

Daniel 05 - Belshazzar's Foolish Party; Handwriting on the Wall; Daniel Interprets Handwriting; Belshazzar Dies; Babylon Falls to Medo-Persia

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Daniel 5

(D) Handwriting on the wall (5:1-31)

(a) Setting (5:1-4)

(i) Feast (5:1)

1 Belshazzar the king held a **greatfeast** for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.

1 Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.

1 King Belshazzar put on a great festival for a thousand of his officials. He joined all one thousand of them in getting drunk.

1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

- "Belshazzar" - remember, don't confuse Belteshazzar (Daniel's Babylonian name) with Belshazzar (Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, who is now in charge)

— Belshazzar came to power about 9 years after Nebuchadnezzar died

— The book of Daniel goes from Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4) to Belshazzar (Dan 5) without giving the history of Babylonian kings between them (see charts below). We have to consult extra-biblical historical literature to understand the succession of kings between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.

— Some older critical scholars claimed that Belshazzar was never a king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. However, modern discoveries have shown that Belshazzar acted as king during his father's frequent and prolonged absences from Babylon.

— The last actual Chaldean king, Nabonidus, "entrusted the kingship" in 539 BC to his son Bel-sar-usur during his ten-year absence from Babylon, returning as the threat from Cyrus grew

- "...great feast" - later (v30-31) we'll learn that Belshazzar hosted this banquet on the night the city of Babylon fell to the Persians

— This feast took place on Saturday Oct 12, 539 BC according to Harold Hoehner, a double-PhD and the best biblical chronologist in history

— This would've been in the 67th year of Israel's captivity in Babylon; Daniel was in his early 80s at this time

- Unbeknownst to Belshazzar, the Persian army is on the move, led by Ugbaru, commander of the Persian army

— They had already conquered many small lowland villages near Babylon; everyone in the city would have understood their intentions

— Babylon should have been preparing defenses, but instead their pride reigned.

Belshazzar felt invincible and invulnerable; Babylon had not fallen to an invading army for

1,000 years before of its strong fortifications, and it is reported that Belteshazzar had about 20 years of supplies on hand.

— Belshazzar's confidence in the security of his capital is evident in his getting drunk while his enemy was at the doorstep

— One of the great deceptions of human beings is that we live with an false sense of security. We live as if we're invincible and invulnerable (Cf. Parable of the Rich Fool, Luke 12:16-21)

- The room where this party was held was rebuilt by Saddam Hussein and is in existence right now in Iraq

— The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: Archaeologists have excavated a large hall in Babylon about 55 feet wide and 165 feet long, that had plastered walls. This room was large enough to hold a banquet of this size.

Succession of Leadership

- Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC
- His son, Evil-Merodach was assassinated after reigning 2 years
- Neriglissar reigned for 4 years, died
- His son Laborosoarchod reigned 9 months, beaten to death
- Co-conspirators appoint Nabonidus
- Nabonidus appoints his son Belshazzar as co-regent

KINGS OF NEO-BABYLONIA

<u>KING</u>	<u>DATES BC</u>	<u>SCRIPTURE</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
Nebuchadnezzar	605-562	2 Kings 24-25; Daniel	Dies after ruling 43 years
Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach) [Nebuchadnezzar's son]	562-560	2 Kings 25:27-30; <u>Jer 52:31-34</u>	Murdered by Neriglissar
Neriglissar	560-556	<u>Jer 39:3,13</u>	Dies
Labahi-Marduk [Neriglissar's son]	556		Ruled 2 months, assassinated by Nabonidus
Nabonidus (Nabunaid)	556-539		
Belshazzar Nabonidus' son (appointed as co-regent)	539 BC		

Succession of Gentile Rulers

- Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan 1-4)
- Belshazzar of Babylon (Dan 5)
- Darius of Media-Persia (Dan 6)
- Belshazzar of Babylon (Dan 7-8)
- Darius of Media-Persia (Dan 9)
- Cyrus of Media-Persia (Dan 10-12)

(ii) Temple vessels (5:2-3)

2 While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave orders to bring the gold and silver **vessels** which **his father Nebuchadnezzar** had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, **his wives, and his concubines** could drink out of them.

2 When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

2 Under the influence of wine, Belshazzar ordered that the gold and silver vessels his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem be brought in so the

king, his officials, his wives, and his mistresses could drink from them.

2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein.

- This is a big mistake...

- He already made a huge military mistake by not preparing defenses when he was aware of the mobilizing Media-Persian forces

- Now he's making a huge spiritual mistake by disrespecting the vessels from the temple treasury

- "...vessels" - these were originally taken out of the temple in Jerusalem during Nebuchadnezzar's first siege of Jerusalem (Cf. 1:2)

- At this time they resided in the museum across the street from the palace, stored as trophies of war

- "...his father Nebuchadnezzar" - based on extra-biblical history, Nebuchadnezzar was not Belshazzar's father (see chart: Kings of Neo-Babylonia)

- There is no dynastic or genealogical linkage between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, so why does

- In the ancient world, successive monarchs were often identified as the "sons" of famous predecessors, even when there was no dynastic or genealogical linkage between them.

