

DANIEL 5

STUDY GUIDE



Amazing
Discoveries

Table of Contents

02	Introduction
13	Daniel 5:1-6
15	Daniel 5:7-9
16	Daniel 5:10-16
17	Daniel 5:17-21
19	Daniel 5:22-24
23	Daniel 5:25-28
26	Daniel 5:26-28
28	Daniel 5:29-31
31	Answer Key
34	References

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Although Babylon served the Lord's purpose in punishing Israel, the Babylonians failed to respond to His entreaties through His servants. As a result, the fall of Babylon was predicted by Old Testament prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah ([Isaiah 13:6-22](#); [Jer 50 & 51](#)).

For twenty-three years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, a series of incompetent rulers had brought Babylon to the edge of ruin.

"Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty-three years and was succeeded by the following rulers: His son, Evil-merodach, two years; Neriglissar, his son-in-law, four years; Laborosoarchod – Neriglissar's son, nine months, which being less than one year, is not counted in the canon of Ptolemy, and lastly, Nabonadius, whose son, Belshazzar, grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, was associated with him on the throne, and with whom that kingdom came to an end.

In the first year of Neriglissar, only two years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, broke out that fatal war between the Babylonians and the Medes, which was to result in the utter subversion of the Babylonian kingdom.

Cyaxeres, king of the Medes, who is called "Darius" in Daniel 5:31, summoned to his aid his nephew, Cyrus of the Persian line, in his efforts against the Babylonians. The war was prosecuted with uninterrupted success... until, in the eighteenth year of Nabonadius (the third year of his son Belshazzar), Cyrus laid siege to Babylon. (1)

The Medo-Persian army under Cyrus the Great had come from the north and the king of Babylon, Nabonidus, leaving his son Belshazzar in charge of the kingdom went out to do battle.

Two days before Belshazzar's feast, Nabonidus had surrendered the battlefield without a fight and fled. Meanwhile, Cyrus rushed his forces to the walls of Babylon and laid siege to the city.

The Babylonians, gathered within their impregnable walls, with provision on hand for twenty years... scoffed at Cyrus...and derided his seemingly useless efforts to bring them into subjection. ... But God had decreed that the proud and wicked city should come down from her throne of glory; and when he speaks, what mortal arm can defeat his word?" (2)

The city was well situated to handle a siege. Its walls were tall and strong. Its storehouses bulged with food. And the Euphrates river brought water right through the middle of the city.

Belshazzar, grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, was not concerned. He had forgotten God's warnings and the history and hard lessons learned by Nebuchadnezzar. He was having a grand party, confident in Babylon's years' of stored food and impregnable walls. Some commentators think it was an annual festival to one of the Babylonian deities.

Cyrus took advantage of the festivities. The only access point he could find was the underwater gates under the city. Counting on the guards being too busy with the festivities to properly secure the gates, he ordered his men to divert the water to the Euphrates above the city to an artificial lake. In the meantime, another group of men stood waiting by the river at the city gates until the river had lowered enough to make it fordable so they could enter under the city.

None of Belshazzar's guards noticed that the water in the river Euphrates had been slowly getting lower and lower. And just as Cyrus had hoped, in the drunken revelry of that fatal night, the river gates were all left open and the Persian army was able to enter in unperceived. They quietly made their way to the citadel where the king and his friends and counselors sat drinking and feasting. Their aim was to kill the king and his government and take over the kingdom.

This chapter of Daniel depicts the last night of Belshazzar's reign and the transfer of power to a new kingdom from the golden head to the chest and arms of silver.

Please note: The entire chapter is provided here below, but because the study refers frequently to specific verses, it will be easier to complete it using a Bible opened to the chapter we are studying. This will prevent having to flip back to the pages at the beginning of the lesson as you progress through the lesson. You may also want to add notes or mark passages directly in your Bible.

These studies use the King James Version. Please keep in mind that if you use a different version, Bible verse fill-in-the-blank questions will not be a perfect fit and will not yield results that match the answers given in the answer key.

Daniel 5, KJV

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

2Belshazzar, 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.

