

BOOK OF DANIEL

Chapter 5

WISDOM OF THRIVING IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT IN EXILE

Diet in Exile

Wisdom of picking the battlegrounds when in exile and a picture of those Jews who will remain faithful in days of the Tribulation

Statue

Prophecy of the Times of the Gentiles: Jews in exile... God controls history according to His Plan

Furnace

Trusting God in exile; picture of faithful Jews during the Tribulation

Tree

God's love in bringing arrogance to the gospel; Picture of the madness of pride of the nations during the Tribulation

Handwriting on the Wall

How quickly a nation can fall; Picture of the fall of Babylon the Great; in the Tribulation; the Mother of Harlots in Revelation 17-18

Jeremiah 29:3-4; 7, 11

³ *The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying,*

⁴ *“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,*

⁷ *Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.’*

¹¹ *For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.*

HOW QUICKLY A NATION FALLS

Daniel’s Chapter 5 records the fall of the **FIRST GREAT EMPIRE OF THE TIME OF THE GENTILES**; and while only 5 are mentioned in the statue of Daniel 2, do not forget that EGYPT and ASSYRIA have already become great empires of the Seven Headed Dragon and both of these have already fallen.

BABYLON is the first in the prophecy of Daniel and was one of the greatest, most glamorous, of all the empires of the Times of the Gentiles. It can be argued that **ROME** exceed it in power.

Almost 70 years have elapsed in time from Daniel 1 to Daniel 5.

Daniel is now an old man, around 85 years old.

Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 bc; he had ruled 43 years.

Babylon fell 13 October 539 bc.

But Daniel 5 begins with the name Belshazzar as king of Babylon.

Who is he and how did this happen?

This presents another great attack against the book of Daniel by the liberals. They claim that history records that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon, and Belshazzar was never the king.

Let's first list the kings of Babylon, then take a look at how God moves in history to take one nation down and how He raises up another. And know that as we record these last kings of Babylon that God is raising up the Medo-Persian Empire, the chest and arms of the weaker metal, silver, of the Statue of chapter 2 in Nebuchadnezzar dream.

So the next empire is on its way into power.

625-605	Nabopolassar: Organized the Chaldean tribes; succeeded by son
605-562	Nebuchadnezzar ; made the Kingdom great; believed in Jesus Christ
562-560	Amel-Marduk
560-556	Neriglissar
556	Labashi-Marduk
556-539	Nabonidus
553-539	(Belshazzar)

In less than 100 years the Babylonian empire
came into existence,
rose to dominance
fell

And this is the story of the Times of the Gentiles. The most interesting pages of a world history book is the TABLE OF CONTENTS, where you have listed the rise and fall of nations, empires and kingdoms.

One way that God works through history is through **LEADERSHIP**, *strong* leadership, *weak, evil, incompetent* leadership. Most of these nations will decline from within **BEFORE** they are conquered from without.

And so often through the
Times of the Gentiles

Moral decline **Economic** decline **Religious** decline

- 1 Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his very weak son **Amel-Marduk**, in Aramaic means man or servant of the god Marduk or Merodach. He is mentioned twice in the bible:
2 Kings 25:27 and Jeremiah 52:31. Evil-merodach.
He was disappointing as a son and even worse king to follow in his grandfather and father's footsteps.

- 2 His brief reign lasted only 2 years (562-560) before he was killed by his sister's husband, Neriglissar, who is not mentioned in the bible but you can read about him in CAH III*... *The Assyrian Empire*. His reign will last only 4 years from 560-556 bc.
- (* Cambridge Ancient History)
- 3 Nebuchadnezzar will have at least two daughters; one will marry Neriglissar (who murders her brother Amel-Marduk,) while the other will marry to the last king of Babylon, Nabonidus
- 3a Neriglissar reign ended after 4 years when he died apparently of natural causes.
- 3b Neriglissar was succeeded by his son, Labashi-marduk. Who lasted less than a year, 556 bc. He is mentioned CAH in Vol. III *The Assyrian Empire* as "***in conceit, knew not how to rule.***" Within the Babylonian empire were those who were forming a revolution to take over the empire and a coup was formed that murdered Labashi-Marduk and appointed their own man to the throne.
- 3c Nabonidus was their appointed man to rule Babylon from 556 bc to the fall of Babylon in 539 bc. While he is not mentioned in the bible, he is well documented in secular history.
- 4 Nabonidus was their appointed man to rule Babylon from 556 bc to the fall of Babylon in 539 bc. While he is not mentioned in the bible, he is well documented in secular history.
- 5 But what about Belshazzar being noted as 'king' by Daniel in 5:1? Liberals love to call this as just another of the fictitious facts that discredit Daniel. What is interesting here is this: that if Daniel was written in 2nd century bc, as they claim, not the 6th century bc, surely Daniel would have known for certain that Belshazzar was not king.