- On the Black Obelisk of Shalmanesar III, Jehu is called the son of Omri, even though there is no relationship between them, and Jehu is responsible for wiping out the Omri lineage.

- "...his wives, and his concubines" - the presence of the king's wives and concubines was usually not tolerated at banquets. It was, however, permitted when degeneracy began to run rampant.

Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III



3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank out of them.

3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.

3 As ordered, they brought in the gold vessels that had been taken from the sanctuary of God's Temple in Jerusalem, and the king, his officials, his wives, and mistresses drank from them.

3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

- Belshazzar took something sacred and turned it into something profane

(iii) Idolatry (5:4)

4 They drank the wine and praised the **gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone.**

4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

4 As they drank the wine, they praised gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

- The profaning of the temple elements turned into idolatry

- Their presence in the museum/warehouse of Babylon was sufficient humiliation of *Yahweh*, who in their minds could not prevent their theft

- However, using the vessels in praise of Babylon's gods was even more sacrilegious than just possessing them

- This was an open act of defiance to insult the God whose Temple had stood in Jerusalem

- "...gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone" - Daniels descriptions of Babylon's gods as precious metals, iron, wood and stone reflects the Hebrew perspective (Cf. v23)

- For the Israelites, the gods that Belshazzar honored were no gods at all

(b) Revelation of the handwriting on the wall (5:5-9)

(i) The writing (5:5)

5 Suddenly the fingers of a human hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.

5 Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.

5 At that moment, humanlike fingers of a hand appeared near the lamp stand of the royal palace and wrote on the plaster of the wall.

5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

- This brought the party to a screeching halt. Their night of revelry became a night of revelation.

- Terror is probably an inadequate word to describe the feeling in the room

- In the ancient world, a severed hand symbolized death

- In war, casualty counts were made by cutting off the right hand of the dead (Cf. 1 Sam 5:3-4)
- This hand, which to them symbolized death, was alive and was writing a message on the wall

In the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace archeologists have uncovered a large throne room 56 feet wide and 173 feet long that probably was the scene of this banquet. Midway in the long wall opposite the entrance there was a niche in front of which the king may well have been seated. Interestingly, the wall behind the niche was covered with white plaster as described by Daniel, which would make an excellent background for such a writing.

(ii) The responses (5:6-9)

(a) Fear (5:6)

6 Then the king's face became pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his **hip joints loosened** and his knees began knocking together.

6 Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.

6 While the king watched the back of the hand as it was writing, his facial expression changed. Utterly frightened, he lost control of his own bowels and his knees knocked together.

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

- He didn't have his brown britches on [see note: **Lord Nelson** below]

— If you think that's funny, that's not the half of it

— God prophesied this very thing would happen...Belshazzar's brown britches...150 years before it happened in the book of Isaiah (Is 45:1; Cf. Is 21:1-9; 44:24-45:25)

— Belshazzar filling his shorts is a fulfillment of prophecy, believe it or not

(b) Inability to decipher (5:7-9)

7 The king called aloud to bring in the sorcerers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners. The king began speaking and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Anyone who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be **clothed with purple** and *have* a **necklace of gold** around his neck, and have authority as **third ruler** in the kingdom."

7 The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and *have* a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third *ruler* in the kingdom."

7 The king cried out to bring in enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers. He announced to the advisors of Babylon, "Whoever can read this writing and tell me its meaning will be clothed in purple, have a gold chain placed around his neck, and will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

- "...clothed with purple" - meant giving him royal authority (Cf. Esther 8:15)

- "...necklace of gold" - had symbolic as well as monetary value

- "...third ruler" - for centuries, skeptics would point to this and say that Daniel should've been a "second ruler" because there wasn't one at that point

- Until an archaeologist named Taylor in 1854 in southern Iraq discovered the Nabonidus Cylinder, which states that Nabonidus was co-regent with his son Belshazzar, meaning that Daniel could rise to no higher than third ruler in the kingdom.

- This was the highest official reward he could offer

Rev 17:4: The woman was **clothed in purple** and scarlet, and **adorned with gold**, precious stones, and pearls, holding in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her sexual immorality,

Rev 18:16: saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, she who was **clothed in fine linen and purple** and scarlet, and **adorned with gold**, precious stones, and pearls;

OT Descriptions of Babylon in Rev 17–18

	Rev 17–18	Old Testament
Waters	17:1	Ps 137:1
Babylon the Great	17:5	Dan 4:30
Mother harlots	17:5	Gen 11:1-9
Fallen, fallen is Babylon	18:2	Is 21:9
Will not see widowhood	18:7	Is 47:7-9
Colorful attire	17:4; 18:16	Dan 5:7,16,29
Sorcery	18:23	Is 47:9-13

Cylinder of Nabonidus

This mid 6th century BC cuneiform cylinder was discovered in the temple of Shamash at Sippar (Iraq). It tells of Babylonian King Nabonidus' reconstruction of pagan temples and the discovery of ancient inscriptions of former kings. More importantly, however, it offers historical **confirmation of Belshazzar**, who was previously either considered legendary or the Bible was mistaken to identify him as "king" (Daniel 5:1) since he was absent from any official kings list.