3Then 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.

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

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

6Then 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.

7The 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.

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

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

10Now 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:

11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers;

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.

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 father brought out of Jewry?

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.

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 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.

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.

18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour:

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.

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:

21And 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.

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

23But 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:

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

25And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

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

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

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

29Then 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.

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

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

The fall of Babylon was not a secret to the inhabitants of Daniel's world. When Israel first went into captivity, the prophets told them to build houses and plant vineyards, to marry and to pray for the peace and prosperity of Babylon (Jer 29:4-7), in other words, to settle down and cooperate because it was going to be 70 years before they would be allowed to return (Jer 25:11,12; 29:10; 2 Chron 36:21). God used Babylon to administer His judgments against Israel (Jer 25:8-12).

1) How did Israel's enemies treat God's people? Look up: [Psalm 137:1-5](#) and [Jer 50:17](#).

A: _____

So often, we read in the Bible about how Israel's enemies made their sufferings worse, when they should have shown them mercy and compassion.

While in Babylon, the Israelites were subjected to mocking and persecution for their faith.

2) Did the Babylonians know that they were part of God's plan for correcting Israel's apostasy from Him? Look up [Jer 50:7](#).

A: _____

The Babylonians understood precisely why the Israelites had been allowed to be taken captive. They boasted that it was not a problem to oppress the Jews, since God had placed them under bondage because of their sins.

3) What lesson can we learn from Israel's experience with Babylon that can help us who are living in the last days? Look up [Jer 30:3-9](#).

A: _____

The yoke of the king of Babylon was hard to bear. It was a time of trouble for the Jews, a foretaste of the time of Jacob's trouble that the people of God will have to go through before Jesus comes a second time.

While oppressed and captives in Babylon, yet the Jews still did their duty of teaching the Babylonians about the true God, the coming Messiah, the everlasting Gospel, and the destruction that was soon to come. Though they had failed to hold out the light to the world while they lived in peace and prosperity in their own country, God was able to use them while they were slaves under Babylonian oppression.

4) God was longsuffering and merciful to Babylon but the Babylonians rejected His love and grace. What judgment message did God send through His prophets as a result? Look up [Is 13:17-22](#) and [Jer 51:11, 28](#).

A: _____

Babylon was to be destroyed and would become a waste place, full of wild beasts. Had Babylon listened to God and accepted His rulership, she could have been joined to the God of heaven and been an everlasting kingdom. ([Jer 51:9](#); [18:6-10](#)) But Babylon chose not to accept the kingship of the God of heaven.

“There was no hiding the fact that the God of the Jews had prophets among His people. It was in this way that not only the Jews, but Moab, Edom, Tyre and Sidon, Ammon, Egypt, Arabia, and even Media and Persia knew that the fall of Babylon was decreed. Many of these nations, and the Persians among the number, knew just what kingdom would be used to destroy Babylon, and the name of the man whom God had chosen to accomplish the overthrow.” (3)

And the Babylonians were well aware of the prophets of Israel—the Spirit of prophecy manifested among the Jews. Daniel had proven that God was with him, and had more than once interpreted dreams for the king of Babylon that no one else could. And the same prophets that had warned of the coming overthrow of Israel, also warned about the fall of Babylon. Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah sent messages from the Lord to God’s people and to the nations round about. To the nation of Israel, the messages were that God would plead their cause ([Jer 50:33-34](#)). To the nations round about, the message was a warning that God would destroy them ([Ezekiel 25: 27; 29](#); [Jer 25:12-29](#)), and in particular Babylon ([Isaiah 13:6-22](#); [Jer 50 & 51](#)).

Cyrus had been chosen by God to overthrow Babylon. ([Is 44:28](#); [45:1](#)) The Medo-Persian army under Cyrus the Great was now attacking from the north.

This was not the first time the Medes had come. A year earlier, the Medes and Persians had tried to attack. In 539 BC the armies marched towards Babylon.

5) As the time of judgment approached, what message did God send to His people who were in Babylon? Look up [Jer 51:6](#).