6 We should be thankful for archeologists, be they Christian or secular. Archeologists have un-earthed what is called the ‘Cylinder of Nabinidus’ (*which you can look up on Google*) plus other artifacts with inscriptions. And once again, liberal critics of the bible have been proven to have been wrong in their attacks on the bible. For these findings mention Belshazzar as the son of Nabonidus, and that he co-reigned with his father (Nabonidus).

John C. Whitcomb (*of the Genesis Flood –co-authored with Henry Morris*) presented an excellent clarification on Belshazzar as king. Excerpts from his book on Daniel are here duplicated for your information.

Why? Because of answers to critics of the book of Daniel and it’s early dating of the 6th century bc. The accuracy of the book of the bible is astounding to all writings in existence; we can believe this book – trust this book on what it says

...about science (–that JC created the heavens and earth and all that is in it–)

...on history

...and, of course, on all spiritual matters from **God** to **JESUS CHRIST** to **THE HOLY SPIRIT** to **THE WORD** itself.

From John C. Whitcomb’s book on Daniel.

5:1. Belshazzar the king.

Because he was a subordinate king under his father, Nabonidus, during the final fourteen years of the Neo-Babylonian empire (553-539 B.C.), Belshazzar's name was soon forgotten by ancient Babylonian and Greek historians who were interested mainly in the reigns of *official* kings.

Negative critics of the Bible considered this silence to be fatal to the claim of the book of Daniel to be a sixth-century B.C. document, since it refers to Belshazzar as "the Chaldean king" when Babylon fell (5:30) and dates events in the first and third years of his reign (7:1 and 8:1).

But as early as 1861, **H. F. Talbot** published a cuneiform tablet found at Ur containing the name BEL-SHAR-USUR ("Bel protect the king!"). In 1882, Theophilus Pinches published the famous "Nabonidus Chronicle" and correctly inferred that the "crown prince" (obviously Belshazzar) "was regarded as king" because he was left in full control of the army in Babylon from at least 549 to 545 B.C. while Nabonidus was establishing a new military and commercial fortress at Teima in northwest Arabia.

Still more texts appeared which contained the name Belshazzar" and shed important light on his activities as the *mar-sharri* (son of the king). In 1916, Pinches published two legal documents dated in the twelfth and thirteenth years of Nabonidus (544-543 B.C.), which record oaths sworn by the life of Nabonidus, the king, and of Belshazzar, the crown prince.

A. L. Oppenheim observes, "There is no known parallel for this in all ancient cuneiform literature."

The final blow to critical objections to the historicity of the fifth chapter of Daniel came in 1924, when **Sidney Smith** of the British Museum published a cuneiform document known as the

"Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus," which contains the statement that Nabonidus "entrusted the kingship" to Belshazzar.

This crucially important statement reads as follows:

"When the third year [553 s.c.] was about to begin, he [Nabonidus] entrusted the 'Camp' to his eldest son, the firstborn, the troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his command. He let everything go, entrusted the kingship [*sarrutum*] to him and, himself, he started out for a long journey."

Old Testament scholars of the more liberal school have been divided in their reaction to this spectacular evidence. **Norman W. Porteous** insists that the fifth chapter of Daniel is "not history but story-telling for the communication of religious truth" because "in the story before us Belshazzar is represented as acting in every way as a king with full authority," whereas the inscriptional evidence shows that "he was never king, though a certain royal dignity was accorded him."'

Robert H. Pfeiffer of Harvard University more cautiously concluded:

"We shall presumably never know how our author learned . . . that Belshazzar, mentioned only in Babylonian records, in Daniel, and in Baruch 1:11, which is based on Daniel, was functioning as king when Cyrus took Babylon."?

But J. Finegan states much more positively:
"Since, therefore, Belshazzar actually exercised the co-regency at Babylon and may well have continued to do so unto the end, the Book of Daniel (5:30) is not wrong in representing him as the last king of Babylon."

Thus, "one need not be surprised that the fifth chapter of Daniel calls Nebuchadnezzar the father instead of the grandfather of Belshazzar, as this is entirely in harmony with Semitic usage under such circumstances."

Furthermore, the omission of any reference to Nabonidus and Belshazzar's offer to make Daniel "third ruler in the kingdom" (5:7, 16,29) shows that "the fifth chapter of Daniel is in remarkable harmony" with the known fact that "Nabonidus was the titular head of the nation, but Belshazzar, who had been delegated with royal authority by his father, was the second ruler."