- Confirms historical figure of **Belshazzar** (Daniel 5)
- Belshazzar was Nabonidus' son and **co-regent** (King, Daniel 5:1)
- Explains why Daniel could rise no higher than **3rd ruler** in the kingdom (Daniel 5:29)



8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.

8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.

8 Then all the king's advisors came in, but they were unable to read the writing or tell the king what it meant.

8 Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

- These "wise men" could not reveal what only God could reveal; they are now 0 of 3 so far in Daniel (Cf. 2:4-13; 4:7; 5:8)

— Belshazzar was looking for truth from the wrong sources

— The Babylonian system was completely bankrupt; the system and people that Israel was so intimidated by is completely bankrupt

— God was still in control, even though His nation was out of their land in exile

9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew *even more* pale, and his nobles were perplexed.

9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew *even paler*, and his nobles were perplexed.

9 So King Belshazzar became even more frightened, and his facial expression showed it. His officials also were thrown into confusion.

9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

(c) Interpretation (5:10-29)

(i) Daniel's entrance (5:10-16)

(a) Queen's request (5:10-12)

10 The **queen** entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen began to speak and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale.

10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale.

10 Hearing the voices of the king and his officials, the queen entered the banquet hall. "Your majesty, live forever," the queen said. "Don't be frightened by your thoughts or allow your facial expression to show it.

10 Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:

- "...queen" - most understand her to be Nabonidus' wife, Belshazzar's mother;

Belshazzar's wives had been participating in the banquet (v2)

— She was possibly Belshazzar's mother, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar

— She spoke to Belshazzar more as a mother than a wife; she also spoke as one who had personal experience with Daniel's earlier interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream (Cf. 4:8-9,18)

— The queen mother was often a significant figure who exerted considerable influence in ancient courts (Cf. 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 11:1-3; 24:12; Jer 13:18)

— This woman proceeded to do for Belshazzar what Arioch had done for Nebuchadnezzar, namely: to bring Daniel to the king's attention (Cf. 2:25)

11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is **a spirit of the holy gods**; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in

him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—appointed him chief of the soothsayer priests, sorcerers, Chaldeans, *and* diviners.

11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans *and* diviners.

11 There's a man in your kingdom in whom dwells the spirit of the holy gods. During your grandfather's reign, he was found to have insight, intelligence, and wisdom, like that of the gods. Your grandfather, King Nebuchadnezzar—your kingly predecessor—appointed him to be chief administrator over the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers,

11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy [grand]father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy [grand]father, the king, I say, thy [grand]father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; - "...a spirit of the holy gods" - a reference to the Holy Spirit, but she is misinterpreting the Spirit through her polytheistic worldview

When really severe crises arise, it is often the man or woman of God that others turn to for answers.

12 *This was* because **an extraordinary spirit**, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of riddles, and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."

12 *This was* because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."

12 because he was found to have an extraordinary spirit, knowledge, and understanding, along with an ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. His name is Daniel, whom the king renamed Belteshazzar. Call for Daniel, and he will reveal the meaning of the writing."

12 Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

- "...an extraordinary spirit" - the Spirit within Daniel is what made him different

— The Holy Spirit provides insight that the world can't understand (1 Cor 2:14-15)

- A person with the Holy Spirit has the capacity for discernment and understanding, that is a mystery to the unsaved world
- This is why Daniel was valuable, and brought up off the bench in his mid-80s to interpret this writing on the wall

(b) King's request (5:13-16)

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king began speaking and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?"

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?"

13 Then Daniel was brought before the king. The king spoke up and told Daniel, "So you are Daniel, one of the Judean exiles whom my grandfather the king brought from Judah!"

13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my [grand] father brought out of Jewry?

14 Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that **illumination**, insight, and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you.

14 Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you.

14 I've heard about you, that a spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, discernment, and extraordinary wisdom.

14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.

- Paganism misinterprets the origin of the Holy Spirit, but it understands the power of the Holy Spirit in a person

- "...illumination" - the capacity to understand; the Holy Spirit allows Daniel to see things that the wise men of Babylon could not see

— This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer...He enlightens the mind and allows a person to think in a spiritual manner that he couldn't do so without His presence (Cf. John 16:13; 1 Cor 2:14-15)

— We often hear the expression, Seeing is believing. But its actually the exact opposite: Believing is seeing. A person believes and receives the Spirit of God, and suddenly they "see" (understand) spiritual things.

15 Just now the wise men *and* the sorcerers were brought in before me to read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message.

15 Just now the wise men *and* the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message.

15 Take note that the advisors and enchanters were brought before me to read the writing and explain its meaning, but they were unable to do so.

