Daniel 5:29-30

Daniel 5:29-Belshazzar Rewards Daniel By Clothing Him In A Purple Robe, Golden Chain And Making Him Third Ruler In The Kingdom

Review of Daniel 5:1-28

Daniel 5:1 King Belshazzar threw an enormous banquet for a thousand of his nobles. He even drank wine excessively directly in front of the thousand. (Author’s translation)

Daniel 5:1 presents to the reader the circumstances preceding God giving Belshazzar over to the Persians. Belshazzar’s father was Nabonidus who was residing at the time in Tema. Belshazzar was the co-regent with his father. He was the great-grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel chapter five presents the account of what happened the night that Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians in 539 B.C. Daniel 5:1 says that Belshazzar was throwing a huge banquet for a thousand of his nobles. According to ancient Near Eastern custom, Belshazzar would have sat on a raised platform at a separate table where he could be seen by his guests.

It was not unusual for kings of the ancient world to hold such enormous banquets. In fact, it was typical of the later Persian kings (see Esther 1:3-8). Oriental kings were notorious for their extravagant feasts since archaeological discoveries reveal that some Persian monarchs were known to dine daily with 15,000 guests at a meal. At Alexander the Great’s marriage 10,000 guests attended his wedding dinner. Ashurnasirpal II had a banquet for 69,754 guests at a banquet dedicating his new capital city Calah in 1879BC. Athanasius describes the food at these banquets writing that “1,000 animals are slaughtered daily for the king. These comprise horses, camels, oxen, asses, deer, and most of the smaller animals. Many birds are consumed, including Arabian ostriches, geese, and chickens.”

What is unusual is that Belshazzar threw this banquet at a time of great crisis since a huge Medo-Persian invasion force had surrounded the city of Babylon. He may have held the banquet in order to boost the morale of his people. Or he might simply have not been very concerned about the invaders outside the walls of the city since it had not fallen to an invading army for 1,000 years because of its extremely strong fortifications. Furthermore, there were huge stockpiles of food that could sustain the capital for several years. This is something which an invading army would not be able to boast of since they would have to forage for food.

So probably to show contempt for the Medes and Persians and his great confidence in the city’s fortifications and that the city had not fallen to an invader
for a thousand years, Belshazzar threw an enormous banquet for a thousand of his nobles. During this party, the wine flowed freely and the king became intoxicated along with his guests. History confirms that a drunken party was taking place preceding the destruction of the city of Babylon.

Daniel 5:2 Belshazzar issued an order while under the influence of the wine causing the gold and silver articles to be brought in which Nebuchadnezzar, his great-grandfather caused to be confiscated from the temple, which was in Jerusalem, in order that the king, his nobles as well as his wives and in addition his concubines could drink with them. (Author’s translation)

When Belshazzar became intoxicated by the wine he was drinking he became very bold and did something that would be even shocking to any heathen individual, namely, he drank from the vessels that belong to a temple of a god, which happened to be the God of Israel, Yahweh. The heathen of antiquity were noted for destroying and ransacking the temples of their victims but they always erected new temples for the deities of the conquered nations or placed their sacred things in their own pantheons as Nebuchadnezzar did with the articles of gold and silver from Solomon’s temple. The gods of peoples were venerated. In fact, a man respected not only his own god but also the gods of others. Therefore, the actions of Belshazzar described here in Daniel 5:2 would be shocking to any pagan in that day.

Daniel 5:3 Therefore, the gold and silver articles were brought in, which were confiscated from the temple, which was God’s house, which was in Jerusalem so that the king, his nobles as well as his wives and in addition his concubines could drink with them. (Author’s translation)

Daniel 5:3 records the execution of Belshazzar’s orders to bring to the enormous banquet he was throwing for his nobles the gold and silver articles from Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem which were confiscated by Nebuchadnezzar during his first invasion of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. The purpose of this order according to Daniel 5:2 was so that the king and his nobles as well as his wives and concubines could drink their wine from them.

Here in verse 3, the king’s orders is reported by Daniel in almost the exact words that were used in Belshazzar’s command in verse 2. There is one slight addition, namely the phrase “God’s house” or “house of God.” This addition serves to magnify the sin of the king. It puts into perspective clearly the tremendous sacrilege and sin Belshazzar was committing by drinking wine from these sacred articles, which were used in the worship of Yahweh. These gold and silver articles from Solomon’s temple were set apart to be used exclusively in the worship of the God of Israel. Thus, Belshazzar’s actions as well as his nobles, wives and concubines were flagrant disrespect for the God of Israel. The articles of the temple were sanctified meaning that they were to only be used when worshipping
and serving God in the temple. It means that they were set apart to be used exclusively for worshipping the Lord in the temple.

Belshazzar and his guests are guilty of blasphemy, which is the profaning or desecration of that which is used to worship Him. It is also taking in vain of the name of God, or the reviling of any of His works or deeds. It is strongly forbidden by God as dishonoring His character and reputation. Blasphemy is strongly forbidden (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11; cf. Exodus 22:28; Leviticus 18:21; 19:12; 22:32; Numbers 15:30-31) and is punished by God (Leviticus 24:10-16,23; 2 Kings 19:20-37; cf. Isaiah 37:21-38). Defiling sacred things blasphemes God (Leviticus 22:1-2; Ezekiel 20:27-28; 22:26; Malachi 1:6-13).

Daniel 5:4 They drank wine while they praised gods composed of gold as well as silver, bronze, iron, wood and in addition stone. (Author’s translation)

Belshazzar and his guests not only showed great disrespect for the God of Israel by using the articles of gold and silver from Solomon’s temple which were to used in the worship of the God of Israel but also they praised their gods composed of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone. So they were not only blaspheming the God of Israel but also committing idolatry as well.

In Daniel 5:4, we have Belshazzar praising the gods he and his guests worshipped. Undoubtedly, they were praising these gods because they erroneously believed that they had protected the city of Babylon for hundred of years and would do so again since Babylon had not fallen to an invading army in a thousand years at the time when the king threw this party for his nobles. So probably to show contempt for the Medes and Persians and his great confidence in the city’s fortifications and that the city had not fallen to an invader for a thousand years, Belshazzar threw an enormous banquet for a thousand of his nobles. However, ingeniously, Cyrus’ commander Ugbaru who is referred to in the Chronicle as governor of Gutium, diverted the waters of the Euphrates to an old channel dug by a previous ruler which suddenly reduced the water level well below the river-gates. Not too long after that the Persian invaders came wading in at night and clambered up the riverbank before the guards of the city knew what happened.

In Daniel 5:22, Daniel makes clear to Belshazzar that he knew full well that his great-grandfather Nebuchadnezzar who became a believer in the God of Israel and was humbled by Yahweh when the king refused to acknowledge His sovereignty over the king. The king knew the significance of these articles from Solomon’s temple. Yet, he totally disregards the Lord’s past dealings with his great-grandfather and instead is shaking his fist as Yahweh, for which he will pay the ultimate price, death. Therefore, this great banquet thrown by the king and the use of the articles from Yahweh’s temple in Jerusalem is Belshazzar defying the God of Israel. In effect, he is challenging Him in that the king thinks that the Medes and Persians will in no way defeat him and take Babylon since the gods he worships
along with his guests are superior to the gods of the nations including Israel’s God, Yahweh.

**Daniel 5:5** During this time, the fingers of a human hand appeared while writing on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, directly in front of the lampstand so that the king observed the palm of the hand which was writing.  
(Author’s translation)

Daniel tells the reader here in verse 5 that during the time when Belshazzar and his guests were drinking while praising the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone, the fingers of a human hand appeared to the king and his guests. When the fingers of this hand appeared, they were writing on the plaster of one of the walls in the banquet room of the king’s palace. The fingers express God’s power over the king and that Belshazzar’s judgment and death is imminent. The hand appeared on the wall which was directly in front of the golden lampstand which was confiscated from Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem in 605 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar and was stored by him in the treasury of the temple of Marduk in the city of Babylon. As a result of the hand writing on the wall which was lit by the golden lampstand, Belshazzar observed carefully the palm of the hand which was writing so as to determine what person or human being it was attached to. Daniel 5:6 tells us that the king’s face grew pale and became petrified when he saw that the hand was not attached to any human being.

The mention of the location of the wall in which the hand was writing is important since it tells the reader that the writing appeared on a portion of the wall of the banquet room which had the most light.

**Daniel 5:6** Consequently the king, his countenance was changed for him. Also, his thoughts caused him to be terrified so that his hip joints gave way resulting in his knees knocking together, one against the other.  
(Author’s translation)

In this verse, Daniel presents to the reader a four-fold description of Belshazzar as a result of the king observing a human hand which was not attached to a human body, writing on the wall of the banquet which was behind the lampstand. First of all, Daniel describes the king’s countenance as changing as a result of seeing this unattached hand writing on one of the walls of the banquet hall. This implies his face became pale as result of being stricken with fear. He then describes the king as being terrified by what he saw, which was the cause of his countenance changing. Daniel then describes the king’s hip joints giving way as a result of this fear meaning that his legs shook or his legs became weak. This implies that he was standing and that he had to sit down because he was so stricken with the supernatural appearance of this unattached hand. This in turn Daniel says resulted in the king’s knees knocking together, one against the other. Thus, the picture
Daniel is drawing for us is not very complementary of Belshazzar. He is stricken fear with fear.

At this point in the narrative, Belshazzar has learned what his great-grandfather Nebuchadnezzar learned, namely the immanency of the God of Israel. The immanency of God means that He involves Himself in and concerns Himself with and intervenes in the lives of members of the human race, both saved and unsaved. The appearance of this hand and the message it was writing for the king demonstrated to the king and everyone in the banquet hall that the God of Israel whose cups they were drinking with was intervening in the life of the king and those who were his guests. Belshazzar was going to learn that he was accountable to the God of Israel and was sovereign over the king.

As was the case with Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar is also learning that the God of Israel was sovereign over him. The term “sovereignty” connotes a situation in which a person, from his innate dignity, exercises supreme power, with no areas of his province outside his jurisdiction. As applied to God, the term “sovereignty” indicates His complete power over all of creation, so that He exercises His will absolutely, without any necessary conditioning by a finite will or wills. Therefore, God, from His innate dignity, exercises supreme power over the nations of the earth, with no area of planet earth outside His jurisdiction. God’s exercises His will absolutely over the nations of the earth.

Daniel 5:7 The king authoritatively shouted out an order for the purpose of causing the necromancers, astrologers as well as diviners to be brought in. He declared to the city of Babylon’s wise men, “Any person who can read aloud the inscription as well as can make known its interpretation to me will be clothed with a purple robe as well as a golden chain around his neck. Indeed, they will rule as third in the kingdom.” (Author’s translation)

Daniel 5:6 presented Belshazzar’s response in terms of how he acted to the hand writing on the wall behind the lampstand in the banquet room whereas Daniel 5:7 presents to the reader his verbal response to this supernatural occurrence. His first action was to authoritatively shout out an order to bring in necromancers, astrologers and diviners so that they could read and interpret the inscription. The king then promises the wise men that he will reward them if they can meet his request. They will be clothed with purple robe as well as a golden chain would be placed around their neck as well. Both of which were marks of royalty in the ancient world. They would thus be made third ruler in the kingdom. Of course, Belshazzar was co-regent with his father Nabonidus, thus the reason for offering the wise men the position of being third ruler in the kingdom.

The king’s promise to the wise men here in Daniel 5:7 reveals that he fully believed that he would continue to rule as king over Babylon and that he was not very worried about the Medes and the Persians who were attacking the city at the
time. It reveals his proud arrogance, which was undoubtedly based upon the fact that Babylon had not fallen to an invading army in a thousand years. He was not very concerned about the invaders outside the walls of the city since it had not fallen to an invading army for 1,000 years because of its extremely strong fortifications. Furthermore, there were huge stockpiles of food that could sustain the capital for several years. This is something which an invading army would not be able to boast of since they would have to forage for food.

**Daniel 5:8 Therefore, each and every one of the king’s wise men came in but they were totally unable to read the inscription or cause the interpretation to be made known to the king. (Author’s translation)**

Daniel 5:8 tells the reader that Belshazzar’s wise men were totally unable to read or interpret the dream. We can understand why they couldn’t interpret but it seems strange that they could not read the inscription since it was written in Aramaic. The wise men’s difficulty in reading the writing may have been that it was written in Aramaic script without the vowels being supplied. However, if it was written in cuneiform, the vowels would have been included. Daniel does not explain the difficulty in reading the writing on the wall, but the problem apparently was not that it was a strange language but rather what the words signified prophetically. The vowels would be supplied in ordinary discourse. However, in a cryptic statement such as found with this inscription the addition of vowels is a problem. The inscription on the wall may have appeared like this, “MN’ MN’ TQL UPRSN.” The order of the letters in the Aramaic, of course, would be the reverse of this, that is, from right to left. Also, if, some unfamiliar form of these characters was used, it would indeed have required divine revelation to not only provide an interpretation for the inscription but also to read it. This helps us to understand why Belshazzar requested that someone read the inscription for him.

The wise men could not interpret it since to receive the interpretation would require meeting four qualifications. First, they would have to be a believer. Secondly, they would have to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, they would have to be in fellowship with God. Lastly, God the Holy Spirit must desire to give them the interpretation. Daniel like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego met the first three qualifications. The book of Daniel does not give us any indication that any of the wise men became a believer while they were under Daniel’s authority. Although this does not mean none of them became believers in Yahweh. The Holy Spirit chose to give the interpretation to Daniel and not his three friends or any of the wise men who might have become a believer because it was His sovereign will that this would be the case. It was pleasing to the Spirit to give the interpretation to Daniel and to no one else.

The inscription on the wall of Belshazzar’s banquet hall was a message from God to Belshazzar about his kingdom and his future. Thus to read and interpret it
would require a person who has the capacity to receive communication from God. The Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity who gives a person the ability to receive communication from God the Father. The Holy Spirit would give Daniel the ability to interpret the inscription to Belshazzar.

