

Daniel Chapter 5 chronicles the fall of one of the wealthiest world empires to have existed upon the earth. This empire like all others that have fallen, found themselves after a time of reckless sinfulness, outside of God's grace and thus illustrating, that righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach that leads to destruction (Proverbs 14:34). The fall of the Babylonian Empire in one night however, remains a marvel to historians. Yet, for students of Bible prophecy, the details of this event, spoken nearly one hundred years before its occurrence, confirm the wisdom and power of God to orchestrate world events! The book of Daniel in its entirety, accompanied by the testimony of other Bible prophets, guarantees God's prophecies for the future. Through its revelations, we are given assurance that God knows the end from the beginning and that His words are true (Isa 46:10)!

Belshazzar, grandson of the powerful King Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 27:5-7), held a feast for a thousand of his lords over the course of several nights in 539B.C. In arrogance and prideful confidence of Babylon's seemingly impenetrable walls, the drunken feast that spread throughout the city, was held despite imminent threats of besiegement by the combined forces of Mede and Persian armies.



Q: *While entertaining his lords, wives, and concubines, what did Belshazzar request be brought to the party and for what purpose?*

A: Belshazzar summoned the sacred vessels that His grandfather had taken from God's temple in Jerusalem. Once consecrated to the service of the Lord, the vessels were brought from the treasury to be used in the idolatrous feast.

Q: *What sins had Belshazzar committed by using the vessels hallowed to the God of the Jews?*

A: Read: Exodus 40:9; 1 Chronicles 28:11-18; 2 Chronicles 36:10, 17-21; Ezekiel 22:26; Habakkuk 1:11; 2 Timothy 2:20, 21; John 10:33.

Belshazzar blasphemously sought to use the articles that were sacred and consecrated to God, for common purposes. Further, in contempt of God, he worshipped idols of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and stone, ascribing his life and prosperity to them.

In response to this contemptuous act, God sent a bloodless hand, the *finger of God* (Consider Luke 11:20; Matthew 12:28; Exodus 31:18), to write upon the court walls a message to the proud king and his subjects.



Q: *How does the Bible describe Belshazzar's response to the distressing sight?*

A: *"Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."* Dan 5:6

Q: *After summoning the Babylonian magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers who proved incapable of interpreting the handwriting on the wall; who was Belshazzar then instructed to call and by whom was he counseled?*

A: The Queen Mother, most likely Belshazzar's mother, reminded him of Daniel the Prophet, *"in whom [is] the spirit of the holy gods."* She reminded him that his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, had appointed Daniel master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans and soothsayers, the wise men of Babylon, *"Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel"* Daniel 5:11, 12

Then an old man, Daniel was summoned to give the interpretation of the handwriting to the king.

Q: *Describe the manner in which Belshazzar addressed Daniel: "Art thou that Daniel, which [art] of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?" Daniel 5:13*



A: In utter contempt of Daniel, his people, and Daniel's God, Belshazzar inquired if Daniel was from among the enslaved captives that his grandfather delivered from Jewish indoctrination. Belshazzar was obviously unaware of the danger he faced, yet he still requested Daniel's services.

Q: *Notice Daniel's response to the king's offer of fine apparel, a gold chain, and to be made ruler over a third of the empire in exchange for the interpretation? What principles of a prophet of God did Daniel uphold?*

A: Daniel refused any payment or reward for the interpretation, and purposed to convey the entire message given to him by God.

Daniel reminded Belshazzar of his grandfather's former pride and the manner in which God humbled him. He scolded the king, who knew well of God's power to break men's pride, yet in arrogance, chose to misuse God's sacred vessels. Daniel made plain to Belshazzar, who failed to heed the example of his grandfather, that the message was directly from the One who held his breath in His hands, and Whom he had offended. Daniel, through inspiration, then [interpreted the handwritten sentence](#) pronounced upon the doomed king and his empire:

- **Mene** [Numbered] = 50 shekels = 1000 Gerahs
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- **Tekel** [(Shekel) - Weighed] = 1 shekel = 20 Gerahs
- **Upharsin** [(Peres) - Divide] = 25 shekels = 500 Gerahs
* 1 Shekel = 20 Gerahs (Exodus 30:13)

SUM = 126 shekels = **2,520** Gerahs



Q: Based on our study of Daniel Chapter 4, what fate was declared for the Babylonian Empire? Consider the term **seven times** and its numeric equivalent, **2,520**.