15 And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing:

16 But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and *wear* a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third *ruler* in the kingdom."

16 But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and *wear* a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third *ruler* in the kingdom."

16 However, I've heard that you can provide meaning and interpretation, and that you can solve difficult problems. If you are able to read the writing and report its meaning, you will be clothed in purple, have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

16 And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

- This is quite an offer from Belshazzar...he's giving everything that he would be allowed to give

— The king's willingness to reward a Jewish exile shows how desperately Belshazzar wanted to learn the meaning of the enigmatic message on the wall.

- Then here was Daniel, a worshipper of the God—whom Belshazzar had been dishonoring in his banquet—who, ironically on this night of all nights, might prove superior to the Chaldeans in deciphering the mystery

Too often the world, like Belshazzar, is not willing to seek the wisdom of God until its own bankruptcy becomes evident. Then help is sought too late, as in the case of Belshazzar,

and the cumulative sin and unbelief which precipitated the crisis in the first place becomes the occasion of downfall.

(ii) Daniel rebukes Belshazzar (5:17-23)

(a) Refusal to accept Belshazzar's gift (5:17)

17 Then Daniel replied and said before the king, "Keep your **gifts** for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him.

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him.

17 At this, Daniel answered, speaking directly to the king, "Let your gifts and rewards be given to someone else. However, I'll read the writing for the king and tell him its meaning.

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

- "...gifts" - clothed in purple, necklace of gold, promoted to third in the kingdom (Cf. v7)

— Daniel is prophesying what the inscription says without yet seeing it. Belshazzar's wealth and authority was worthless: the handwriting on the wall speaks of the destruction of the Babylonian Empire on that very night.

(b) Reminder of Nebuchadnezzar's humility (5:18-21)

18 O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, greatness, honor, and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father.

18 O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father.

18 Your majesty, the Most High God gave your grandfather Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty, as well as greatness, glory, and splendor.

18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy [grand]father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor:

- Daniel now gives Belshazzar a history lesson about Nebuchadnezzar's testimony...which occurred about 40 years earlier.

An ounce of history is worth a pound of logic. — Unknown

19 Now because of the greatness which He granted him, all the peoples, nations, and *populations of all* languages trembled and feared in his presence; whomever he wished, he

killed, and whomever he wished, he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated, and whomever he wished he humbled.

19 Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled.

19 And because of the greatness that he gave him, all nations, nations, and languages revered and feared him. He executed those whom he desired to execute, he spared those whom he wished to spare, he promoted those whom he desired to promote, and he humbled those whom he wished to humble.

19 And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would, he slew; and whom he would, he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.

- Translation: hey punk, your grandfather was a real king; you're a joke

20 But when his heart was arrogant and his spirit became so overbearing that he behaved presumptuously, he was deposed from his royal throne, and *his* dignity was taken away from him.

20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and *his* glory was taken away from him.

20 But when he became arrogant and his spirit hardened, he was removed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him.

20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

21 He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like *that of* animals, and his dwelling place *was* with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind, and *that* He sets over it whomever He wishes.

21 He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like *that of* beasts, and his dwelling place *was* with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and *that* He sets over it whomever He wishes.

21 He was driven away from human society and given the mind of an animal. He lived with wild donkeys, ate grass like cattle, and his body was soaked with dew from the sky until he realized that the Most High God is sovereign over human kingdoms and places over them whomever he desires.

21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

- A summary of Dan 4: Daniel reminded Belshazzar and everyone else in the room the lesson of humility that God had taught the king's grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar

(c) Reminder of Belshazzar's pride (5:22-23)

22 Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, **even though you knew all this,**

22 Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this,

22 "But you, Belshazzar, his grandson, haven't humbled yourself, even though you knew all of this.

22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

- "...even though you knew all this" - the record was available, and Belshazzar either knew about Nebuchadnezzar or he should've known about him and what caused his 7-year hiatus from the throne

— Even though Belshazzar knew of this history, he chose to go down this path; and because God is not a respecter of persons, since He is the same yesterday, today and forever...then how can the same be withheld from Belshazzar

- Before judgment came upon Nebuchadnezzar (4:19), God gave him grace prior to judgment being issued. He gave him a year to humble himself and repent, but he failed to do so (4:27).

— For Belshazzar, there is no warning. Daniel is not dealing in grace with Belshazzar...he's dealing in judgment. The warning was given in history, and Belshazzar "knew all this," so that was his warning.

— The historical track record of God dealing with Gentile kings was given in God's dealing with Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar, aware of this, failed to heed the warnings from the history of those events, which was his "warning."

- The Bible teaches that to those to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). The more light or knowledge a person has, the more God expects a response.

— The person in this world who is in the biggest trouble before God is the person who sits in an orthodox, Bible teaching church and hears week after week the truth of God, yet chooses to not do anything with it...not trusting in God for salvation, or choosing to not allow the Holy Spirit to change their life in any way. Truth just goes in one ear and out the other, with no change in your life.