This inscription was revelation from God. The purpose of this revelation was to communicate to the king the will of God for his life. Through this inscription, God the Holy Spirit was telling Belshazzar that both his kingdom and his life were coming to an end immediately. Unfortunately, the king’s response to this revelation was not one of repentance.

So Daniel 5:8 tells the reader that Belshazzar’s wise men were impotent or powerless to help him. However, Daniel was able because he received revelation from God with regards to the inscription’s meaning. This reveals a spiritual principle. Namely, that one receives the power of God by receiving revelation from God the Holy Spirit. The believer not only receives wisdom from God by exercising faith in the revelation communicated by the Holy Spirit in the pages of Scripture but also they receive the power of God. Possessing the power of God enables one to exercise the will of God and to understand and know how to exercise the will of God for one’s life is wisdom from God. The wisdom of God and the omnipotence of God and revelation from God are all interconnected. Receiving the wisdom and omnipotence of God requires receiving revelation from God. Exercising faith in the revelation from God which is found in the Bible appropriates the omnipotence of God, which in turn results in receiving wisdom from God. By appropriating the omnipotence of God by faith in the Word of God, they receive the capacity to execute the Father’s will and to please Him. This capacity to execute the Father’s will and to understand how to execute God’s will is wisdom from God.

Daniel 5:9 Thus, causing the king to be extremely terrified so that his countenance was changed on him as well as causing his nobles to be perplexed. (Author’s translation)

Daniel 5:9 presents to the reader two results that occurred as a result of Belshazzar’s wise men being totally unable to read or interpret the inscription which an unattached hand wrote on one of the walls in the banquet hall behind the lampstand. The first was that the king was extremely terrified. This result in turn resulted in the king’s countenance once again changing on him. The second result was that his nobles were perplexed. The fact that his wise men were totally unable to read or interpret the inscription made the inscription more ominous to Belshazzar.

Coupled with the Medes and Persians outside the city walls and maybe guilt over using the sacred articles from the temple in Jerusalem, the wise men’s inability to read or interpret the inscription made this handwriting appear as a
harbinger of defeat for the king and his nation. The perplexity of the king’s nobles along with the king’s extreme terror resulted in chaos and confusion in the banquet hall.

Daniel 5:10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the king’s words as well as his nobles. The queen responded and said, “O king, live forever! Please, by no means let your thoughts cause you to be terrified so that they by no means cause your countenance to be changed!” (Author’s translation)

In Daniel 5:10, the reader is introduced to a new character in the drama, namely, the queen. She was not one of Belshazzar’s wives since Daniel 5:2-3 tells us that the king’s wives were already at the banquet held in honor of the king’s nobles. Thus, the queen here in Daniel 5:10 is either Belshazzar’s mother or grandmother. The fact that the queen she was old enough to be very familiar with Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar’s relationship would suggest that she was Belshazzar’s grandmother whose name was Adad-Guppi. History tells us that she was a very influential person and the quintessential queen mother. Her description of Daniel indicates that she had contact with him in the past and was familiar with his relationship with Nebuchadnezzar. The manner in which she speaks to Belshazzar indicates she was either his mother or grandmother. She was old enough to have knowledge of the prophet Daniel but also wise enough to not be in attendance of the king’s drunken banquet for his nobles. However, the Nabonidus Chronicle seems to rule out the queen here in Daniel 5:10 as being Nabonidus’ mother and Belshazzar’s grandmother since it records that she died in the ninth year of Nabonidus’ reign (Baldwin, 122). Thus, more than likely the queen is Nabonidus’ wife and thus Belshazzar’s mother. Her name according to Herodotus was Nitocris who was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. In the ancient courts, the queen mother often wielded considerable influence (cf. 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 11:1-3; 24:12; Jeremiah 13:18).

Daniel 5:10 informs the reader that the reason why Belshazzar’s mother entered the banquet hall was because of the words of her son, the king and his nobles. She heard the commotion as a result of the unattached hand writing on one of the walls of the banquet. Undoubtedly, the servants would have informed her of the situation as well.

She responds to the situation by making several statements to the king. The first two appear in Daniel 4:10 and the remaining appear in Daniel 4:11-12. Here in verse 10, she greets the king with the phrase “O king, live forever!” This greeting is of course hyperbole since she doesn’t expect him to live forever. It simply denotes that she wishes that Belshazzar would live a long life. Of course, he was to die that very evening.
Her second statement in verse 10, “Please, by no means let your thoughts cause you to be terrified so that they by no means cause your countenance to change!” expresses in emphatic terms her strong desire that the king’s thoughts would by no means cause him to be terrified so that these thoughts would by no means cause his countenance to be changed. Thus, we see her comforting Belshazzar. In other words, in a polite manner, before all his guests, the queen is telling her son the king to pull himself together. Then, in verse 11-12, she tells him she has a solution. She tells the king why he should be comforted, namely, because he has a man in his kingdom who can read and interpret the inscription. His name is Daniel and she was quite familiar with him and his relationship with Nebuchadnezzar as indicated by her statements to the king in verses 11-12.

Daniel 5:11 “There is a man in your kingdom who possesses God’s Holy Spirit in him. Specifically, during the days of your great-grandfather, illumination, discernment as well as wisdom in accordance with God’s wisdom were observed in him. Indeed, King Nebuchadnezzar, your great-grandfather, your great-grandfather the king, promoted him to be commander over the occult priests, necromancers, astrologers and diviners.” (Author’s translation)

In Daniel 5:11, we have Daniel recording for us the queen speaking to Belshazzar and informing him with regards to Daniel’s ability to solve the problem of the mysterious inscription on one of the walls of the banquet behind the lampstand. As we noted, in Daniel 5:10, the reader is introduced to the queen. She was not one of Belshazzar’s wives since Daniel 5:2-3 tells us that the king’s wives were already at the banquet held in honor of the king’s nobles. The queen is Belshazzar’s mother. The fact that the queen she was old enough to be very familiar with Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar’s relationship would suggest that she was Belshazzar’s grandmother whose name was Adad-Guppi. History tells us that she was a very influential person and the quintessential queen mother. Her description of Daniel indicates that she had contact with him in the past and was familiar with his relationship with Nebuchadnezzar. The manner in which she speaks to Belshazzar indicates she was either his mother or grandmother. She was old enough to have knowledge of the prophet Daniel but also wise enough to not be in attendance of the king’s drunken banquet for his nobles. However, the Nabonidus Chronicle seems to rule out the queen as being Nabonidus’ mother and Belshazzar’s grandmother since it records that she died in the ninth year of Nabonidus’ reign (Baldwin, 122). Thus, more than likely the queen is Nabonidus’ wife and thus Belshazzar’s mother. Her name according to Herodotus was Nitocris who was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. In the ancient courts, the queen mother often wielded considerable influence (cf. 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 11:1-3; 24:12; Jeremiah 13:18).
The queen presents to her son Belshazzar a three-fold description of Daniel in order that he would summon him to the banquet to solve the problem of the mysterious inscription. She says that there is a man in his kingdom who “possessed God’s Holy Spirit in him.” When the queen describes Daniel as such she is using Nebuchadnezzar’s language when describing Daniel to Belshazzar, which appears in Daniel 4:8-9 and 18. The queen was evidently a non-believer and thus we would not expect her to be using this expression. However, she is simply employing Nebuchadnezzar’s language to describe Daniel for her son Belshazzar.

The queen explains explicitly or specifies for Belshazzar what she means by this first description of Daniel. She tells Belshazzar that during the reign of his great-grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, illumination, discernment as well as wisdom in accordance with God’s wisdom were observed in Daniel by the king and his wise men.

The repetition found in the expression “King Nebuchadnezzar, your great-grandfather, your great-grandfather the king” emphasizes with Belshazzar how significant a person Daniel was in that his great-grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar actually promoted to be the commander over his wise men even though he was a Jewish exile. This emphasizes with Belshazzar that he should summon Daniel immediately to solve the problem with the mysterious inscription since the great Nebuchadnezzar who built Babylon into a great empire relied upon him.

The queen informs Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar and his wise men observed “illumination” in Daniel meaning that he possessed spiritual or intellectual enlightenment. She is saying that Daniel demonstrating that God’s Holy Spirit indwells him by virtue of the fact that he demonstrated spiritual and intellectual enlightenment with regards to the dreams/visions which Nebuchadnezzar received from God as recorded in Daniel chapters two and four. Daniel was able to interpret both dreams because he possessed God’s Holy Spirit in him which gave him the capacity to interpret the king’s dreams.

The queen also says that Nebuchadnezzar and his wise men also observed “discernment” in Daniel meaning he had the power of judgment and perceptive insight as demonstrated in the use of knowledge rather than knowing by experience. It denotes that Daniel had the God-given ability to interpret visions and dreams which was impossible for the average human mind.

The queen mother also says that “wisdom” was observed in Daniel in the sense that he possessed a deep understanding and keen discernment as a result of possessing God’s Holy Spirit in him. Specifically, Daniel possessed the ability to know how to interpret the dreams, to solve riddles and decipher extremely difficult problems according to how the queen describes Daniel in Daniel 5:12.

Belshazzar’s mother then tells him that Nebuchadnezzar and his wise men observed wisdom in Daniel “in accordance with God’s wisdom” meaning that
that Daniel’s wisdom was in fact God’s wisdom. Only a person who possesses God’s wisdom could interpret the dreams.

The queen then advances upon and intensifies her two previous descriptions of Daniel by saying that Nebuchadnezzar promoted Daniel to be the commander or chief over occult priests, necromancers and diviners who constituted the king’s wise men. So she goes from describing Daniel as possessing illumination, discernment as well as wisdom in accordance with God’s wisdom to describing him as being made the commander over the wise men by Nebuchadnezzar.

Belshazzar has a unique problem which requires a unique person to solve it for him. The problem cannot be solved by the greatest minds and intellects of his age since it can only be solved by a person who possesses God’s wisdom. The mysterious inscription is directly from God and thus requires a man who possesses a relationship and fellowship with God and has been given the ability by God to read and interpret it. The king has a great crisis which requires a godly man with supernatural power to solve.

Daniel 5:12 “Because in him, in Daniel whom the king assigned him the name Belteshazzar, was found an extraordinary spirit, knowledge, discernment interpreting dreams, explaining riddles as well as solving difficult problems. Please summon Daniel right now in order to cause the interpretation to be known.” (Author’s translation)

In Daniel 5:12, we have the queen continuing to speak to Belshazzar her son in giving him advice as to how to deal with the mysterious inscription. As was the case in Daniel 5:11, the queen describes Daniel for the king. In verse 11, she doesn’t name Daniel but in verse 12, we see that she not only tells the king Daniel’s Jewish name which honors the God of Israel but also his Babylonian name, which honored Nebuchadnezzar’s god prior to his conversion. In verse 11, the queen presents to Belshazzar the reason why Nebuchadnezzar promoted Daniel as commander over the wise men. In this verse, she gives a five-fold description of Daniel’s abilities which he manifested during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, which caused the king to promote Daniel as the commander over the wise men.

The queen informs Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar encountered through personal experience with Daniel that he had an “extraordinary spirit” meaning that his attitude or disposition was incomparable in the sense that it was unique among men. She also tells the king that Nebuchadnezzar encountered through personal experience with Daniel that he had superior knowledge with regards to wide range of subjects which the Babylonians did not possess. It means that these four knew things with regards to various subjects, which others in Babylon did not. The queen also informs Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar and his wise men encountered through personal experience with Daniel that he had the power of judgment and perceptive insight as demonstrated in the use of knowledge rather
than knowing by experience. It denotes that Daniel had the God-given ability to interpret visions and dreams which was impossible for the average human mind. She tells the king that Nebuchadnezzar encountered through personal experience with Daniel that could explain riddles. He had the ability to explain riddles in the sense that he had demonstrated during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign the ability to make clear or understandable riddles implying he could make plain and intelligible a riddle. Lastly, the queen says that Nebuchadnezzar encountered through personal experience with Daniel that he manifested the ability to solve difficult problems or unravel knotty problems. So in other words, he was a great problem solver. He could solve a supernatural and obscure or hidden difficulty such as the vision/dreams Nebuchadnezzar received from God as recorded in chapters 2 and 4.

The queen’s last statement to Belshazzar is an urgent request that he summon Daniel to the banquet hall in order to interpret the mysterious inscription. The fact that the queen has to describe Daniel’s abilities with the king indicates that Belshazzar was not employing Daniel as an advisor as his great-grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had done. Daniel was no longer playing a prominent role in the Babylonian kingdom when it had come to an end. In fact, he was clearly no longer the commander over the wise men as he was under Nebuchadnezzar. When Nebuchadnezzar died, Daniel was removed from his position.

Belshazzar was not unaware or ignorant of Daniel’s abilities because Daniel’s statement to the king in verse 22 indicates that he was fully aware of Daniel’s relationship with Nebuchadnezzar. He had forgotten Daniel because he had no need for Daniel in his kingdom. No dreams had been given to Belshazzar unlike his great-grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. Now that Belshazzar has a crisis, he needs Daniel to solve his problem of the inscription.

