 ~ 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. 30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.*

- Daniel was rewarded and exalted (vs. 29).
- God wasted no time in carrying out His judgment against Belshazzar (vs. 30).
- That very night Belshazzar was killed and Babylon fell, taken over by the Medes and Persians.
- It was on October 12, 539 BC that the most powerful nation in the world came to an end.
- History (Herodotus and Xenophon) fills in the details: The Medes and the Persians built a dam or canal on the Euphrates River which flowed under the wall and through the city.
- The dam/canal diverted the river into a marsh which allowed the water level in the river to fall.
- The Medes and the Persians were able to infiltrate the city by surprise using the riverbed.
- They sneaked in, sang songs as if reveling with the Babylonians, and made their way undetected into the banquet palace.
- Once inside, they killed the guards and threw open the gates which enabled the whole Medo-Persian to take over the city without a battle.
- They assassinated king Belshazzar and conquered the city in one night.
- Cyrus entered the city on October 29, 539 BC according to the Nabonidus Chronicle.

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

### C. Theological Notes

#### 1. The Seriousness of Human Pride and Arrogance

- God always levels human arrogance because He is always opposed to the proud (Jam 4:6).
- Such pride is often evident in expressions of self-reliance and self-sufficiency as was the case with Belshazzar.
- God hates pride in all its forms in both unbelievers and believers.

#### 2. God Will Not be Mocked by Those Who Rebel Against Him

- Belshazzar illustrates the folly of any life not founded on the true God.
- Those who thumb their noses at God may, for a time, think they are exempt from His wrath and judgment; however, He will always deal severely with those who blaspheme Him, sometimes abruptly (cf. Luke 12:20; Gal 6:7-8).

3. The Presence of Signposts Which Point to the Death of a Nation
  - When a nation and its leaders become characterized by drunkenness, immorality, blasphemy, and idolatry, it indicates the nation is on the downgrade.
  - Belshazzar's shameless expressions of pride depict these steps in a nation's downfall:
    - a. Proudful arrogance – willful rejection of God
    - b. Profane sacrilege – blaspheming God by treading on His glory
    - c. Pagan sacrifice – engaging in idolatry
    - d. Personal glory – all done for self
4. The Faithfulness of God to His Word
  - It was prophesied that Babylon would fall and that's exactly what happened (Is 21:1-10; Jer 51:39, 57).
  - God keeps His promises, both promises to bless and promises to judge.
5. The Importance of Personal Integrity
  - Daniel's reputation preceded him – he was known for his character, his confidence in God, and his commitment to stand firm in the midst of great opposition and persecution.
  - Such should be true for all believers (Prov 10:7; 22:1).
  - It has been said that man honors the famous and soon forgets them but God honors the unknown and never forgets them.

#### D. Preaching Helps

1. Todd's Outline

The Wild Party (vs. 1-4)

The Horrifying Inscription (vs. 5-9)

The Faithful Daniel (vs. 10-16)

The Humbling Interpretation (vs. 17-29)

The Devastating Judgment (vs. 30-31)