— In Matt 11:20-24 Jesus denounced the cities in which most of His miracles were done because they did not repent. The lesson is that cities that receive more light, but rejected it, will receive a harsher judgment than those who received lesser light.

— Be careful with the acquisition of spiritual knowledge because to whom much is given, much will be required on the day of judgment

23 but you have **risen up against the Lord of heaven**; and they have **brought the vessels of His house** before you, and you and your nobles, your wives, and your concubines have been drinking wine out of them; and you have **praised the gods of** silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see, nor hear, nor understand. But the **God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified.**

23 but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified.

23 "You've exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven. "You've had the vessels from his Temple brought into your presence. "And you, your officials, and your wives and mistresses drank wine from them. "You praised gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which can't see, hear, or demonstrate knowledge. "But you didn't honor God, who holds in his power your very life and all your ways.

23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

- Daniel lists Belshazzar's sins...

1. Exalted himself - "risen up against the Lord of heaven"
 - Exactly what Nebuchadnezzar had done, even though the historical record was known to him that he was on dangerous ground
2. Abused sacred vessels (1 Cor 11:30) - "brought the vessels of His house"
 - Vessels designed for holy purposes were used for common, profane, idolatrous purposes
3. Praised idols (Rev 9:20; Is 46:1,4) - "praised the gods of..." - which do not see, hear or understand. They were worshiping something that has no life in it, it's just an object.
4. Did not glorify God (Rev 4:11) - "God...you have not glorified" - he never returned to God the rightful glory that He deserves

(iii) Daniel's interpretation (5:24-28)

(a) The writing (5:24-25)

24 Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.

24 Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.

24 "Therefore, the hand that wrote this inscription was sent from his presence.

24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

25 "Now this is the inscription that was written: '**MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.**'

25 "Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENĒ, MENĒ, TEKĒL, UPHARSIN.'

25 This is the written inscription: MENE, MENE, TEKEL AND PARSIN

25 And this is the writing that was written, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.

- These are Aramaic terms that represent parts of speech

- "MENE" [2x] - means "to number"; the reason "MENE" is repeated is to add emphasis

- "...TEKEL" - means "to be found light"; it means to be weighed in the scales of justice and to be found wanting (lacking)

- "...UPHARSIN" - the "U" is a conjunction in Aramaic which means "and"; "PHARSIN" means "to divide"

— So the literal meaning of this inscription is: "numbered, numbered, weighed and divided"

— The kingdom would be "divided" because it was about to be given over to the Medes and Persians, which was a divided kingdom



(b) The interpretation (5:26-28)

26 This is the interpretation of the message: '**MENE**'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.

26 This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENĒ'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.

26 These are the meanings of the words: MENE: God has audited your kingdom—and has ended it.

26 This is the interpretation of the thing: Mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

- Daniel not only translates the words, but provides their meaning: the Babylonian Empire would not last forever, it would have an ending point

- "...MENE" - "to number"

- It is mentioned twice because God is emphasizing to Belshazzar that his kingdom would not last forever

- It's interesting that in every past empire or kingdom, the king believed that his kingdom would last forever

27 '**TEKEL**'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.

27 'TEKĒL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.

27 TEKEL: You've been weighed on the scales—and you don't measure up.

27 Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

- "Tekel" - *tekal*, "weighed"

- God weighed Belshazzar's life on His scales of justice, and Belshazzar was found deficient

28 '**PERES**'—your kingdom has been divided and given to the **Medes** and **Persians**."

28 'PERĒS'—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."

28 PERES: Your kingdom has been divided—and will be given to the Medes and Persians."

28 Peres; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

- "PERES" - "broken in two" or "divided"; the plural form of the word "farsi" (ufarsin) is "peres" which is a wordplay from "Persian"

- Relates to the division of Belshazzar's kingdom into two parts: one part for the Medes and one part for the Persians

- *Paras* means "Persia"; Persia was the dominant kingdom in the Medo-Persian alliance

- So God using the word "PERES" is not only speaking of division, but He is also making a reference to the empire coming to cause the division: the Persian Empire

- "...Medes" - the name for northwest Iran

- Cyrus of Persia brought Media under his control in 550 BC

- "...Persians" - the description for ancient Iran

Aramaic	Noun	Verb
מנא	A “mina” – 60 gold shekels equal 1 mina	“mênă” To number
תקל	Aramaic spelling of a “shekel” – 1/60 th of a mina	“têkâl” To weigh
פרסין	Plural form of פרס Half-minas	
פרס	“pêrēs” = half-mina “pârās” = Persia	“pêrās” To break apart

Ironically, as Daniel interpreted God’s verdict against Babylon, the Medes and Persians were already pouring into the city.

The meaning of these words would’ve been unintelligible to the Chaldean wise men. Even if they would’ve supplied the vowels, as Daniel did, and came up with the words “numbered,” “weighed,” and “divided”—they would have been meaningless without the context.