Daniel 5:13 Consequently, Daniel was ordered to enter the king’s presence. The king asked a question and said to Daniel, “Are you Daniel, who is one of the deported people from Judah whom my great-grandfather the king ordered to be brought from Judah?” (Author’s translation)

In Daniel 5:13, we have Belshazzar ordering Daniel to be brought to the banquet hall in order to read and interpret the mysterious inscription as a result of accepting his mother, the queen’s advice. The king poses a question to Daniel which is condescending and belittles Daniel, namely he asks if Daniel was one of the Jewish exiles which his great-grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar brought to Babylon from Judah in 605 B.C. This question is further evidence that Belshazzar knew Daniel. He was not unaware or ignorant of Daniel’s abilities because Daniel’s statement to the king in verse 22 indicates that he was fully aware of Daniel’s relationship with Nebuchadnezzar. He had forgotten Daniel because he had no need for Daniel in his kingdom. No dreams had been given to Belshazzar unlike his great-grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. Now that Belshazzar has a crisis, he needs
Daniel to solve his problem of the inscription. Now, here in Daniel 5:13, Belshazzar does not begin his questioning of Daniel to confirm his identity with the information his mother supplied for him about Daniel which is recorded in Daniel 5:11-12. Rather, he begins his questioning by first asking Daniel if he was one of the exiles from Judah, who his great-grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar brought to Babylon. His question makes clear he knew Daniel because it was not information his mother, the queen supplied for him about Daniel.

Thus, why would Belshazzar ask Daniel if he was one of the Jewish exiles and instead confirm Daniel’s identity by asking questions which correspond with the queen’s identification of Daniel? There can be no other reason than to belittle Daniel since there is no need to remind Daniel that he is a captive of the Babylonians. The information the queen provided Belshazzar would have been sufficient from which he could ask Daniel to confirm his identity. In fact, the queen’s information was flattering of Daniel and was very complimentary. None of her descriptions of Daniel were derogatory or contemptuous in any way. However, her son, the king begins his questioning of Daniel by in effect insulting him. He is condescending with Daniel and belittles him by asking this question. It was no called for. It is ludicrous on the part of the king to insult Daniel since he has called him to the banquet to solve an extraordinarily difficult problem of reading and interpreting the mysterious inscription for him. It would make much better sense to treat Daniel with great respect as his mother did.

So when Belshazzar asks Daniel if he was one of the Jewish exiles brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, he is attempting to put Daniel in his place in the sense he is reminding Daniel that the Babylonians conquered the Jews. The king’s bravado is ridiculous. The king is saying in effect to Daniel that his people, the Babylonians are superior to his people. However, none of his people can solve the mystery of the inscription. So the king’s national pride is vain and empty.

Interestingly, the question is rhetorical because he does not give Daniel a chance to answer it but instead goes immediately to asking Daniel questions which are based upon the information the queen provided him with regards to Daniel’s abilities and character. So Belshazzar first asks if Daniel is one of the Jewish exiles before going on to more complimentary questions because from his perspective, he is putting Daniel in his place. The king’s thinking, “you Daniel might be able to read and interpret this crazy inscription, but you still are only a captive?” So when Belshazzar is asking Daniel if he is one of the Jewish exiles, he is expressing his great pride and reminding Daniel that he and the Babylonian people conquered his people, the Jews.

Daniel 5:14 “Likewise I heard concerning you that God’s Spirit is in you so that illumination, discernment as well as extraordinary wisdom were observed in you.” (Author’s translation)
In Daniel 5:13, we saw Belshazzar begin to speak with Daniel. In this verse, he was condescending to Daniel and belittled him by asking him if he was one of the Jewish exiles, which he knew already that Daniel was. From the king’s perspective, this was to put Daniel in his place. Now, here in Daniel 5:14, he immediately stops being condescending and begins to relate to descriptions of Daniel, which he received from his mother the queen. This was to flatter Daniel because he desperately needs him to read and interpret the mysterious inscription.

First of all, the king relates to Daniel that he heard that God’s Spirit was in him. He leaves out the word “holy” which his mother used to describe the Spirit and she was in fact passing along to Belshazzar his great-grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar’s description of Daniel. “Holy” describes the Spirit’s character and nature as set apart and morally pure in the sense that He is to be distinguished from the heathen gods in that He is the true God and they are not. Belshazzar omits this word in describing the Spirit of God because he was more than likely convicted since he was not morally pure and living in rebellion against God.

Then, Belshazzar says that the result of God’s Spirit indwelling Daniel was that illumination, discernment and wisdom were observed in him and specifically observed by Nebuchadnezzar. The king uses “extraordinary” to describe Daniel’s wisdom whereas his mother the queen used this adjective to describe Daniel’s spirit.

Of course, during his reign Belshazzar never utilized this extraordinary wisdom of Daniel or sought out his illumination and discernment because he was arrogant and proud. Undoubtedly his mother must have suggested using Daniel in the past since she suggests to Belshazzar they he seek out Daniel’s help to solve the mysterious inscription. Belshazzar had no need for Daniel’s abilities during his reign and neither did his father Nabonidus or Evil-Merodach because they were ungodly men who did not value spiritual abilities and neither did they have a capacity to understand and appreciate spiritual realities. The only time Belshazzar had any need for Daniel is this crisis involving the inscription. Otherwise, Daniel was no longer needed.

Prior to being summoned by Belshazzar, Daniel spent many years out of the public limelight. The kings of Babylon had no use for him in direct contrast to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. He bided his time and continued to grow in his relationship with God. He waited patiently for an opportunity to serve the king of Babylon and now that moment had finally come. God would use Daniel to communicate to Belshazzar a message of judgment. It wasn’t until Belshazzar was faced with a crisis did have a need for a spiritual person. Sadly, this is true of many people in the world today in our day and age.

Daniel 5:15 “Now at this time, the wise men, the necromancers were ordered to enter my presence in order that they could read aloud the
inscription as well as to make known to me its interpretation. However, they were totally unable to cause the message’s interpretation to be made known to me.” (Author’s translation)

In Daniel 5:15, Belshazzar recounts for Daniel the wise men’s inability to read or interpret the mysterious inscription. The reason is that this was a personal message from the God of Israel to the king and could thus only be read and interpreted by the man of God’s choosing, who of course is Daniel.

So we can understand why they couldn’t interpret the inscription but it seems strange that they could not read the inscription since it was written in Aramaic. The wise men’s difficulty in reading the writing may have been that it was written in Aramaic script without the vowels being supplied. However, if it was written in cuneiform, the vowels would have been included. Daniel does not explain the difficulty in reading the writing on the wall, but the problem apparently was not that it was a strange language but rather what the words signified prophetically. The vowels would be supplied in ordinary discourse. However, in a cryptic statement such as found with this inscription the addition of vowels is a problem. The inscription on the wall may have appeared like this, “MN’ MN’ TQL UPRSN.” The order of the letters in the Aramaic, of course, would be the reverse of this, that is, from right to left. Also, if, some unfamiliar form of these characters was used, it would indeed have required divine revelation to not only provide an interpretation for the inscription but also to read it. This helps us to understand why Belshazzar requested that someone read the inscription for him.

The wise men could not interpret it since to receive the interpretation would require meeting four qualifications. First, they would have to be a believer. Secondly, they would have to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, they would have to be in fellowship with God. Lastly, God the Holy Spirit must desire to give them the interpretation. Daniel like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego met the first three qualifications. The book of Daniel does not give us any indication that any of the wise men became a believer while they were under Daniel’s authority. Although this does not mean none of them became believers in Yahweh. The Holy Spirit chose to give the interpretation to Daniel and not his three friends or any of the wise men who might have become a believer because it was His sovereign will that this would be the case. It was pleasing to the Spirit to give the interpretation to Daniel and to no one else.

The wise men do not have the wisdom of God. To have the wisdom of God means that one knows how to do things in a manner that is pleasing to God. When I say “wisdom” in this context, I mean that the wise men do not have the know how to read or interpret the inscription. They must receive this know how from God.
The inscription on the wall of Belshazzar’s banquet hall was a message from God to Belshazzar about his kingdom and his future. Thus to read and interpret it would require a person who has the capacity to receive communication from God. The Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity who gives a person the ability to receive communication from God the Father. The Holy Spirit would give Daniel the ability to interpret the inscription to Belshazzar.

This inscription was revelation from God. The purpose of this revelation was to communicate to the king the will of God for his life. Through this inscription, God the Holy Spirit was telling Belshazzar that both his kingdom and his life were coming to an end immediately. Unfortunately, the king’s response to this revelation was not one of repentance. He was unlike Nebuchadnezzar who responded to God delivering Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from his power by exercising faith in God which was demonstrated in his praise of God (Daniel 3:28). Belshazzar was like Nebuchadnezzar in the sense that the latter did not respond to the revelation that God gave him as recorded in chapter four. In this dream, God used an enormous tree to symbolize the king. The dream symbolized the king being deposed from power for seven years and after which he would acknowledge God’s sovereignty over him unless he repented. Nebuchadnezzar did not repent and was deposed from power but restored to power after he acknowledged God’s sovereignty over him. In Daniel 4:22, Daniel tells Belshazzar that he knew of all God’s dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, yet he did not repent.

God dealings with both Nebuchadnezzar and his great-grandson Belshazzar reveal a spiritual principle. Namely, that God reveals His will to men to either bless them or judge them. The person’s response to the revelation of His will determines whether they are blessed or judged by God. The person who exercises faith will be blessed whereas the one who does not exercise faith in this revelation will be judged.

Belshazzar is an example of someone who was judged by God because of unbelief in the revelation God had given him. He did not exercise faith as demonstrated by his lack of repentance upon receiving the interpretation from Daniel. He did not humble himself before God. When God delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from his power, Nebuchadnezzar responded in faith by praising their God, which expressed his humility and resulted in his receiving eternal salvation. God disciplined Nebuchadnezzar as a believer by deposing him from power for seven years but at the end of the seven years, the king praised God effusively and sent a proclamation to all in his world-wide kingdom praising the God of Israel. However, Belshazzar is a different story. He did not praise God after receiving Daniel’s interpretation of the writing on the wall. He did not respond. He thus is suffering eternal condemnation.
Daniel 5:16 “But I myself personally heard concerning you that you are able to provide interpretations as well as solve difficult problems. Now, if you are able to read aloud the inscription as well as cause its interpretation to be made known to me, you will be clothed with a purple robe as well as a golden chain around your neck. Indeed, you will rule as third over the kingdom.” (Author’s translation)

So here in Daniel 5:16, we have Belshazzar making the same promise to Daniel as he did to the wise men, namely he would clothed Daniel with a purple robe and a golden chain and would in fact make him third ruler in the kingdom if he could read and interpret the mysterious inscription. Before making this promise, the king recounts to Daniel what he heard about him from his mother the queen, namely that he was able to provide interpretations as well as solve difficult problems. The fact that Belshazzar relates to Daniel his mother’s description of him expresses the king’s confidence that Daniel could in fact solve his problem of the mysterious inscription. He is eagerly anticipating Daniel being able to solve the problem and Daniel does not disappoint him.

Daniel 5:17 Then Daniel responded and said in the presence of the king, “Please, keep your gifts for yourself or please give your rewards for another. However, I will read aloud the inscription to the king as well as cause the interpretation to be made known to him.” (Author’s translation)

Daniel politely rejects Belshazzar’s offer to clothe him with a purple robe and place a golden chain around his neck which would signify that Daniel was now the third ruler in the Babylonian kingdom. The prophet tells the king he can either keep them for himself or give them to another. In other words, he is telling Belshazzar that you wear the purple robe and wear a golden chain around your neck which is signifies that you are king or give these things to another person in your kingdom. Against Daniel’s will, Belshazzar rewards him with these things anyway and makes him third ruler in the kingdom when Daniel reads and interprets the inscription for the king.

Daniel agrees to read and interpret the inscription because he knows that it is a prophetic message from the God of Israel to Belshazzar. Daniel knew that God wanted him to read and interpret the inscription for the king since through this message he could see that God was telling Belshazzar that his kingdom had ended and was being handed over to the Medes and Persians. This would fulfill the prophecy he gave to Nebuchadnezzar as recorded in Daniel chapter 2. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that the Medes and the Persians would follow his kingdom as a world-wide empire. Daniel would have been told this by God the Holy Spirit in prayer that this inscription was from the Father to the king.

Daniel rejects Belshazzar’s offer of gifts and promotion whereas he accepted these things from Nebuchadnezzar who made him ruler over the wise men of
Babylon. The reason why he accepted rewards and the promotion of being the head of the wise men is that there was no chance of Nebuchadnezzar viewing Daniel’s motivation for interpreting his dream as an opportunity for self-advancement or self-interest. Nebuchadnezzar never promised Daniel rewards for interpreting his first dream recorded in chapter two. In fact, Daniel interpreted the dream to save his life and the lives of three friends as well as the wise men. On the other hand, Daniel does not accept from Belshazzar gifts and the promotion of being the third ruler in the kingdom since he did not want the king to consider his motivation for reading and interpreting the inscription as a lust for power and money or self-advancement. By rejecting gifts and promotion, Daniel would be telling Belshazzar that he was only doing it to please the God of Israel who is responsible for the inscription and the message for the king that it contained. There was no chance of Nebuchadnezzar viewing Daniel’s motivation for interpreting his dream as motivated by a lust for power and money or self-advancement. With Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel was simply attempting to save his life and the lives of his three friends as well as the wise men who were also under the sentence of death.

Though Daniel accepted gifts and promotion from Nebuchadnezzar, he did not value these things because he did not love the cosmic system of Satan. Money and power, approbation from were not attractive to Daniel since he did not value them as much as his relationship and fellowship with God and obeying God. He presents here a great example for church age believers to follow. Money and power were not his motivation for reading and interpreting the inscription but rather he did so in obedience to God’s will.

Daniel 5:18 “As for you, O king, the Most High God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, your great-grandfather a kingdom, yes a great kingdom as well as honor, yes, great honor.” (Author’s translation)

Before Daniel reads and interprets the mysterious inscription for Belshazzar, he will first rebuke the king. In Daniel 5:18-23, he gives a stern rebuke to Belshazzar for becoming arrogant before God and not humbling himself even though he was well aware of how God dealt with his great-grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. In verse 18, Daniel reminds Belshazzar that the Most High God had given his great-grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar a great kingdom as well as great honor. In verse 19, Daniel gives examples of the kind of power Nebuchadnezzar wielded during his reign. Then in verses 20-21, he reminds Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar became proud and arrogant and God deposed him from power and caused him to suffer boanthropy. When Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God was sovereign over him he was restored to power. In verse 22, Daniel reminds Belshazzar that he was well aware of this entire story about his great-grandfather being deposed from power by God for his arrogance and pride. Next, in verses 23-28, Daniel rebukes Belshazzar for his idolatry and blasphemy in drinking from the sacred articles from Solomon’s
temple. He then reads and interprets the inscription for the king informing him that his reign was at an end and that the Medes and Persians were going to defeat his kingdom, bringing an end to it.

