

DANIEL – CHAPTER 5  
HISTORICAL NOTES

1. Almost 70 years have passed from chapter 1 to chapter 5.
2. Remember: Daniel and his 3 friends were taken to Babylon in the “year of ascension” of Nebuchadnezzar.  
He reigned from 605 BC to 562 BC or 43 years.
3. Upon his death, his son, Evil-Merodach, reigned for 2 years.  
Jer 52:31-34
4. Evil-Merodach was assassinated by Neriglissar, his brother-in-law, who reigned for 4 years, Jer 39:1-10.  
He was enthroned in August of 560 BC.
5. Neriglissar was succeeded in 556 BC by his son, Labashi-Marduk, who was assassinated that same year by a group that included Nabonidus, who was made king.  
Nabonidus reigned for 17 years.
6. Nabonidus left Babylon under his son’s co-regency.  
His son was named Belshazzar.  
Nabonidus was defeated outside Babylon by Cyrus the Persian.  
He was allowed to live in Carmania until the time of his death but he was never allowed to return to Babylon.
7. Daniel chapter 5 records, not only the defeat of Belshazzar, but also the destruction of Babylon (the head of gold).  
Belshazzar is killed by Darius the Mede.  
The next great Gentile empire is the Medo-Persian empire.

*DANIEL – CHAPTER 5 continued*

8. No extra-biblical evidence existed mentioning Belshazzar before AD 1958-60.

Archaeologists discovered a Babylonian cylinder which lists him as an officer of Neriglissar.

No apologies from the disbelievers; they just move on to other evidence, or lack of it that would seem to support their unbelief.

9. The term "father" can mean a predecessor on the throne, or in this case it may indicate that Belshazzar's mother, the wife of Nabonidus, was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.

10. For us, we do not wait for archeologists to confirm the Bible. When you have an historical record given to us by God, it does the teaching.



Verses 1-4 Belshazzar's feast in honor of the gods of Babylon

Note: Daniel, chapter 7 and chapter 8 occur chronologically about 12 years before the event of chapter 5.

This represents the time when Belshazzar was set up as co-regent because of his father's departure from Babylon.

The Setting of this drinking party is interesting:

1. The whole surrounding territory outside the city of Babylon had already been conquered by the Medes and the Persians.
2. Only Babylon, with its massive walls and fortifications remained intact.

3. Food and wine still filled the storehouses of the great city.

*DANIEL – CHAPTER 5 continued*

4. As an act of assurance that the gods of Babylon could not be defeated by other gods, Belshazzar mocks the God of Israel.

Quoting from Walvoord's Commentary on Daniel:

“According to Herodotus, Babylon was  
about fourteen miles square,  
with great outer walls, 87 feet thick and 350 feet high;  
with a hundred great bronze gates in the walls.

A system of inner and outer walls made the city very secure.  
So broad and strong were the walls that chariots four abreast  
could parade around its top.

Herodotus pictures hundreds of towers at appropriate  
intervals, reaching another 100 feet into the air, above  
the top of the wall.”

(Modern critics believe that Herodotus exaggerated. Even if he  
did, the city must have been impressive!)

The Euphrates River flowed through the city, which became the  
weakness which caused its destruction.

5. It would appear that the vessels of the Temple had been kept in  
storage, without use for the past 70 years.

Verses 5-9 The Handwriting on the Wall

With Nabonidus being the first ruler (absent) as king, and  
Belshazzar (co-regent) being the second ruler; offering anyone

the place of third ruler fits.

No one could help with either the writing or its interpretation

*DANIEL – CHAPTER 5 continued*

Verses 10-12 The Queen remembers a man named Daniel  
Having already seen the number of times that the kingdom  
had changed kings, its understandable why so many would  
have forgotten Daniel.

Vs 11 The Queen describes Daniel as the one in whom:

1. a spirit of the holy gods resides
2. illumination – enlightenment
3. insight – understanding
4. wisdom – the wisdom of gods; knows what to do with his knowledge

1. Nebuchadnezzar had made him master or chief of his wise men, which in itself, was a remarkable position for one who is not a Chaldean.

Verses 13-16 Daniel is called before the king  
When brought in to the king, the king makes sure that what he's been told  
by the queen is accurate.

The setting: Here is Daniel, in his 80's, a "prophet" of the God  
of Israel, standing in the presence of drunk  
Babylonians, who have been praising their gods of  
stone, metal, and wood. Isa 40:18-31.

Note: Daniel has lived for 70 years with no Temple, Levite,  
support, in the midst of wealth and pagan worship.

He is the same Daniel who had arrived, 70 yrs before.

*DANIEL – CHAPTER 5 continued*

Verses 17-23 Daniel rebukes Belshazzar (just as he did  
Nebuchadnezzar – Dan 4:27)

Daniel's service to both his God and the authority which his God had placed over him is not for sale.

Daniel's attitude relating to Belshazzar is different than it was to other kings. Dan 4:19; 6:21

That which set Belshazzar apart is the disrespect he had shown to the God of Israel. Dan 5:3-4

Daniel's answer, reasons as follows:

1. God – the God of Israel – gave Nebuchadnezzar his great kingdom and the honor that went with it. vs 18
2. Daniel describes graphically how great he was. vs 19
3. He lost his kingdom and honor for awhile because of the pride it had produced in him.  
He forgot Who sets up and Who takes down.  
Dan 4:17, 24-25. vs 20-21
4. The application is clear to Belshazzar. vs 22-23

Verses 24-28 Daniel interprets the writing  
Numbered  
Weighed

## Divided

Herodotus, quoted again, records that the city of Babylon was entered by diverting the Euphrates River, having soldiers move in to the city by moving down the river bed and then unlocking the gates from the inside so that the remaining troops could enter the city and upon entering they found the rulers in a drunken condition at a festival on Oct 11 or 12, 539 BC.

## *DANIEL – CHAPTER 5 continued*

Vs 29-30     Both God and Belshazzar followed through on their promise that night!

Vs 31         Historical Note: Darius the Mede is probably an alternative name for Cyrus the Persian.  
Dan 6:28 can also be translated “Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”  
To date, there has been no other historical reference found to “Darius the Mede”.