The Handwriting on the Wall

(Assuming atbash encryption)

יִשְׁתַּ אֲדָכּ וְגַח

מִנָּה מִנָּה תְּקֵל פֶּרֶס

M^{ene} : Numbered, Reckoned.

"God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it."
Your number is up.

T^{ekel} : Weighed.

"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

P^{eres} : Broken, Divided.

"Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes
and the Persians."

(**P^{aras}** is also the word for **Persians**.)

(iv) Daniel's promotion (5:29)

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.

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.

29 Then Belshazzar gave orders to clothe Daniel in purple, to place a chain of gold around his neck, and to proclaim him the third highest ruler of the kingdom.

29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

- Belshazzar kept his promise (v16), though Daniel's honor only lasted a few hours, at most
- This was Belshazzar's last act as king

(d) Fulfillment of the prophecy (5:30-31)

(i) Belshazzar's death (5:30)

30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed.

30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.

30 That night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was killed,

30 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

- October 13, 539 BC

- Herodotus, Xenophon, Berossus, the Babylonian Chronicles, and Cyrus (on the Cylinder of Cyrus) all described the fall of Babylon in writings that have remained to the present day

— The Persians diverted the water from the Euphrates River that flowed south through Babylon into an ancient lake located to the north. This allowed them to walk into the city on the riverbed and scale the undefended walls that flanked the river.

- In the long run, things do not go well for the person who lives their life as if God doesn't exist

— From the human perspective it may seem like some unbelievers get ahead in life, but compared to what they will experience in eternity any victories in this life will be extremely short-lived.

— To live one's life outside of the protective care and love of God is difficult (Prov 13:15). Living outside of the principles that the Creator has designed has consequences: life, relationships, finances, emotions all become difficult.

— Even as Christians, much (not all) of the suffering we experience we bring upon ourselves because we made a choice to go back into the sin nature, and the payoff of sin is death. Sin has a price tag which is around long after the brief pleasure we receive from sin.

(ii) Fall of Babylon (5:31)

31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

31 and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of 62.

31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

- Belshazzar suffered execution that very night, and Darius the Mede became ruler of Babylonia (Cf. 2:21)

— Daniel introduced Darius in 5:31, which is the first verse of Dan 6 in the Hebrew Bible

— Daniel now sees the head of gold turn into the chest and arms of silver

Important Lessons (v30-31)

1. The historicity of the events

- Dan 5 describes actual historical events. This wasn't a vision or a dream, it actually happened and it is historically documented.

- We can document the actual date that this event occurred: Saturday Oct 12, 539 BC
 - Daniel is very specific with names and dates (Darius, age 62); he is also specific with his ethnicity, a Mede
2. The folly of false security
- The point at which the Babylonians were most proud of their invincibility is the point at which they were most vulnerable (1 Cor 10:12)
 - If you see yourself as master of your own destiny, you have your own fate in your hands, that is the thinking when you become most vulnerable. During these times are when we should be asking God to help us see things from His perspective.
3. The reliability of predictive prophecy
- It took only a matter of hours before God's prophecy in the handwriting on the wall became reality
 - Many churches today have completely disregarded God's prophetic Word. It's gotten so bad today that many pastors don't even preach from the books of Daniel or Revelation.
 - The Church today is anemic because of the decision of many pastors to only focus on part of God's Word instead of the entire Bible
 - As these events were happening, God was fulfilling another prophecy, given to Isaiah 150+ years earlier (Is 44:28—45:1) God mentions Cyrus (the Persian) by name and says that he will deliver Israel out of their captivity.
 - There are many prophecies in Daniel that are still future for us today. How do we have confidence in those prophecies? Because we can see God's track record of fulfilling prophecy all through Daniel and all through the Scriptures. If He fulfilled previous prophecy exactly as stated, He will fulfill future prophecy exactly as stated (Cf. John 13:19; 14:29).
4. The sovereignty of God
- Dan 2:21: "It is He who changes the times and the periods; **He removes kings and appoints kings**; He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to people of understanding.
5. A reminder of Babylon's future

Isaiah 13-14

- Day of the Lord (13:6-9)
- Cosmic disturbances (13:10-13)
- Global judgment (13:11-12)
- Sodom and Gomorrah (13:19)
- Complete and final desolation (13:20-22)
- Universal peace and rest (14:5-8)
- Israel's regeneration (14:1-4)

Morris, Revelation Record, 348.

Isaiah prophesied about Babylon in 740 BC

Isaiah 13/Matthew 24 Connection

- Isaiah 13:10; Matthew 24:29
- Isaiah 13:12; Matthew 24:21-22



Jeremiah 50-51

- Sudden destruction (51:8)
- Complete destruction (50:3, 13, 26, 39-40; 51:29, 43, 62)
- No reuse of building materials (51:26)
- Believers flee (50:8; 51:6, 45)
- Israel's regeneration (50:2, 4-5, 20; 51:50)

Dyer, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17–18 (Part 2)," 443-49.