In verse 18, Daniel is attributing Nebuchadnezzar’s great kingdom and honor to God. He was attributing Nebuchadnezzar’s sovereignty as directly originating from God. Daniel was reminding Belshazzar that the Most High God was sovereign over his great-grandfather. The obvious implication for Belshazzar is that God is sovereign over him too. God punished Nebuchadnezzar for his great pride and arrogance and lack of respect for God. So Belshazzar can expect to be punished severely by God for his great pride and arrogance and lack of respect for God.

When addressing Belshazzar, Daniel shows him respect by addressing him as “O king.” Daniel knows that Belshazzar’s authority comes from God and thus the king should be respected. To disrespect Belshazzar would be to disrespect God who gave the king his authority. Even though Belshazzar was not worthy of respect Daniel demonstrated respect for the king because God gave the king his authority and power.

Daniel 5:19 “Indeed, because of this greatness, which He gave to him, each and every person belonging to the nations, ethnicities as well as language groups was in state of trembling, yes in a state of fear from being in the presence of him. He was characterized as putting to death whomever he desired whereas he was characterized as sparing whomever he desired. He was also characterized as promoting whomever he desired while on the other hand he was characterized as demoting whomever he desired.” (Author’s translation)

Daniel 5:19 advances upon and intensifies Daniel’s previous statement in Daniel 5:18 in the sense that Daniel goes from reminding Belshazzar that God gave Nebuchadnezzar his greatness to telling the king that this greatness caused the subjects in his great-grandfather’s world-wide kingdom to tremble with fear before him. Verse 19 tells the reader that the reason why each and every person belonging to the nations, ethnicities and language groups in Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom during his reign trembled with fear from being in his presence was that God gave him his greatness. In other words, because God made Nebuchadnezzar the most distinguished and preeminent king in the entire earth, the inhabitants in his kingdom trembled with fear when in his presence.

Daniel then goes on to give Belshazzar four specific examples of the sovereign power that God had delegated to Nebuchadnezzar, his great-grandfather. He was characterized during his reign as putting to death and sparing whomever he desired. These first two examples describe Nebuchadnezzar as sovereign over the lives of the inhabitants in his world wide kingdom because God had delegated to him this sovereign power. Daniel 2:12-13 provides an example of the sovereign
power Nebuchadnezzar possessed with regards to putting to death whomever he desired. In this passage, he ordered the execution of each and every one of the city of Babylon’s wise men because they were unable to tell him the content of his dream. Daniel chapter three serves as another example in that Nebuchadnezzar executed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego because they would not worship the golden statue that he erected of himself on the plain of Dura in the province of the city of Babylon. Also, Daniel chapter two records that the wise men were not executed because of Nebuchadnezzar’s decision not to do so. Of course, this was at the request of Daniel who requested the executioner Arioch not kill them because he knew the content of the king’s dream as well as its interpretation. Thus, the implication is that the wise men got a stay of execution because of Daniel requested that Nebuchadnezzar would not do so because he could meet his demands.

Daniel then reminds Belshazzar that his great-grandfather was characterized during his reign as promoting and demoting whomever he desired. These two also examples also form a single unit as the first two. Daniel 2:47-49 provides an example of Nebuchadnezzar promoting and demoting whomever he desired. IN this passage, Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel ruler over the entire province of the city of Babylon. The king made him the chief over the senior officials over each and every one of the city of Babylon’s wise men. Then, at the request of Daniel, the king assigned the administration over the province of the city of Babylon to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego while Daniel was at the king’s court. The obvious implication of the promotion of these four men is that the wise men were demoted because the king promoted Daniel as their commander. Also, every one who served in the administration of the province of the city of Babylon was under the authority of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as a result of being promoted over the administration of the province of the city of Babylon.

So in Daniel 5:19 Daniel is teaching Belshazzar that the Most High God delegated sovereign authority to his great-grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. This is what the apostle Paul taught in Romans 13:1-7. Daniel is teaching Belshazzar that the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar, his great-grandfather absolute sovereign authority over the inhabitants of the earth. He is telling Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar possessed complete power over each and every inhabitant of the earth, so that he exercised his will absolutely, without any necessary conditioning by a finite will or wills. His great-grandfather exercised supreme power over various nations, ethnicities and language groups absolutely because gave Nebuchadnezzar this authority.

Daniel 5:20 “However, when his mind was in a state of arrogance, namely, his attitude was obstinate so that he was proud, he was ordered to be removed
from his royal throne so that honor was taken away from him.” (Author’s translation)

In Daniel 5:20, Daniel continues his brief discourse on God’s dealing with Belshazzar’s great-grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. In this verse, Daniel reminds Belshazzar that despite God giving Nebuchadnezzar a great kingdom and honor, he became arrogant and specifically his attitude was obstinate so that he was proud. Consequently, God removed Nebuchadnezzar from his royal throne so that he no longer received honor or public recognition from men. Daniel is reminding Belshazzar of all this since he wants the king to understand the implications of his arrogance and pride toward God. If Nebuchadnezzar who was greater than Belshazzar was deposed from power by the Most High, then certainly Belshazzar will be if he does not repent of his pride and arrogance.

Daniel is reminding Belshazzar that the Most High is sovereign over him just like he demonstrated with his great-grandfather so He will demonstrate it with him as well. He is also reminding Belshazzar that the Most High God is his judge and does execute judgments against those who violate His laws. Belshazzar’s stubborn refusal to repent of pride and arrogance here in Daniel chapter 5 reveals his great pride and arrogance. Daniel is also reminding Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar was punished for his stubbornness which was the result of an unrepentant heart.

So in Daniel 5:17-23, Daniel is reminding Belshazzar of how the Most High dealt with his great-grandfather in the hopes that he would repent and be humble himself. So Daniel is warning Belshazzar indirectly that if God dealt severely with Nebuchadnezzar for his pride and arrogance, He will certainly do so with him as well.

Daniel 5:21 “Specifically, he was driven away from members of the human race. For his benefit, his mind was even transformed into the mind of a wild animal so that his dwelling place was among the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like cattle. Furthermore, his body was continually drenched with the dew from heaven until he acknowledged that the Most High God was the sovereign authority over mankind’s realm so that He can establish over it whomever He desires.” (Author’s translation)

In this verse, Daniel explains in detail what he means by his statement to Belshazzar at the end of verse 20 that the Most High ordered Nebuchadnezzar removed from his royal throne so that honor was taken away from him. Here in verse 21, Daniel presents to Belshazzar a five-fold description of Nebuchadnezzar as a result of the Most High deposing him from power for seven years. First of all, Nebuchadnezzar was driven away from the society of human beings. Secondly, his mind was even transformed into the mind of a wild animal. Thirdly, this resulted in his dwelling place being among the wild donkeys. The fourth description Daniel gives the king is that Nebuchadnezzar was fed grass like cattle. Lastly,
Nebuchadnezzar was continually drenched with the dew from heaven as a result of being exposed to the elements like a wild animal. Daniel reminds Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar experienced all these things until he acknowledged that the Most High was the sovereign authority over the realm of mankind and that He can establish over it whomever He desires.

Daniel reminds Belshazzar of all this because he wants to emphasize with the king that the Most High God whom he insulted by drinking from the articles of His temple in Jerusalem, demonstrated Himself to be sovereign over a greater king than himself, namely, his great-grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. If God could humble a king greater than himself, He can certainly humble Belshazzar who is a co-regent with his father Nabonidus. In Daniel 5:22, Daniel emphasizes with Belshazzar that he knew in detail all about this with his great-grandfather, yet, he never humbles himself but becomes arrogant and proud. Verse 22 indicates that the royal family knew of Nebuchadnezzar’s seven year punishment but the Babylonian people and the world did not know of these events.

The fact that Belshazzar knew of these events indicates quite clearly that this story was passed down through the years in his family. However, Belshazzar never learned the lesson. So Daniel reviewed the experience of Nebuchadnezzar for Belshazzar in order to rebuke him for his pride and arrogance which he manifested by committing sacrilege in drinking from the articles from Solomon’s temple. He also committed idolatry as manifesting by his praising the gods composed of gold, silver, bronze, wood and stone.

Daniel 5:22 “However, as for you, his great-grandson, you by no means humbled your heart even though you are well acquainted with all this.” (Author’s translation)

Daniel rebukes Belshazzar telling the king that he, the great-grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, did not humble himself before God even though he knew all about this story of the Most High deposing Nebuchadnezzar from power because of his pride and arrogance. He knew that Nebuchadnezzar was not restored to power until he acknowledged that the Most High was sovereign over him and the nations of the earth. So this verse marks a contrast between Belshazzar refusing to humble himself and Nebuchadnezzar humbling himself after being deposed from power for seven years.

In light of the Most High deposing Nebuchadnezzar from power and only restoring to power after he repented, Belshazzar should have been humble since his great-grandfather was more powerful than he ever was. In fact, he was a co-regent with his father, Nabonidus. Yet, Belshazzar remained arrogant and proud despite knowing all the details of God deposing his great-grandfather from power and restoring him to power only after he humbled himself by acknowledging that God was sovereign over him.
Daniel is confronting Belshazzar for his great pride and arrogance. However, he
is not doing this arrogantly or doing being overbearing since he was very careful to
remind Belshazzar of God’s judgment of Nebuchadnezzar since he wants the king
to focus on God’s sovereignty and power to bring about judgment with reference to
the king. Daniel wanted the king to know in no uncertain terms that God was not
rash or arbitrary in judging. He was in fact merciful and patient and gracious with
Belshazzar as He had been with his great-grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar.

Like Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar was king by the sovereign grace of God.
Daniel tells Belshazzar here in verse 22 that he was very well acquainted with the
Most High God deposing his great-grandfather from power for seven years.
However, Belshazzar never learned the lesson though God was very patient with
him. He never learned to humble himself before God by submitting to the will of
the Most High.

Daniel 5:23 “Instead, you caused yourself to become arrogant against the
Lord ruling the heavens. Specifically, the vessels which are from God’s house
were brought into your presence. Consequently, you, yourself along with your
nobles, your wives as well as your concubines drank wine excessively with
them while you, praised the gods composed of silver as well as gold, bronze,
iron, wood and in addition stone, which never see as well as never hear
likewise, never communicate. Thus, you never honored the God who holds
your life in His hand so that every one of your ways originates from Him.”
(Author’s translation)

Daniel continues his rebuke of Belshazzar here in verse 23 by contrasting
Belshazzar humbling himself as a result of being aware that God punished
Nebuchadnezzar for his pride and arrogance with that of exalting himself against
the Lord ruling the heavens despite this knowledge. He lists five charges against
the king. The first summarizes the others.

The first is that Belshazzar caused himself to become arrogant against the Lord
who rules the inhabitants of the first, second and third heavens. Daniel then
explains in detail how the king did this. He first ordered the sacred vessels which
were from God’s house to be brought to the banquet hall. These articles were from
Solomon’s temple and were confiscated by Nebuchadnezzar who in turn stored
them in the treasury of the god Marduk.

Belshazzar ordered these vessels to be brought to the banquet he was throwing
for his nobles in order that he and his nobles, as well as his wives and concubines
could drink their wine with these vessels. They not only drank with them but got
drunk doing so. These two actions of ordering the vessels to be brought to the
banquet and drinking wine excessively with them demonstrated Belshazzar’s
arrogance toward God. They also constituted committing sacrilege as well as
blasphemy.
Then Daniel charged Belshazzar and his guests with idolatry. He rebukes the king for praising the gods of the Babylonians while drinking wine with the sacred vessels and getting drunk. Daniel describes these gods as composed of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood and stone. He says that they never see, hear or speak. This stands in stark contrast with the God of Israel who spoke to Nebuchadnezzar in two dreams and by delivering Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from his power. The God of Israel also deposed Nebuchadnezzar from power for seven years after warning him in a dream whose interpretation was communicated to the king by Daniel. The God of Israel also employed an unattached hand to communicate with Belshazzar of his impending doom.

The last charge in verse 23, which Daniel communicates to Belshazzar is that he never honored God as a result of praising his gods. Daniel describes God as holding Belshazzar’s life in His hand, i.e. power so that each and every one of the king’s ways originated from God. The entire course of the king’s life originated from God because He held the king’s life in His power.

There is a bit of a wordplay with this description since the God who held Belshazzar’s life in His “hand,” caused an unattached hand to appear writing a message for the king on one of the walls of the banquet hall. This description of the God of Israel stands in stark contrast to the lifeless idols which Belshazzar and his guests worshipped and praised. They should have worshipping the God of Israel since they were created by Him and their existence is directly attributed to Him.

All of Belshazzar’s actions described here in Daniel 5:23 were deliberately against the God of Israel. In fact, his knowledge of how God punished his great-grandfather Nebuchadnezzar for his great pride and arrogance serves to make Belshazzar’s actions here especially hideous. He blatantly disrespects God. This verse makes clear that Belshazzar was volitionally responsible and accountable to God. The king’s actions demonstrate his total depravity, which he shares with the entire human race.

