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## THE BOOK OF DANIEL | THE FUTURE OF THE GENTILE REIGN AND THE JEWISH REMNANT

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LISTENER'S GUIDE | SESSION 7 | DANIEL 5:1-31 | DR. RANDY WHITE

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### BELSHAZZAR THE KING | DANIEL 5:1-2

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- Time-line of the book of Daniel
  - Chapter 1: Daniel goes to exile: 606 BC
  - Chapter 2: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: 604BC
  - Chapter 3: Nebuchadnezzar's golden image: 580BC
  - Chapter 4: Nebuchadnezzar's second dream: 570 BC
    - Seven years of agony: 570-563
    - restoration of reign 563/2
    - Reign of Evil-Merodach 562-560 (2 Kings 25:27)
    - Reign of Neriglissar 560-556 (son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, killed his brother-in-law for the throne)
    - Reign of Labashi-Marduk 556 (short reign, quickly deemed unfit to reign)
    - Reign of Nabonidus – 556-539 (He spent much of his reign in Arabia, and appointed his son Belshazzar as co-regent to rule in Babylon).
    - For a journey in both the history of Babylon's fall and a history of movie making, watch part IV of the 1919 silent movie, *Intolerance*. [https://youtu.be/MI871iS\\_gik](https://youtu.be/MI871iS_gik)
  - Chapter 5: Belshazzar's feast: 539 BC
- Verse 1
  - **Belshazzar the king** –
    - Nebuchadnezzar died in 562BC, followed by a quick succession of three kings from 562-556BC. Nabunaid (Nabonidus) became the king in 556BC, However, during much of his reign, he was in Arabia on a military and spiritual campaign, and gave his rule to Belshazzar, his son. Nabunaid and Belshazzar reigned until 539BC, when Babylon fell (see Dan 5:30-31).
    - Before archaeological discoveries of the 1800s, critics accused Daniel of being incorrect, because no Belshazzar was mentioned in the historical record.
  - **drank wine before the thousand** - Compare with Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. It seems that a display of wine excessive drinking was a means of showing power and privilege among Mesopotamian kings.
- Verse 2
  - **father Nebuchadnezzar** - Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus, whose genealogy is unknown. The term is used in a generic sense, as in "our father Abraham."
  - **Vessels...taken out of the temple** - These would be returned under Cyrus (See Ezra 5:14).



FIGURE 1-THE NABONIDUS CHRONICLE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ARCHEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE FALL OF BABYLON.

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### THE EXPERIENCE AND THE ATTEMPT TO INTERPRET | DANIEL 5:3-7

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- Verses 3-5 – in the midst of the abuse of the utensils from the temple, a hand appears and writes on the wall.
- Verses 6-7 –
  - The king seeks interpretation of the words, and makes great promises to the one who can provide the interpretation.

- **the third ruler in the kingdom** - Nabonidus is first, Belshazzar second, and Daniel is being offered third.

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## DANIEL INTERPRETS THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL | DANIEL 5:8-29

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- Verses 8-12 –The queen makes a suggestion.
  - The identity of **the queen** is unknown, but many scholars believe her to be the Queen Mother, by reason of her knowledge of the past events with Daniel.
- Verses 13-29 – Daniel’s Interpretation
  - Verse 13 – **out of Jewry** - Literally, "out of the Judeans."
  - Verse 14 – **the spirit of the gods** - See note on Dan. 4:9
  - Verse 16 – **dissolve doubts** - A difficult phrase, perhaps "to solve riddles" or, literally, "to loose knots."
  - Verse 25 – **MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN**-
    - When translated: *numbered, numbered, weighted, divided*.
    - The challenge was not “what are the words?” but “what do the words mean?” Daniel gives the interpretation in vv. 27-28.

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## THE FALL OF BABYLON | DANIEL 5:30-31

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- Verse 30 – Belshazzar dies
  - The Achaemenid Empire (later known as Persian), ruled by Cyrus the Great, approached Babylon in the fall of 539BC
  - The Bel (Marduk) priesthood had become antagonistic against Nabonidus because he was overly friendly to other gods, especially Sin, the moon-god. This caused division in the Babylonian empire, which led to an weakness, of which Cyrus takes advantage.
  - The actual details of the conquest are debatable, with several conflicting stories. There does not appear to have been much of a battle, but Belshazzar does die, as this verse records.
  - The record of Greek historian Herodotus says that Cyrus’ troops diverted the Euphrates river so that the moat around the city walls was drained.
  - The Nabonidus Chronicle states that the invasion by Cyrus took place during the Akitu festival, and that Nabonidus had gathered all the gods (idols) from around the empire into the walls of the city. The chronicle states that the citizens welcomed Cyrus, who became very popular for allowing the gods to each be returned to their respective temples, and allowing the Jews to return to their homeland.