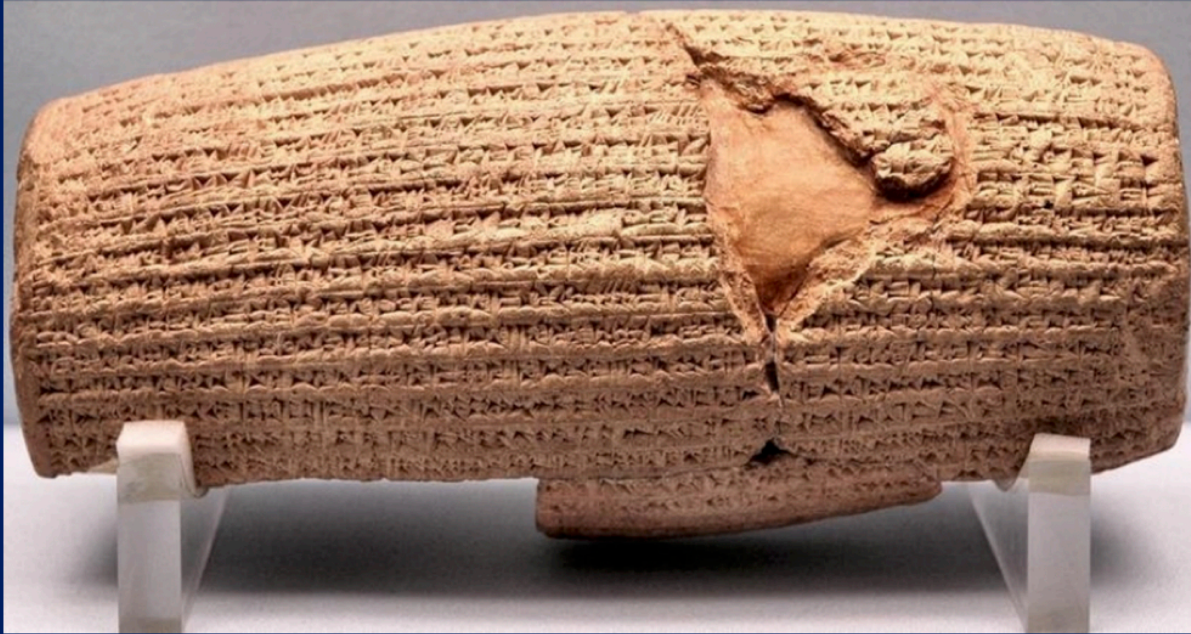
Jeremiah prophesied about Babylon in 680 BC



Herodotus, *Histories*, 1:191 (450 B.C.)

“...he conducted the river by a channel into the lake...and so he made the former course of the river passable by the sinking of the stream. When this had been done, the Persians who had been posted for this very purpose entered by the bed of the river Euphrates into Babylon, the stream having sunk so far that it reached about to the middle of a man’s thigh...those Babylonians who dwelt in the middle did not know that they had been captured...”

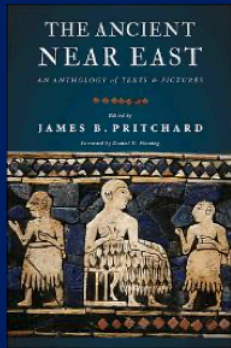
Cyrus Cylinder



The Cyrus Cylinder has been translated for us in a book called *The Ancient Near East Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ANET):

James Pritchard

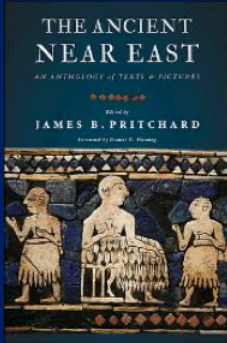
The Ancient Near East Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 315-16.



Without any battle. . . sparing Babylon . . . any calamity.... I am Cyrus...king of Babylon....When I entered Babylon...under jubilation and rejoicing...troops walked around Babylon...in peace, I did not allow anybody to terrorize (any place) of the [country of Sumer] and Akkad. I strove for peace in Babylon...and in all his (other) sacred cities....I returned to (these) sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been in ruins for a long time, the images which (used) to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries.

James Pritchard

The Ancient Near East Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 315-16.



I (also) gathered all their (former) inhabitants and returned (to them) their habitations. Furthermore, I resettled... unharmed, in their (former) chapels, the places which make them happy. May all the gods whom I have resettled in their sacred cities ask daily Bel and Nebo for a long life for me...all of them I resettled in a peaceful place... ducks and doves,...I endeavoured to fortify/repair their dwelling places . . .

When Cyrus entered Babylon, he didn't want to upset the Babylonian deities because he was a polytheist. So he made sure these idols were undisturbed so they would bless him all his day.