Daniel 5:24 “Then, the palm of the hand was sent from Him so that this inscription was written.” (Author’s translation)

Daniel makes Belshazzar aware of the origin of the unattached hand which appeared on the wall lit by the golden lampstand. The hand Daniel informs the king was sent directly from the presence of the God who he had insulted by getting drunk with wine with the vessels from His temple in Jerusalem and committing idolatry by praising the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone. This would make clear to the king that the message on the wall was one of judgment and that he was being held accountable by God for his sinful actions since Daniel has told the king that the inscription is from the God who he had insulted by his actions. The king know now that the inscription was the direct result of his
misusing the articles from God’s temple in Jerusalem as well as he and his guests praising their lifeless gods composed of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.

God had come to break up the party and He was not happy with Belshazzar. He was intervening in the life of the king and his nobles, wives and concubines and the people of the city of Babylon. This is called in theology, the “immanency” of God. Belshazzar was learning what his great-grandfather Nebuchadnezzar learned, namely that God involves Himself in and concerns Himself with and intervenes in the lives of members of the human race, both saved and unsaved.

The appearance of this hand and the message it was writing for the king demonstrated to the king and everyone in the banquet hall that the God of Israel, whose cups they were drinking with and who they insulted by committing idolatry, was intervening in the life of the king and those who were his guests. Belshazzar was going to learn that he was accountable to the God of Israel and was sovereign over the king.

As was the case with Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar is also learning that the God of Israel was sovereign over him. God, from His innate dignity, exercises supreme power over the nations of the earth, with no area of planet earth outside His jurisdiction. God’s exercises His will absolutely over the nations of the earth.

Daniel 5:25 “Now, this is the content of the inscription to follow that was written: MENÊ, MENÊ, TEKÊL, UPHARSIN.” (My translation)

The expression “MENÊ, MENÊ, TEKÊL, UPHARSIN” literally means “numbered, weighed and divided.” Daniel’s interpretation in Daniel 5:26-28 indicates that God was bringing to an end Belshazzar’s days as king of the Neo-Babylonian empire since he did not measure up to God’s standards and this kingdom would be divided between the Medes and the Persians.

Daniel 5:26 “This is the interpretation of the message: As for MENÊ’-God has numbered your kingdom’s days so that He has caused it to be brought to an end. 27 As for TEKÊL-you have been weighed on the balances with the result that you have been observed deficient. 28 As for PERÊS-your kingdom has been divided so that it has been given to the Medes and Persians.” (My translation)

Daniel 5:26-28 contains Daniel’s interpretation of the inscription, which was written on one of the walls of the banquet hall which was lit by the golden lampstand during the party Belshazzar threw for a thousand of his nobles. Daniel’s statement in 26 interpreted “MENÊ” as indicating that the God of Israel was bringing to an end the reign of Belshazzar’s Neo-Babylonian kingdom as a world-wide empire as a result of numbering the days of this kingdom as a world-wide empire. Then, in verse 27, he interprets “TEKÊL” as indicating that Belshazzar had been weighed on the balances with the result that he had been observed by God as deficient. What he means by this is that God had evaluated the king
according to His perfect, holy moral and ethical standards and determined the king did not measure up to these standards. Lastly, in verse 28, he interprets “PERĒS” as indicating that Belshazzar’s Neo-Babylonian kingdom had been divided by God into two parts so that it had been given to the Medes and the Persians.

These two nations were represented by the silver arms and chest of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream recorded in Daniel chapter 2. This kingdom lasted over 200 years (539-330 B.C.), longer than the Neo-Babylonian Empire of 87 years (626-539). However, as we noted in Daniel chapter two this empire was inferior in quality to the Babylonian empire just as silver compared with gold.

Daniel 2:39 records Daniel telling Nebuchadnezzar that after his kingdom there will arise another kingdom which will be inferior to his kingdom. Since Daniel told the king at the end of Daniel 2:38 that he was the head of gold of the statue in his dream, this second kingdom is represented by the silver arms and chest of the statue. History records that this part of the statue represented the Medo-Persian Empire. It was inferior since it lacked the inner unity of Babylon because the Medes and the Persians, though united, never fused into one people.

Since the metals of the statue decrease in value but increase in strength, the silver arms and chest of the statue indicate that the character of authority in rulership of the Media-Persian Empire was superior to the third and fourth kingdoms, which history records were Greece and Rome respectively and inferior to only Babylon. However, its power or strength was superior to Babylon but inferior to Greece and Rome.

In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the arms of silver represented two distinct nations, namely, Media and Persia that together defeated Babylon. Although the Medo-Persia Empire lasted over 200 years (539-330 B.C.) longer than the Neo-Babylonian Empire of 87 years (626-539), the Medo-Persian Empire was inferior to it, as silver is compared with gold. History confirms that the Medo-Persian Empire, and the empire of Alexander which followed, lacked the central authority and fine organization which characterized the Babylonian Empire, thus the Babylonian Empire was greater.

Therefore, in Daniel 5:26-28, Daniel interprets the inscription for Belshazzar and the message is one of judgment. His interpretation reveals that the God of Israel was bringing an end to the reign of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom as a worldwide empire because Belshazzar and his kingdom did not measure up to God’s holy moral and ethical standards which are represented in the Ten Commandments, which are written into the soul of every human being according to Romans 2:14-15. This interpretation indicates that the first stage of the prophecy in Daniel chapter two which declared that Nebuchadnezzar’s Neo-Babylonian kingdom would be a world-wide empire but would come to end and be followed by the Mede-Persian empire.
Belshazzar Issue Orders

Daniel 5:29 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. (NASB95)

“Then Belshazzar gave orders” is composed of the preposition bē (ב) (beh), which is not translated and is followed by the temporal adverb ʾēḏā́yīn (יֵאֵדַּהַיִּין) (ed-ahʾ-yin) and together they are translated “then” and they are followed by the third person singular peʿal (Hebrew: qal) active perfect form of the verb ʾāmār (אמר) (am-arʾ), “gave orders” which is followed by the masculine singular proper name bēʾlšāʾr (בְּלֵשָׁנָר) (bale-shats-tsarʾ), “Belshazzar.”

bēʾ ʾāḏāyīn

The preposition b- is prefixed to the temporal adverb ʾēḏā́yīn in order to function as a marker of result and means “therefore, consequently” since they introduce a statement which tells the reader the result of the events recorded in Daniel 5:25-28. Thus, the marker of result bēʾ ʾāḏāyīn presents to the reader Belshazzar’s response to Daniel fulfilling his request that someone read and interpret the mysterious inscription. Therefore, bēʾ ʾāḏāyīn indicates to the reader that Belshazzar rewarded Daniel by ordering him to be clothed with a purple robe, gold chain and making him third ruler in the kingdom “as a result of” reading and interpreting the inscription for him. This expression could be interpreted as a temporal coordinator presenting to the reader the next event that took place after the events recorded in Daniel 5:25-28. However, Daniel’s emphasis would be more of presenting the result of what happened to him after meeting the king’s request since in Daniel 5:16 Belshazzar promised to reward him for meeting his request and Daniel 5:29 records the king rewarding Daniel as he said he would.

ʾāmār

The verb ʾāʾmār means “to issue an order” since the clause that follows reveals that Nebuchadnezzar issued an order to clothe Daniel with a purple robe, gold chain and to have a proclamation which declared him as third ruler in the kingdom.

The peʿal (Hebrew: qal) stem of the verb is fientive expressing an action on the part of Belshazzar issuing an order to reward Daniel by clothing him with a purple robe, gold chain and to have a proclamation which declared him as third ruler in
the kingdom. The perfect tense of the verb is constative describing in summary fashion Belshazzar issuing this order. We will translate 'ā-mār, “issued an order”

Daniel is Clothed with a Purple Robe and Gold Chain

Daniel 5:29 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. (NASB95)

“And they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck” is composed of the conjunction wa (י) (waw), “and” which is followed by the third person masculine plural haf’el (Hebrew: hiphil) active perfect form of the verb lēḇūš (שַׂמָּשׁ) (leb-oosh), “they clothed” and then we have the preposition lē (ל) (leh), which is not translated and its object is the masculine singular proper noun dānīyēl (דַּנְיָל) (daw-ney-yale), “Daniel” and then we have the masculine singular noun ʾār-gwān (אֲרֶג-וֹאָן) (arg-ev-awn), “with purple” and then we have the conjunction wa (י) (waw), “and” which is followed by the masculine singular noun hām-yānāk (הַמֵּאָנָק) (ham-oo-nayk), “a necklace” and then we have the particle dî (די) (dee), “of” which is followed by the masculine singular noun dēḥāḇ (דְּחָב) (deh-hab), “gold” and then we have the preposition ʿāl (עָלָ) (al), “around” and its object is the masculine singular construct form of the noun šāw-wār (שַׁאוֹו-וַּר) (tsav-var), “neck” which is modified by the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix hû (יו) (who), “his.”

wa

The conjunction wa is a marker of purpose meaning that it is introducing a statement which presents to the reader the purpose of Belshazzar issuing an order. The word introduces a statement which records Daniel being clothed with a purpose robe, a gold chain. Therefore, this word indicates that the purpose of Belshazzar issuing an order immediately on the heels of Daniel fulfilling his request to read and interpret the inscription, was to clothe him with a purpose robe, a gold chain.

lēḇūš

The verb lēḇūš means “to clothe someone” referring to Belshazzar’s subordinates clothing Daniel with a purple robe as well as a golden chain around his neck because he read and interpreted the mysterious inscription written on the wall.
The haf’el (Hebrew: hiphil stem) stem of the verb is causative meaning that the subject causes its direct object to do the action described by this verb in the pe’al (Hebrew: qal). Here the subject is Belshazzar’s subordinates who carried out his orders to clothe Daniel with a purple robe and a gold chain. The direct object is of course Daniel. Thus, this stem denotes Belshazzar’s subordinates who carried out his orders caused Daniel to be clothed with a purple robe and a gold chain around his neck. The perfect tense of the verb is constative describing in summary fashion this past action.

dā·niy·yē(’)l

The proper noun dā·niy·yē(’)l means of course “Daniel” and is the object of the preposition lē, which marks the word as the direct object of the verb lē’būš meaning that it receives action of this verb.

ʾār·gēwān

The noun ʾār·gēwān means “purple garment” or “purple robe” which was the common sign of rank worn by kings in the ancient world.

wa

Once again the conjunction wa is adjunctive meaning that “in addition to” being clothed with purple robe, Daniel had a gold chain placed around his neck.

hām·mō·nēkā(’) dī dā·hēbā(’)

The noun hām·yā·nāk means “chain” referring to a series of links used or worn as an ornament around the neck. The word is followed by the particle dī, which should not be translated since it is simply a marker to show the genitive relationship between chain and the gold. Specifically, it denotes genitive of material indicating that this chain was “composed of” gold. The noun dēḥāb means “gold.”

‘āl ēh šāw(’)r

The noun šāw·wā(’)r means “neck” referring to the part of the human body which connects the head with the torso. This word is modified by the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix hū(’), which means “his” since it functions as a possessive pronoun referring to Daniel. This noun is the object of the
preposition ‘āl, which means “around” since it functions as a marker of location but in a comprehensive sense indicating that this golden chain was placed “around” the neck of Daniel.

Daniel is Made Third Ruler in the Kingdom

Daniel 5:29 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. (NASB95)

“And issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom” is composed of the conjunction wa (ו) (waw), “and” which is followed by the third person masculine plural haf’el (Hebrew: hiphil) active perfect form of the verb k’rāz (ךְרָצ) (ker-az´), “issued a proclamation” and then we have the preposition ‘āl (אל) (al), “concerning” and its object is the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix hû (הָ) (who), “him” which is followed by the particle dî (דִ) (dee), “that” and then we have the third person masculine singular pe’al (Hebrew: qal) active imperfect form of the verb hāwā(h) (הָוָה) (khav-aw´), “he had” which is followed by the masculine singular form of the adjective šāl-lît (shallit) (shal-leet´), “authority as” which is followed by the masculine singular ordinal number tâl-tā(ו) (tel-awth´), “third” which is followed by the preposition b- (ב) (beh) “in” and its object is the feminine singular construct form of the noun māl-kūṯ (מל庫ות) (mal-kooth), “the kingdom.”

wa

This time the conjunction wa is emphatic meaning that the word is introducing a statement that is advancing upon and intensifying the previous statement that in obedience to Belshazzar’s orders, Daniel was clothed with a purple robe as well as a gold chain around his neck. This conjunction is introducing a statement which records Belshazzar ordering a proclamation to be read which declared Daniel as the third ruler in the kingdom. That this conjunction is emphatic is indicated by the fact that purple robes and a gold chain around the neck were marks of royalty in the ancient world. Thus, we will translate the conjunction “indeed.”

k’rāz

The verb k’rāz means “to issue a proclamation, to publicly proclaim” indicating that in obedience to Belshazzar’s orders, a proclamation was issued declaring that
Daniel was now third ruler in the kingdom. The verb denotes that in obedience to Belshazzar’s orders, Daniel was publicly proclaimed as third ruler in the Babylonian kingdom.

The hafĕl (Hebrew: hiphil stem) stem of the verb is causative meaning that the subject causes its direct object to do the action described by this verb in the pe’al (Hebrew: qal). Here the subject is Belshazzar’s subordinates who carried out his orders to publicly proclaim Daniel as third ruler in the kingdom. The direct object is of course Daniel. Thus, this stem denotes Belshazzar’s subordinates who carried out his orders caused Daniel to be proclaimed publicly as third ruler in the kingdom. The perfect tense of the verb is constative describing in summary fashion this past action.

David was now third ruler in the kingdom. The verb denotes that in obedience to Belshazzar’s orders, Daniel was publicly proclaimed as third ruler in the Babylonian kingdom.

The hafĕl (Hebrew: hiphil stem) stem of the verb is causative meaning that the subject causes its direct object to do the action described by this verb in the pe’al (Hebrew: qal). Here the subject is Belshazzar’s subordinates who carried out his orders to publicly proclaim Daniel as third ruler in the kingdom. The direct object is of course Daniel. Thus, this stem denotes Belshazzar’s subordinates who carried out his orders caused Daniel to be proclaimed publicly as third ruler in the kingdom. The perfect tense of the verb is constative describing in summary fashion this past action.