Many have insisted that the book of Daniel is in error when it states that "in that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain" (5:30), for this supposedly contradicts the report in the Nabonidus Chronicle that Babylon fell into the hands of the Persians without a general conflict. But our text says nothing of a battle. It simply states that Belshazzar was slain. A similar situation occurred when Queen Athaliah was slain

in Jerusalem (2 Kings 11:15-16). Dougherty denies that "the writer of the fifth chapter of Daniel thought that Babylon was captured as the result of vigorous combat involving the full strength of opposing armies. The bare reference to the slaying of Belshazzar is not enough to sustain such an interpretation."

Belshazzar's Feast

Half a century of additional research on the Belshazzar problem has produced nothing to modify **Raymond Dougherty's** conclusion:

Of all non-Babylonian records dealing with the situation at the close of the Neo-Babylonian empire *the fifth chapter of Daniel ranks next to cuneiform literature in accuracy* as far as outstanding events are concerned.

The Scriptural account may be interpreted as excelling because it employs the name Belshazzar, because it attributes royal power to Belshazzar, and because it recognizes that a dual ruler-ship existed in the kingdom. Babylonian cuneiform documents of the sixth century B.C. furnish clear cut evidence of the correctness of these three basic historical nuclei contained in the Biblical narrative dealing with the fall of Babylon. . . . The total information found in all available chronologically-fixed documents later than the cuneiform texts of the sixth century B.C. and prior to the

writings of Josephus of the first century A.D. could not have provided the necessary material for the historical framework of the fifth chapter of Daniel. The view that the fifth chapter of Daniel originated in the Maccabean age is discredited.

Biblical critics have pushed back its date to the third century s.c, ... However, a narrative characterized by such an accurate historical perspective as Daniel 5 ought to be entitled to a place much nearer in time to the reliable documents which belong to the general epoch with which it deals.

Held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.

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 B.C., he claimed to have 69,574 guests at a banquet. 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.

NABONIDUS AND THE DECLINE OF BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

While he is not mentioned in the bible he is very important to Bible history. They also let us know why the king Nabonidus was not present at the time of Daniel 5.

- 1 Even though Nebuchadnezzar believed in Jesus Christ and wrote a great Salvation tract, he could not lead his country into followers of Jesus Christ and the empire started to decline economically and religiously with the worship of idolatrous gods (the goddesss)
- 2 Nabonidus was somewhat an archeologist and scholar himself and was often on one of his excavations at Teima in north Arabia or in Haran in Turkey, where he restored the Temple of the Moon god, Sin,—later, in Mecca know as Allah. It is interesting that the first Islamic University was established here in Teima.
- 3 Nabinidus was also known as a diplomat and administrator, however, his many excavations continued to drain financially an already strained Babylonian empire.

These findings record that often, while Nabinidus was absent, his son, Belshazzar would sit on his throne ruling the declining empire

- 4 The Medes and Persians continued to rise in power and finally moved against Babylon in 539 bc.
 - ♦ Nabonidus lead Babylonian army out into the battlefield against the Meads and Persians and was defeated by the Medo-Persian armies.

- ◇ Nabonidus was not killed but fled and hid
 - ◇ There are three historical accounts of what happened at the fall of Babylon to the Medo-Persian Empire, and all three differ from one another: first there is the Cylinder of Nabonidus; Cyrus Cylinder and the historical writings of Herodotus and Xenophon. We will not go through these accounts of the battle and what followed. Some speak of a great battle at Opis, north of Babylon, others hardly mention the city, much less battle.
 - ◇ but what is agreed is that Nabonidus's son, Belshazzar remained in Babylon and was in effect ruler
 - ◇ in Daniel 5:16 Belshazzar offers Daniel third ruler in the kingdom; he knew that his father, Nabonidus was still alive. Nabonidus was first, then Belshazzar –who was sitting on the throne and then Daniel
 - ◇ the Word of God is accurate down to the details not known until recently
- 1 Belshazzar has gathered his troops into the City of Babylon, shut all the entrances into the city and everyone felt safe inside these impregnable walls of Babylon, even though they have been defeated on the battlefield. Their confidence lies in the great city of Babylon.

And this is where Daniel 5 begins.

- ◇ Nebuchadnezzar wanted to advance on the design of the city of Nineveh.
- ◇ the Medo-Persian Armies are encamped outside of the city of Babylon, out of arrow range, in tents.
- ◇ Babylon was built in a square, 13 miles to a side
- ◇ there were two walls around the city; the outer wall was 87 feet thick (some 28 yards) and 350 high –over 100 yards high.
- ◇ towers were built about every 250 yards. For the placement of archers; these towers were 100 feet higher than the walls.
- ◇ city had 100 bronze gates
- ◇ the river Euphrates ran through the center of the city for water supply
- ◇ inside the city were built inner walls with moats
- ◇ the most impregnable city ever built.

Lesson from history, anything built by man can sink!

Be it a ship, or city, or empire or philosophy

it can and will sink.

ONLY WHAT IS DONE IN CHRIST LAST THROUGH ETERNITY