Babylon's History After 539 BC

- Herodotus gives Babylon's measurements (450 BC)
- Alexander the Great visits and dies in Babylon (323 BC)
- Seleucus seizes Babylon (312 BC)
- Strabo pronounces Babylon's Hanging Gardens as one of the "seven wonders of the world" (25 BC)
- Babylonians present at Pentecost (Acts 2:9)
- Talmud promulgated from Babylon (500 AD)
- Haukal mentions Babylonian village (917 AD)
- Babylon known as "Two Mosques" and "Hilah" (1100 AD)



Dr. John Walvoord
The Nations in Prophecy, 63-64

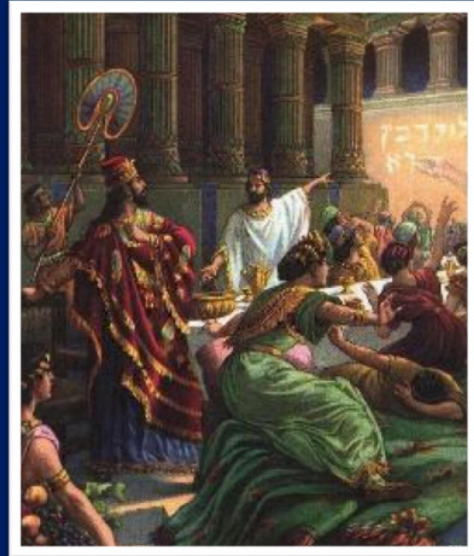
“As far as the historic fulfillment is concerned, it is obvious from both Scripture and history that these verses have not been literally fulfilled. The city of Babylon continued to flourish after the Medes conquered it, and though its glory dwindled, especially after the control of the Medes and the Persians ended in 323 B.C., the city continued in some form or substance until A.D. 1000 and did not experience a sudden termination such as anticipated in this prophecy.”

Parallels Between Jeremiah 50-51 & Revelation 17-18

	Jeremiah	Revelation
Associated with a Golden cup	51:7a	17:3-4; 18:6
Dwelling on many waters	51:13	17:1
Intoxicating the nations	51:7b	17:2
Same name	50:1	17:5
Stone sinking into Euphrates	51:63-64	18:21
Sudden destruction	51:8	18:8
Destroyed by fire	51:30	17:16
Final, uninhabitable	50:39	18:21
Deserved	50:29	18:6
God's people flee	51:6, 45	18:4
Heaven rejoices	51:48	18:20
Dyer, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17-18 (Part 2)," 441-43.		

Isaiah's Oracles Against the Nations (Isa 13–23)

1. **Babylon (13:1-14:23)**
2. Assyria (14:24-27)
3. Philistia (14:28-32)
4. Moab (15-16)
5. Damascus and Samaria (17)
6. Ethiopia (18)
7. Egypt (19-20)
8. **Babylon (21:1-10)**
9. Edom (21:11-12)
10. Arabia (21:13-17)
11. Jerusalem (22)
12. Tyre (23)



In Isaiah's Oracles Against the Nations (Is 13-23), Babylon is the only nation mentioned twice...in Is 13-14 and again in Is 21:1-10. Why? Because Is 21:1-10 was fulfilled in Daniel 5 and Is 13-14 will be fulfilled in Rev 17-18.

6. Who is Darius the Mede?

It was common in the ancient world to have two names. Solomon had two names (2 Sam 12:24-25): Solomon and Jedediah. Thus, Darius could be another name for Cyrus, or it could be a second name for Ugbaru, a general and a governor appointed by Cyrus after he conquered Babylon. It could also be a reference to Cambesius, Cyrus' son.

It's only a matter of time before archaeologists find out definitively who Darius the Mede was. In the meantime, we should trust Scripture.

Darius the Mede?

Darius the Mede – in the Bible, a king of the Medes who succeeded to the throne of Babylonia after Belshazzar. Otherwise unknown outside biblical tradition, it is likely that this Darius has been confused with Cyrus the Persian, who succeeded Belshazzar and decreed (539 B.C.) the return of exiled Jews. He is also mentioned by Herodotus and Josephus.



Lord Nelson

A fictional but funny story that parallels the story of Dan 5...

Lord Nelson was idolized seaman in British Navy. He was on the ship one day and midshipman comes in and says, "Lord Nelson, there's a French ship off the starboard bow." Lord Nelson says, "Sound general quarters and give me my red wesket." So he sounded general quarters and gave him his red wesket. So Lord Nelson gets on his red wesket, they engage the French ship, and sink it.

Few days later, midshipmen comes in and says, "Lord Nelson, there are two French ships off the starboard quarter." Lord Nelson says, "Sound general quarters, get me my red wesket." So again they sounded general quarters and gave him his red wesket. He puts on his red wesket, engaged the two ships, and sank them.

Midshipman comes in the next morning and says, "Lord Nelson, sir, may I ask a question." Lord Nelson says, "Sure, son, that's how you learn." Midshipman says, "Sir, I noticed that each time we go to general quarters, you always wear your red wesket. May I ask why that is?" "Sure son," Lord Nelson answers, "in case I should sustain a hit during battle, I don't want my men to be distracted by the site of blood."

A few days later, midshipman comes in and says, "Lord Nelson, Lord Nelson, Napoleon's entire fleet is on the near horizon." Lord Nelson says, "Sound general quarters and get me

my brown britches."