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šāl·lîṯ

The noun šāl·lîṯ means “ruler” and denotes a person who has sovereign authority over a group of individuals. The word is used to describe Daniel as being the third ruler in the Babylonian kingdom. It means that he had sovereign authority over every individual in the Babylonian kingdom with the exception of Belshazzar and his father Nabonidus.

tāl·tā(‘) b māl·kū·tā(‘)

The ordinal number tāl·tā(‘) means “third” indicating that Daniel was the third ruler in the kingdom. It denotes that only Belshazzar and his father Nabonidus would be have greater authority than Daniel. The noun māl·kū means “kingdom” and denotes the sphere of Babylon’s authority or control over various nations, ethnicities and language groups. It is used to designate the territorial sphere of Babylon. The term refers to the political boundaries of authority and control, which were determined by the extent to which Belshazzar and his father Nabonidus and now Daniel exercised authority. This noun is the object of the preposition b-, which is a marker of authority indicating Daniel was now the third ruler “over” the inhabitants of the Babylonian kingdom.

Translation of Daniel 5:29

Daniel 5:29 Consequently, Belshazzar issued an order for the purpose of clothing Daniel with a purple robe as well as a gold chain around his neck. Indeed, they issued a proclamation concerning him that he was the third ruler in the kingdom.

Exposition of Daniel 5:29

Daniel 5:29 records Belshazzar keeping his word to Daniel that he would reward him if he could meet his request to read and interpret the mysterious inscription. Belshazzar does not kill Daniel even though Daniel’s interpretation shockingly spoke against the king in that it said that his rulership was at an end and that the reign of Babylon as a world-wide empire had come to an end. Undoubtedly, he inwardly had a strong desire to kill Daniel for this interpretation. However, he does not do this because more than likely he wanted to save face in front of his guests. He made a public promise to reward any one including the Jewish captive Daniel if they could solve his problem. If he did not reward Daniel
after Daniel met his request, he would have lost respect before his nobles and disgraced himself before his nobles, wives and concubines. However, Belshazzar honors Daniel when he should have honored the God Daniel represented.

By Belshazzar issuing a proclamation that Daniel was third ruler in the kingdom, the king was revealing that he did not agree with and believe that Daniel’s interpretation was correct or would come to pass since if he did, he would have made Daniel second or first ruler in the kingdom. So by rewarding Daniel, he actually is revealing that he thought his kingdom would continue and that he would continue to rule.

The king shows absolutely no sign of repentance before God. His response demonstrates that he either thought Daniel’s interpretation was ridiculous or wrong or would not come to pass. If he did trust in Daniel’s interpretation, he would have demonstrated great fear as he did when the hand wrote on the wall and when his wise men could not read or interpret the inscription the hand wrote on the wall. The fact that he demonstrates no fear in light of Daniel’s interpretation is an indication that he did not trust in the interpretation. The fact that he makes Daniel third ruler in the kingdom is again evidence of his unbelief. Nevertheless, he still rewards Daniel to save face before his guests. Therefore, the king did not accept his imminent death and decline of his kingdom. He stubbornly refuses to trust in this revelation that God has given him through Daniel. If he did trust in it he would have shown some sign of repentance as the king of Nineveh did when Jonah preached that the city of Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days. Like the king of Nineveh, Belshazzar would have sat in sackcloth and ashes and issued a proclamation for a nation wide fast for the entire population of Babylon if he had trusted in Daniel’s interpretation and had repented.

The term “repentance” means to go in one direction and to change your mind and go in the exact opposite direction and does not involve emotion or feeling sorry for your sins. Repentance involves not only a change of attitude but of conduct. After Daniel’s interpretation, Belshazzar shows no sign that his attitude and conduct towards God’s sovereign authority over him has done a 180 degree turn. Repentance is simply a change of attitude or a change of mind. It means to being going in one direction and to change your mind and go in the exact opposite direction. Belshazzar shows no sign of repentance whatsoever. The fact that he dies that very evening makes clear that he never repented otherwise could would have spared him.

To receive eternal salvation, the only issue in repentance is Christ and not a person’s sin. In relation to receiving eternal salvation, the Scriptures never teach repentance of sins but of a change of attitude regarding Christ as one’s personal Savior. An individual’s personal sins are not an issue because they were all paid for at the cross by the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, with respect to the non-
believer, repentance would involve simply faith along in Christ alone (John 3:16-18; Acts 16:31). On the other hand, repentance for the believer would involve the confession of sin (1 John 1:9) which must be followed immediately by obedience to the Word of God (1 John 2:3-6). As we noted in our previous studies in detail, Nebuchadnezzar was a believer when he received this vision in Daniel chapter four.

The Greek word in the New Testament for repentance is the noun *metanoia*, which means “a change of mind” and its cognate verb is *metanoeo*, which means “to change your mind, to change your attitude toward something.” *Metanoia* is found 24 times in the Greek New Testament and *metanoeo* is found 35 times. *Metanoeo* is a compound verb, which means that it is composed of two words. The first is *meta* meaning “change,” and the second is *noeo*, “mind,” therefore, the correct meaning of repentance is “to change one’s mind,” or “to change your attitude toward something.” Both words have absolutely nothing to do with feeling sorry for your sins. They have nothing to do with your emotions.

There is another word in the Greek New Testament which has an emotional connotation and that is the verb *metamelomai* which means “to feel sorry, to regret, to feel sorrow.” This word is found 6 times in the Greek New Testament. The distinction between the two verbs *metanoeo* and *metamelomai* is obvious in the Greek New Testament. *Metamelomai* expresses a merely emotional change while *metanoeo* expresses a change of choice. *Metamelomai* signifies nothing but regret resulting in feeling sorry while *metanoeo* deals with a change of mental attitude. *Metanoeo* concerns your volition and not your emotions. Since our English word is a translation of the Greek of the New Testament, we need to look at the original language.

There are two New Testament Greek words which are translated “repentance” in the modern English translations: *metanoia* (and its verbal counterpart *metanoeo*) and *metamelomai*. The former term is so translated fifty-eight times in the New Testament; the latter only six times. This study will be concerned primarily with *metanoia*.

*Metamelomai* means, “to regret, change the mind” and may connote the idea of sorrow, but not necessarily. It is translated by “regret, change the mind, and feel remorse” in the NASB and NIV, and in all but one of the passages where it is used, the primary idea is a change of mind (cf. Matt. 21:29, 32; 27:3; 2 Cor. 7:8; Heb. 7:21).

*Metanoia*, the primary word, without question, means “a change of mind.” It refers to the thinking of people who thought one thing or made one decision and then, based on further evidence or input, changed their minds. So, the basic sense is “a change of mind.” This is its meaning and use outside the New Testament and
in the New Testament. It is a change of mind that leads to a different course of action, but that course of action must be determined by the context.

In a context that deals with forgiveness of sin or receiving eternal life as a gift from God, the course of action is a change of trust because one now sees Jesus as the only means of salvation from sin. Let me illustrate this for you in the Scriptures and I’ll point out when each word is used.

John the Baptist used the verb *metanoeo*.

**Matthew 3:2** Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, “Repent (*metanoeo*, “change your mind”), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (NASB95)

What were John’s listeners suppose to change their minds about?

**Mark 1:14** And after John had been taken into custody (put into prison), Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand (Jesus Christ the Savior is right in front of them); Repent (*metanoeo*, “change your mind”) and believe in the gospel.” (NASB95)

They were to change their minds about Christ. They were unbelievers and they were to change their minds about Christ and believe in Him for salvation. They were to change their minds concerning the gospel, which is the “power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

Our Lord makes an interesting comment concerning the person who changes their mind about Christ and accepts Him as Savior.

**Luke 15:7** “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (*metanoeo*, “changes their mind about Christ and accepts Him as Savior”), than over ninety-nine righteous persons (people who have accepted Christ as Savior) who need no repentance (*metanoia*, “change of mind about Christ”).” (NASB95)

**Luke 15:10** “In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (*metanoeo*, “changes their mind about Christ and believes in Him for salvation”).” (NASB95)

So you can see that repentance has nothing to do with emotion but is a change of mind about Christ.

Now, the first occurrence of *metamelomai* is in Matthew 21:29-32 in the parable of the two sons. In the parable, one son said to his father that he would go in the vineyard while the second son said he would not but then he *metamelomai*, felt badly, regretted not going and then went. The first son, who said he would go, but didn’t.

*Metamelomai* occurs twice in this passage. It is found in verse 29 which the New American Standard translates as “regretted,” and it is found in verse 32 where it is translated “remorse.”
In Matthew 27:3, *metamelomai* is used in connection with Judas Iscariot, an unbeliever who betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 27:1 Now when morning had come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death; 2 and they bound Him, and led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate the governor. 3 Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him (Jesus), saw that He (Jesus) had been condemned, he felt remorse (*metamelomai*, “he felt sorry”) and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests, 4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “what is that to us? See that yourself.” 5 And he (Judas) threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. (NASB95)

Judas felt sorry for his sin and yet he went to the Lake of Fire. We know that he went to hell because the Lord Jesus Christ said so Himself.

John 17:12 “While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name (God the Father’s) which You have given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished (the apostles and His disciples) but the son of perdition (Judas Iscariot), that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” (NASB95)

Now, what is important to note is that Judas felt sorry for his sin for betraying the Son of God and yet he was not saved because of his emotions. The apostle Peter denied Christ three times and he felt sorry and wept.

Matthew 26:75 And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, “Before a cock crows Peter, you will deny Me three times.” And he (Peter) went out and wept bitterly. (NASB95)

Both men felt sorry for their sins, and yet one was saved and the other was not. Each committed a terrible sin, one was saved and the other was not. Emotion could not save Judas. Peter wept bitterly and yet his tears did not save him but rather his faith in Christ saved him.

There is only one-way of salvation which excludes human works and emotion and that is to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31; John 3:16, 36). Judas could have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ but did not. Peter did believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:13-16).

The word *metamelomai* also occurs in 2 Corinthians 7:8 where the apostle Paul is talking about his first letter to the Corinthians in which he sharply rebuked the believers in Corinth,

1 Corinthians 7:8 For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it (*metamelomai*); though I did regret it (*metamelomai*)-for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while-9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance (*metanoia*, “a change of mind”). For you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in
anything though us. 10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a change of mind (metanoia) WITHOUT REGRET (metamelomai), leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (NASB95)

This passage deals with confession of sin followed by obedience to the Word of God. Paul was talking to people who were believers. They had already believed in Jesus Christ as Savior and were saved forever. The repentance that Paul is talking about is the confession of sin and their recovery from that sin through obedience. This sin knocks them out of fellowship yet does not cost them their salvation.

In relation to receiving eternal salvation, sin is never an issue in repentance according to the Scriptures but rather one’s attitude toward Jesus Christ is the issue.

Psalm 103:10 He (God) has NOT dealt with us (you and I) according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. (NASB95)

John 1:29 “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (NASB95)

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man (Adam) sin (sin nature) entered into the world, and death (spiritual) through sin (the sin nature), and so death (spiritual) spread to all men (the entire human race), because all sinned. (NASB95)

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I (Paul) delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. (NASB95)

Galatians 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who (the Lord Jesus Christ) gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of God and Father. (NASB95)

Hebrews 8:12 For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more. (NASB95)

Hebrews 10:17 And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. (NASB95)

1 Peter 2:24 And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin (sin nature) and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. (NASB95)

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. (NASB95)

1 John 2:2 He is the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins, and not for ours only but for those of the whole world. (NASB95)

1 John 3:5 He (the Lord Jesus Christ) appeared in order to take away sins (plural; personal sins of the entire human race). (NASB95)
Revelation 1:4 John to the seven churches in Asia (what is today western Turkey): Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven spirits who are before His throne; 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead (1st to be resurrected), and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood. (NASB95)

The only issue in repentance that the Scriptures teach is regarding the Person and Work of Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:13-20). The sins of the entire world-past, present and future were paid for by the impeccable humanity of Christ in hypostatic union at the cross. He paid for these sins with His voluntary substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths.

Therefore, repentance in relation to the non-Christian with respect to receiving eternal salvation has nothing to do with a person’s sins but rather his attitude toward Jesus Christ. The issue in repentance is simply, “Will you change your mind about Jesus Christ and accept Him as your Lord and Savior?” Each person must decide for himself. Salvation is through faith alone in Christ alone and nothing more and nothing less (John 3:16-17, 36; Acts 16:31). In relation to the Christian, repentance involves confession of sin (1 John 1:9) followed by obedience to the Word of God (1 John 2:3-6).

Daniel 5:17-29 reveals the great courage of Daniel since he faithfully communicated God’s message of doom and judgment for Belshazzar and kingdom even though the king could have killed him on the spot for such an interpretation. Daniel’s great courage demonstrated his great faith in his God.

As was the case in chapter four with Nebuchadnezzar, here in chapter five with Belshazzar, Daniel displays great courage in communicating this message from God to the king. This is reminiscent of Nathan confronting David with regards to his murder of Uriah the Hittite to cover up his adulterous affair with his wife Bathsheba that got her pregnant. Daniel’s courage like Nathan’s was the result of their great faith and trust in the Lord and their understanding that God is sovereign over the men who rule over the kingdoms of this earth like David, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Daniel is speaking the truth to Belshazzar in love as he did with Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Ephesians 4:15).

Faith produces courage whereas unbelief produces cowardice and so we see that the faith of Daniel produced courage in his soul. Faith honors the Lord whereas unbelief dishonors the Lord because it calls into question His integrity and ability to deliver on His promises. Faith is obedience to God’s commands and is the positive response to God’s commands and acting upon those directions.