A: The seven-times judgment pronounced upon Nebuchadnezzar, grandfather of Belshazzar, was designed to produce repentance in the proud king. The seven-times judgment God declared upon Belshazzar and the Babylonian Empire however, was for it to be **scattered** that night, **never to be gathered again**.

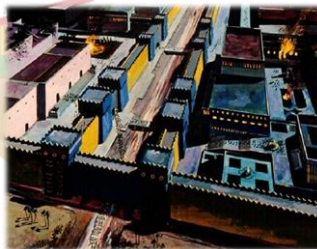
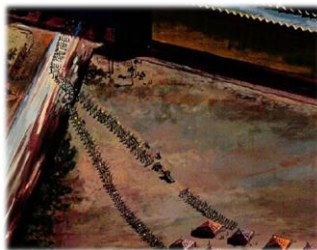
Scripture foretold, nearly 200 years before its occurrence, the details of this historic event. First, Scriptures revealed who would command the siege, and secondly, the manner in which the empire would fall. Let us now review the details:

- God identified Cyrus the Persian by name, as the conqueror of Babylon, more than 100 years before the event, and long before his birth (Isaiah 45:1-6)
- God foretold in detail, the response of king Belshazzar and his army to the frightful news of the empire's destruction (Isaiah 21:1-4; 13:1-8)
- God foretold an alliance between the Medes and Persians [*Elam*], as the combined force to conquer Babylon (Isaiah 13:17-19; Isaiah 21:1-9; Jeremiah 51:11, 28-33)
- God gave Cyrus the idea of diverting the Euphrates River that ran directly into the center of the fortified city. By diverting the river, drying it up from the *east* (Rev 16:12), Cyrus intended to march his army on the riverbed of the

Euphrates to attack the double-leafed gate that guarded access to the city. (Isaiah 45:1, 2)

- God foretold that **He** would providentially leave the double-leafed gate, guarding the main access to the city unlocked and open. Belshazzar's feast engrossed the entire city; enabling Cyrus to march upon it unchallenged (Isaiah 45:1, 2; Jeremiah 51:58)
- Cyrus would execute Belshazzar that night, subduing the once great world empire, Babylon (Isaiah 45:1; 13:1-8; 14:3-11)
- God foretold that Babylon would never again be established as a nation or empire (Isaiah 13:19-22; Jeremiah 50:9-15)

We should never underestimate the power of our witness on the lives of others. In time, Cyrus the Persian King would himself come to honor and acknowledge the true God. This was partly due to Daniel's exemplary character, as well as his conveying to Cyrus the prophecies of Scripture detailing his own life, years before his birth (Ezra 1:2, 2 Chronicles 36:23; Isaiah 41:2, 3, 25). Further, Cyrus would play a critical role in re-establishing the Jewish nation, issuing the first of three



decrees in 536B.C, for the rebuilding and restoration of Jerusalem (Ezra 1, Isaiah 44:26-45:3). As these three decrees would liberate Israel, calling God's people out of Babylon, so too, in time, we will learn how God prophetically calls His people, you and me, out of **Spiritual Babylon** by **Three Messages** (Revelation 14:5-12, 18:1-4).

"Remember the former things of old: for I [am] God, and [there is] none else; [I am] God, and [there is] none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times [the things] that are not [yet] done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:"

Isaiah 46:9, 10

"I [am] the LORD: that [is] my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them" *Isaiah 42:8, 9*

We should gain immense comfort knowing that the One True, all-knowing, loving God, is in control of world events. Let us place our full trust in Jesus, Who knows the beginning and the end of all things.

If you have never asked Jesus into your heart, why not do so today, **even right now!** He wants to abide with you, and in you, to direct your path (Exodus 33:14; Revelation 3:20-22, Proverbs 3:5, 6; John 15:1-11)!

The Fall of a Great Empire

Daniel Chapter 5