Unbelief on the other hand is disobedient and is the negative response to God’s commands and as a result the failure to act upon God’s commands. Unbelief not only occupies itself with difficulties but also magnifies and exaggerates them so
that spiritual defeat (Rm. 7) rules out experiencing victory (Rm. 8). Fear is a result of unbelief and unbelief is failure to trust that God will protect and provide for us.

There are three forms of perception: (1) Empiricism: Trusting in one’s experiences in life to make decisions. (2) Rationalism: Trusting in one’s intellect to make decisions in life. (3) Faith: Trusting in the authority of another to make decisions in life.

Faith is the only system of perception that God will accept because it is compatible with His grace policy (Ephesians 2:8-9). The object of the Christian’s faith at the moment of salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ and the object of his faith after conversion is the written Word of God.

Faith for the Christian is trusting in the authority of the Word of God in order to govern one’s life. Faith is obedience to God’s commands and is the positive response to God’s commands and acting upon those directions.

The Bible never separates faith from obedience (cf. Hebrews 11:8). Unbelief on the other hand is disobedient and is the negative response to God’s commands and as a result the failure to act upon God’s commands (Hebrews 3:12).

After conversion the believer is to walk by means of faith in the Word of God (2 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 2:20; Romans 1:16-17; Hebrews 10:37-38). Just as the Christian received the Lord Jesus as his Savior by exercising faith in Him for eternal salvation, so after conversion he is to live by the same principle of faith (Compare Ephesians 2:8-9 with Colossians 2:5-7).

The principle of faith operates quite simply: (1) God speaks and we hear His Word. (2) We trust His Word and act on it no matter what the circumstances are or what the consequences may be.

The circumstances may be impossible, and the consequences frightening and unknown but we obey God’s Word just the same and believe Him to do what is right and what is best.

Hebrews 11:1-3 gives a definition of faith and also a description of the nature of faith or in other words, what faith does and how it works.

**Hebrews 11:1** Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. (NASB95)

Faith is the positive response and obedience to God’s commands and prohibitions and acting upon those directions whereas unbelief on the other hand is disobedient and is the negative response to God’s commands and as a result the failure to act upon God’s commands.

A Christian’s faith is based upon trusting in the authority of the Scriptures in order to govern his life and is a non-meritorious system of perception. The object of the sinner’s faith for eternal salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ and the object of
his faith after conversion is the written Word of God. In order for the Christian to please God and gain His approval he must trust in the authority of the Scriptures to govern his life (See Hebrews 11:6).

Fellowship with God is based upon a moment-by-moment walk of faith in the Lord.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the {life} which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (NASB95)

Faith in the Word of God is the way to victory over the enemy, Satan.

1 John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith. (NASB95)

In fact, the believer is commanded to take up for himself the shield of faith.

Ephesians 6:16 In addition to everything, I solemnly charge all of you to take up for yourselves your shield, which is your faith because that will enable all of you to extinguish all the flaming arrows originating from the evil one. (Author’s translation)

The believer acquires faith through hearing the communication of the Word of Christ.

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (NASB95)

Answered prayer requires faith and is thus an expression of confidence in God’s ability to meet one’s need (Matt. 8:10; Luke 7:9; Matt. 9:22; Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48; Matt. 9:29; 17:20; Luke 17:5; Mark 9:29; Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:24; 1 John 3:21-22; James 1:5-8; 5:15).

True faith regards what has been requested as one’s own possession even though the request has not been received. Faith is an attitude toward God, in which the believer considers God to be faithful who will perform all that which He is promised in His Word. This attitude is illustrated in Philippians 1:6.

The great Old Testament saints were men and women who lived by this principle of faith. Hebrews 11:1-3 gives a definition of faith and also a description of the nature of faith or in other words, what faith does and how it works. Hebrews 11 lists many individuals who express faith in God by being obedient to His Word, thus God bears witness to them in His Word…what an honor. They honored God by trusting in His promises, thus God honors them. These individuals are summarized in Hebrews 12:1 as the “so great a cloud of witnesses.”

Hebrews 11:4-40 is devoted to a summary of the lives and labors of great men and women of faith who lived in Old Testament dispensations, Abraham. In each instance, you will find the same elements of faith: (1) God spoke to them through His Word. (2) They responded to His Word and obeyed God. (3) God bore witness about them.
The Lord will test the believer’s faith after conversion in order to produce endurance in them.

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 2 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance 3 and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (NASB95)

The Lord rewards the believer after his faith has been tested.

James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (NASB95)
Belshazzar is Killed

Daniel 5:30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. (NASB95)

This verse is composed of the preposition b- ( bev) (beh) and its object is the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix hû( ) ( who) and then once again we have the preposition b- ( bev) (beh) but this time its object is the masculine singular noun lê·lê ( lay-leh), “night” and then we have the third person masculine singular pe’il (Hebrew: qal passive) perfect form of the verb qe’tâl ( ) (ket-al’), “killed” which is followed by the masculine singular proper name bê·lê·šâr( ) (bale-shats-tsar’), “Belshazzar” and then we have the masculine singular form of the noun mē·lēk ( ) (meh-’lek), “the king” which is modified by the masculine plural form of the noun kâs-dây ( ) (kas-day), “Chaldean.”

Asyndeton

We have the figure of “asyndeton” meaning that there is no connective word between the statement to follow that Belshazzar was killed by the Medes and Persians during the very same night that Daniel interpreted the mysterious inscription from God and the previous statement that Belshazzar rewarded Daniel as a result of reading and interpreting the inscription for him. This emphasizes with the reader how profound and terrible the punishment Belshazzar received from God for his disobedience and rebellion. It expresses the shock that Belshazzar was killed immediately after Daniel interpreted the inscription for him.

b bêh lê·lê·yâ( ’)

The preposition b- and the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix hû( ’) are employed together as a temporal marker and literally mean “after this.” The preposition b- is a temporal marker meaning “after” marking the end of the events recorded in Daniel 5:13-29 indicating that Belshazzar was killed subsequent to these events. The third person feminine singular pronominal suffix hî( ’) means “this” since it is functioning like a demonstrative pronoun. It is anaphoric referring to the events recorded in Daniel 5:13-29, which record Daniel reading and interpreting the mysterious inscription for the king. Therefore, this prepositional
phrase means “after this” indicating that Belshazzar was killed after the events recorded in Daniel 5:13-29.

This first prepositional phrase is followed by another. Once again we have the preposition $b$- and this time its object is the noun $lē·lē$, which means “night,” referring to the period of time between sunset and sunrise. The preposition $b$- is again a temporal marker but this time it means “during” referring to the hour in which Belshazzar was killed by the Medes and the Persians. Therefore, this prepositional phrase means “during the night” indicating that Belshazzar was killed during the night whereas the first prepositional phrase identifies for the reader that he was killed after Belshazzar made Daniel third ruler in the kingdom after he read and interpreted the inscription for the king.

$kāś·dā·yā(’) māl·kā(’)$

The name Belshazzar is an Akkadian name which means “Bel protect the king.” The name “Bel” is a reference to the Babylonian god Marduk. He was great-grandson of Nebuchadnezzar and the first-born son of Nabonidus who had gone into semi-retirement in the oasis of Tema, leaving Belshazzar to rule the empire as co-regent. The noun $mē·lēk$ means “king” and of course is used with reference to Belshazzar referring to the fact that he was the governmental head of Babylon.

The noun $kāś·dāy$ is functioning here as an ethnic and thus means “Chaldeans” indicating the race of Belshazzar in contrast to Darius the Mede who is mentioned in Daniel 6:1. Therefore, the presence of the latter signifies a contrast with the former indicating a contrast between the Babylonians and the Medes.

$qēṭāl$

The verb $qēṭāl$ means “to kill” indicating that Belshazzar was killed by the Medes and the Persians during the very same night after Daniel interpreted the inscription for him.

The pe’il (Hebrew: qal passive) stem of this verb is fientive expressing an action. Here it denotes the action of Belshazzar being killed by the Medes and the Persians. The passive voice of the verb means that the subject receives the action of the verb from an expressed or unexpressed agency. Here the subject is of course Belshazzar and the unexpressed agency but implied agency, is the Medes and the Persians. Thus, the passive voice denotes that Belshazzar received the action of being killed by the Medes and the Persians. The perfect tense of the verb is constative describing in summary fashion the death of Belshazzar at the hands of the Medes and the Persians.
Translation of Daniel 5:30

Daniel 5:30 After this, during the night, Belshazzar, the Chaldean king was killed.

Exposition of Daniel 5:30

Daniel 5:30 tersely presents to the reader the death of Belshazzar at the hands of the Medes and the Persians. The text says that this death took place immediately after Daniel interpreted the inscription for Belshazzar and during that same night. This was in fulfillment of the prophecy of the inscription on the wall in the banquet hall where Belshazzar and his nobles were getting drunk and committing blasphemy and idolatry. Therefore, the fulfillment of the prophecy of the inscription taught a principle that appears in the book of Jeremiah, namely, God is watching over His Word to execute it.

Jeremiah 1:12 Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.” (NASB95)

Belshazzar found out painfully through his own personal experience with God that the Lord is watching over His word to perform it. The fact that God can bring to pass that which He has predicted would happen to Belshazzar and his Babylonian empire reveals that He is omnipotent and sovereign and omniscient.

Speaking in the context of judging Assyria the prophet Isaiah speaking for the Lord under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said the following:

Isaiah 14:24 The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, “Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand.”

Babylon and Assyria both learned this statement is true. Everything that Daniel said in his interpretation to the king came to pass exactly as Daniel said it would.

Belshazzar learned through personal experience what Balak was taught by Balaam.

Numbers 23:19 “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” (NASB95)

Belshazzar also learned through personal experience the teaching of Proverbs 29:1.

Proverbs 29:1 A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy. (NASB95)

Belshazzar and the Babylonians learned the hard way that when God says He will do something, He does it unlike sinful mankind who make promises that they can’t keep or say they are going to do something but do not keep their word.
Wiersbe writes “Had Belshazzar studied the Prophet Isaiah, he would have known just how the city of Babylon would be taken, and by whom it would be taken. Cyrus the Persian conqueror would defeat the Medes and then come down upon Babylon (Isa. 41:25; 45:1–4). He would dig a canal that would reroute the Euphrates River and then smuggle his army into the city under the gates. The Babylonians had seen the enemy digging, but they thought they were going to build a mound against the city. Actually, they were diverting the river. Why was the city taken unawares? Because most of the people were drunk. It was a great religious feast day, and the people were too involved in pleasure to think about defense. The enemy came right into the banquet hall, and the king was slain. What a warning to any nation! We have such a pleasure-mad world today that it will be easy for some enemy to take us unawares, and history will repeat itself.”

The fall of Babylon is also described in ancient secular literature such as in the writings of Herodotus, Xenophon and the Nabonidus Chronicle. These sources make clear that the Persians captured the city of Babylon without a major battle. Herodotus states that Cyrus took Babylon by temporarily diverting the course of the Euphrates during a nocturnal festival (1.190-191). Xenophon says that the Persians killed Belshazzar who he describes as a riotous, indulgent, cruel and godless man (Cyrus 4-7 on the fall of Babylon). Berossus tells us that when Nabonidus knew Cyrus was going to attack him, he engaged the Persian’s forces. However, he was defeated and with a few of his troops was shut up in the city of Borsippus. After this Cyrus took Babylon and gave the order to destroy the city’s outer walls since they caused him so much trouble.

Herodotus writes “[190] [1] Then at the beginning of the following spring, when Cyrus had punished the Gyndes by dividing it among the three hundred and sixty canals, he marched against Babylon at last. The Babylonians sallied out and awaited him; and when he came near their city in his march, they engaged him, but they were beaten and driven inside the city. [2] There they had stored provisions enough for very many years, because they knew already that Cyrus was not a man of no ambition, and saw that he attacked all nations alike; so now they were indifferent to the siege; and Cyrus did not know what to do, being so long delayed and gaining no advantage. [191] [1] Whether someone advised him in his difficulty, or whether he perceived for himself what to do, I do not know, but he did the following. [2] He posted his army at the place where the river goes into the city, and another part of it behind the city, where the river comes out of the city, and told his men to enter the city by the channel of the Euphrates when they saw it to be fordable. Having disposed them and given this command, he himself marched away with those of his army who could not fight; [3] and when he came

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to the lake, Cyrus dealt with it and with the river just as had the Babylonian queen: drawing off the river by a canal into the lake, which was a marsh, he made the stream sink until its former channel could be forded. [4] When this happened, the Persians who were posted with this objective made their way into Babylon by the channel of the Euphrates, which had now sunk to a depth of about the middle of a man's thigh. [5] Now if the Babylonians had known beforehand or learned what Cyrus was up to, they would have let the Persians enter the city and have destroyed them utterly; for then they would have shut all the gates that opened on the river and mounted the walls that ran along the river banks, and so caught their enemies in a trap. [6] But as it was, the Persians took them unawares, and because of the great size of the city (those who dwell there say) those in the outer parts of it were overcome, but the inhabitants of the middle part knew nothing of it; all this time they were dancing and celebrating a holiday which happened to fall then, until they learned the truth only too well. [192] [1] And Babylon, then for the first time, was taken in this way."

As we saw in Daniel chapter five, Belshazzar and his guests praised gods composed of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone. Undoubtedly, they were praising these gods because they erroneously believed that they had protected the city of Babylon for hundred of years and would do so again since Babylon had not fallen to an invading army in a thousand years at the time when the king threw this party for his nobles. Belshazzar and his nobles were not only showing contempt for the Medes and Persians but also God. They had great confidence in the city’s fortifications since the city had not fallen to an invader for a thousand years. However, ingeniously, Cyrus’ commander Ugbaru who is referred to in the Chronicle as governor of Gutium, diverted the waters of the Euphrates to an old channel dug by a previous ruler which suddenly reduced the water level well below the river-gates. Not too long after that the Persian invaders came wading in at night and clambered up the riverbank before the guards of the city knew what happened.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown write “HERODOTUS and XENOPHON confirm Daniel as to the suddenness of the event. Cyrus diverted the Euphrates into a new channel and, guided by two deserters, marched by the dry bed into the city, while the Babylonians were carousing at an annual feast to the gods. See also Is 21:5; 44:27; Je 50:38, 39; 51:36. As to Belshazzar’s being slain, compare Is 14:18–20; 21:2–9; Je 50:29–35; 51:57.”

Pentecost writes “The city had been under assault by Cyrus. In anticipation of a long siege the city had stored supplies to last for 20 years. The Euphrates River ran through the city from north to south, so the residents had an ample water supply.

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Belshazzar had a false sense of security, because the Persian army, led by Ugbaru, was outside Babylon’s city walls. Their army was divided; part was stationed where the river entered the city at the north and the other part was positioned where the river exited from the city at the south. The army diverted the water north of the city by digging a canal from the river to a nearby lake. With the water diverted, its level receded and the soldiers were able to enter the city by going under the sluice gate. Since the walls were unguarded the Persians, once inside the city, were able to conquer it without a fight. Significantly the defeat of Babylon fulfilled not only the prophecy Daniel made earlier that same night (5:28) but also a prophecy by Isaiah (Isa. 47:1-5). The overthrow of Babylon took place the night of the 16th of Tishri (October 12, 539 B.C.). The rule of the Medes and Persians was the second phase of the times of the Gentiles (the silver chest and arms of the image in Dan. 2). The events in chapter 5 illustrate that God is sovereign and moves according to His predetermined plans. Those events also anticipate the final overthrow of all Gentile world powers that rebel against God and are characterized by moral and spiritual corruption. Such a judgment, anticipated in Psalm 2:4-6 and Revelation 19:15-16, will be fulfilled at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ to this earth.”

Walvoord writes “The long chapter devoted to this incident which brought the Babylonian Empire to its close is undoubtedly recorded in the Word of God not only for its historic fulfillment of the prophecies relative to the Babylonian Empire but also as an illustration of divine dealing with a wicked world. The downfall of Babylon is in type the downfall of the unbelieving world. In many respects, modern civilization is much like ancient Babylon, resplendent with its monuments of architectural triumph, as secure as human hands and ingenuity could make it, and yet defenseless against the judgment of God at the proper hour. Contemporary civilization is similar to ancient Babylon in that it has much to foster human pride but little to provide human security. Much as Babylon fell on that sixteenth day of Tishri (Oc. 11 or 12) 539 B.C., as indicated in the Nabonidus Chronicle, so the world will be overtaken by disaster when the day of the Lord comes (1 Th 5:1-3). The disaster of the world, however, does not overtake the child of God; Daniel survives the purge and emerges triumphant as one of the presidents of the new kingdom in chapter 6.”

Belshazzar and the Babylonians learned through personal experience that the God of Israel is their judge and does execute judgments against those who violate His laws. God has authority to judge since He is the creator. The Scriptures teach of God’s status as judge (Psalm 75:7; cf. Psalm 50:6; 76:8-9; Ecclesiastes 11:9;

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5 Walvoord, John F. Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation; page 131; Moody Press; Chicago; 1971


God reveals His holy character through His righteous judgments. By judging men and angels He reveals his sovereignty (Psalm 9:7; 96:10; 99:4; Ezekiel 6:14), His power (Exodus 6:6; 14:31; Ezekiel 20:33-36; Revelation 18:8), His holiness (Leviticus 10:1-3; 1 Samuel 6:19-20; Ezekiel 28:22; Revelation 16:5), His righteous indignation (Nahum 1:2-3; Romans 2:5), His truth (Psalm 96:13; Romans 2:2; Revelation 16:7), His impartiality (2 Chronicles 19:7; Romans 2:9-11; Colossians 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17), His compassion (Lamentations 3:31-33; Hosea 11:8-9; John 3:10; 4:2), His patience (Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:30; 2 Peter 3:9), and His mercy (Nehemiah 9:31; Job 9:15; Psalm 78:38; Micah 7:18).

God the Father has awarded power and authority over all creation and every creature to the incarnate Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, because of His substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths on the cross.
Philippians 2:5 Everyone continue thinking this (according to humility) within yourselves, which was also in (the mind of) Christ Jesus, 6 Who although existing from eternity past in the essence of God, He never regarded existing equally in essence with God an exploitable asset. 7 On the contrary, He denied Himself of the independent function of His deity by having assumed the essence of a slave when He was born in the likeness of men. 8 In fact, although He was discovered in outward appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by having entered into obedience to the point of spiritual death even death on a Cross. 9 For this very reason in fact God the Father has promoted Him to the highest-ranking position and has awarded to Him the rank, which is superior to every rank. 10 In order that in the sphere of this rank possessed by Jesus every person must bow, celestials and terrestrials and sub-terrestrials. 11 Also, every person must publicly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord for the glory of God the Father. (Author’s translation)

Because the Lord Jesus Christ controls history as sovereign ruler of history, He has the authority to conduct the following judgments and evaluations in the future. The humanity of Christ in hypostatic union has been awarded the sovereign rulership over the entire cosmos for His voluntary substitutionary spiritual death on the cross and as a result has been awarded by God the Father the power and authority to preside over and conduct the following judgments: (1) Bema Seat Evaluation: Takes place at the Rapture of the Church and is the evaluation of the Church Age believer’s life after salvation (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 John 2:24). (2) Israel: Takes place at the Second Advent and is the removing unregenerate Israel from the earth leaving only regenerate Israel to enter into the Millennial reign of Christ (Ezek. 20:37-38; Zech. 13:8-9; Mal. 3:2-3, 5; Matt. 25:1-30). (3) Gentiles: Takes place at the Second Advent and is for the purpose of removing unregenerate, anti-Semitic Gentiles from the earth (Matt. 25:31-46). (4) Fallen Angels: Takes place at the end of the appeal trial of Satan which runs co-terminus with human history and is execution of Satan and the fallen angels sentence for the pre-historic rebellion against God (1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:10). (5) Great White Throne: Takes place at the end of human history and is the judgment of all unregenerate humanity in human history for the rejection of Christ as Savior (Rev. 20:11-15).

The following groups of regenerate human beings throughout human history will be subjected to a eschatological compulsory evaluation that the victorious, resurrected incarnate Son of God as Sovereign Ruler of the entire cosmos will conduct: (1) OT saints in heaven who lived during the dispensation of the Gentiles (Adam to the Exodus). (2) OT saints in heaven that lived during the dispensation of Israel (Exodus to 1st Advent). (3) All Church Age believers (Day of Pentecost to the Rapture). (4) Regenerate Jews who will live during the Tribulation (Post-
Rapture to the Second Advent). (5) Regenerate Gentiles who will live during the Tribulation (Post-Rapture to the Second Advent). (6) Regenerate Jews and Gentiles who will live during the Millennial reign of Christ (Second Advent to Gog and Magog Rebellion).

The following groups of unregenerate human beings throughout human history will be subjected to an eschatological compulsory judgment that the resurrected incarnate Son of God as Sovereign Ruler of the entire cosmos will conduct: (1) Unbelievers who lived during the dispensation of the Gentiles (Adam to the Exodus). (2) Unbelievers who lived during the dispensation of the Jews (Exodus to the 1st Advent). (3) Unbelievers who lived during the Church Age (Day of Pentecost to Rapture). (4) Unbelievers who lived during the Tribulation (Post-Rapture to Second Advent). (5) Unbelievers who lived during the Millennium (Second Advent to Gog Rebellion).

All fallen angels including Satan himself have already been subjected to a judgment before human history but the execution of that sentence has been delayed because the Supreme Court of Heaven granted Satan and the fallen angels an appeal trial, which runs co-terminus with human history. The elect angels do not come under judgment for the very same reason that regenerate human beings don’t come under judgment because they have exercised personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Every regenerate human being in every dispensation of human history must at some point in the future submit to an evaluation of their lives after salvation which will be conducted by the resurrected and sovereign humanity of Christ in hypostatic union.

Regenerate Israel who lived during the Age of Israel and Tribulation period will be evaluated at the Second Advent (Ezek. 20:37-38; Zech. 13:8-9; Mal. 3:2-3, 5; Matt. 25:1-30). Regenerate Gentiles who lived during the Age of the Gentiles and Tribulation period will be evaluated at the Second Advent (Matt. 25:31-46). Church Age believers will be evaluated at the Bema Seat Evaluation of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 John 2:24). Regenerate Jews and Gentiles who lived during the Millennium will be subjected to a judgment at the conclusion of human history (Rev. 20:15).

Every unregenerate human being in every dispensation of human history must submit to a judgment, which will also be conducted by the resurrected and sovereign incarnate Son of God at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

Every fallen angel has already been judged and sentenced to the Lake of Fire by the Supreme Court of Heaven before human history. The execution of that sentence will not be carried out until the conclusion of the appeal trial of Satan and the fallen angels (Rev. 20:10).
Belshazzar and his fellow Babylonians were punished for their stubborn refusal to repent of their pride and arrogance. In the Scriptures, pride is a great evil because it involves pretending to a greatness and glory that belongs rightly to God alone. It is condemned as evil (1 Samuel 15:23; Proverbs 21:4; James 4:16; cf. Mark 7:22-23; Romans 1:29-30; 2 Corinthians 12:20; 2 Timothy 3:1-2; 1 John 2:16). It is a characteristic of Satan (Ezekiel 28:2; 1 Timothy 3:6; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:4, the antichrist)

There are warnings about pride in the book of Proverbs (Proverbs 16:5, 18; cf. Proverbs 3:7, 34; 6:16-17; 11:2; 25:6-7, 27; 26:12; 27:1; 29:23) as well as elsewhere in Scripture (Psalm 119:21; cf. Leviticus 26:19). God is said to be opposed to the proud (1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6; Proverbs 3:34).


Daniel’s interpretation of the inscription for Belshazzar were designed to produce humility in the king and his subjects but they refused to do so. Humility is putting the glory and honor of God first in your set of priorities and the needs of other human beings ahead of your own needs. Belshazzar and his nation could care less about the needs of others. They could care less about putting the glory and honor of God and the needs of others ahead of their own needs and desires.

“Humility” is viewing ourselves from God’s perspective meaning we are sinners saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ and expresses itself in obedience to the Father’s will, which manifests itself in loving and serving others. It expresses itself in putting others ahead of yourself. Belshazzar had a distorted view of himself and is not viewing himself from God’s perspective which is that he is a creature of God and subordinate to God.

God commands humility (Micah 6:8; James 4:10; 1 Peter 3:8; cf. Exodus 10:3; Proverbs 16:19; Isaiah 57:15; 58:5; Zephaniah 2:3; Luke 14:9-11; Romans 12:3; 1
Corinthians 1:28; Ephesian 4:2; Colossians 3:12; Titus 3:2; James 3:13; 1 Peter 5:5). He promotes the humble (Luke 1:52; cf. 2 Samuel 7:8; 1 Kings 14:7).


There are many outstanding examples of humble people in the Bible (Genesis 32:10 Jacob; Genesis 41:16 Joseph; Numbers 12:3 Moses; 1 Samuel 9:21 Saul; 1 Samuel 18:18; 2 Samuel 7:18 David; 1 Kings 3:7 Solomon; Daniel 2:30 Daniel; Matthew 3:14 John the Baptist; Luke 1:43 Elizabeth; Luke 1:48 Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ; Paul: 1 Timothy 1:15; Acts 20:19).

There is also of course the example of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5-8; cf. Isaiah 53:3-5,7-8; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5; John 12:15; Matthew 11:29; 20:28; Luke 22:26-27; John 13:4; 2 Corinthians 8:9).

Belshazzar and his nation were punished for their stubbornness which was the result of an unrepentant heart. Stubbornness is an attitude of heart (Jeremiah 7:24; cf. Deuteronomy 9:27; Judges 2:19; Psalm 78:8; Isaiah 48:4; Jeremiah 3:17; 5:3; 9:14; 16:12; 18:12; Hosea 4:16; Zechariah 7:11). There are consequences for stubbornness (Ephesians 4:18; cf. Exodus 13:15; 33:3; Leviticus 26:19; 2 Chronicles 26:16; Nehemiah 9:16-17; Job 20:6-7; Psalm 10:4; Proverbs 1:24-31; 28:14; 29:1). The Scriptures teach that there is sudden destruction for the unrepentant (Isaiah 2:11; Jeremiah 5:3; 11:8; 13:10; Hosea 13:6; Zephaniah 3:11; Mark 6:51-52; Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 2:5) The Bible commands people to not to be stubborn (Nehemiah 9:29; cf. Exodus 33:5; 2 Chronicles 30:8; Psalm 95:8). Stubbornness can be God’s judgment on sin (Isaiah 63:17; cf. Exodus 4:21; 14:17; Deuteronomy 2:30; Joshua 11:20; Psalm 81:11-12; Romans 9:18; 11:7-8). God’s appeal to stubborn people (Isaiah 65:2; cf. Romans 10:21; 2 Chronicles 32:24-25; Job 33:16-18; Isaiah 46:12; Jeremiah 7:22-24; Ezekiel 2:4-5; Zechariah 7:11-12; Acts 19:8-9).

Daniel chapter five reveals that God working through His grace policy was responsible for the fact that Babylon became a great world-wide empire. This chapter also teaches that when Babylon and its leaders became proud, they paid no
attention to God and did not worship Him but rather gods of their own creation. Daniel chapter five teaches that God is sovereign as demonstrated by the fact that He deposes kings and raises men up to be kings. It also teaches that He judges the nations and holds them accountable along with their leaders.

Interestingly, as we noted Belshazzar’s name means “Bel protect the king.” Bel is a reference to the Babylonian god Marduk. God demonstrated to Belshazzar that his god could not protect him.