A: _____



When the news reached the city that the Medes and Persians were approaching, those that believed the word of the Lord, knew it was time to flee.

According to S.N. Haskell in *The Story of Daniel the Prophet*, "...the message came to flee from the city and be as goats upon the mountainside ([Jer 50:8](#)). Jews who heeded the word of the Lord then withdrew from Babylon. But the Persian army did not come. History says that Cyrus was stopped by the death of a sacred white horse, which was drowned in crossing the river. Cyrus set his men to digging channels for the river, spending one year in this way." (4)

*And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, **the wall of Babylon shall fall. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord.** And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler. Jer 51:44-46*

“And so it was; one spring the rumor came, but the army failed to appear. The careless and unbelieving scoffed, but to the believing this was the opportune time. The next spring the rumor came again, but there was no time then to sell or prepare to leave, for the army came also, and the Babylonian and Medo-Persian forces met in open battle. The Babylonians were defeated, and retired within the fortifications of the city. The gates were closed and the siege began. Those who were now in Babylon must live or die with the Babylonians, except God stay the hand of the destroyer. The climax was reached by the greatest of earthly governments. All heaven was alive with anxiety. Only man was asleep to his impending destruction.” And it is at this very point that Daniel 5 begins. (5)

Daniel 5:1-6

6) What act marked the limit of God's forbearance toward Belshazzar and Babylon?

A: _____

The desecration of the vessels that had been dedicated to the worship of God, which Belshazzar used to praise Babylonian idols, marked the end of God's patience with Babylon.

Belshazzar invited a thousand of his lords to this party, and was clearly an enormous drinker.



“... within the seemingly impregnable fortress, with its massive walls and its gates of brass, protected by the river Euphrates, and stocked with provision in abundance, the voluptuous monarch felt safe and passed his time in mirth and revelry.” (6)

The Bible calls Nebuchadnezzar his “father” but really he was his grandfather. In this case, the word “father” means “forefather” (as in [John 8:56](#)).

“...according to the then common custom of calling any paternal ancestor, father, and any male descendant, son.” (7)

As he became heated from the wine, he decided to bring out the gold and silver vessels or cups from the temple of Jerusalem that had been taken as spoil by his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. Perhaps this festival was in reference to former victories over the Jews. Perhaps they were celebrating the superior power of their gods over the God of the Jews.

In any case, lost to a sense of all sacred things, he thought to use those vessels to celebrate the victory over the Jews. No other king had been so impious. While they were drinking from the vessels dedicated to the true God, they praised their gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone.

But a holy Watcher looked on the scene, and soon the unseen and uninvited Guest made His presence felt. While the drunken revelers drank toasts to their idols out of the golden cups which had been sanctified to God, at the moment when the sacrilegious revelry was at its highest, a mysterious bloodless hand appeared and wrote God’s judgment upon Babylon with a finger on the banquet wall in four strange characters. See vss. 26-28. (8)

The king’s face turned pale and his knees knocked together. When God makes men fear, they cannot hide the intensity of their terror.

Daniel 5:7-9

7) What was it that “greatly troubled” the king and astonished his lords?

A: _____

Babylon’s wise men “could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation” of the writing on the wall.

Although the king promised a rich reward to anyone who could interpret the writing on the wall these counselors failed the king of Babylon. They could not read the writing.

The king was terrified. Who could help him? He did not think of Daniel.

Daniel 5:10-16



8) Daniel had been a leading figure in Nebuchadnezzar's court. Why do you think the king's mother talked about him as someone unknown to Belshazzar?

A: _____

Daniel seems to have been forgotten and was unknown to the king and those around him. It's likely that the proud young king, Belshazzar, replaced the older, experienced members of his father's and grandfather's courts with those of his own generation.

When the Queen Mother heard of what had happened she came in to see the king. She remembered the aged Daniel - the one that had so many times interpreted dreams for his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. The queen's amazing recommendation of Daniel is given in verses 11 and 12.

"The queen who came in and made known to the king that there was such a person to whom appeal could be made for knowledge in supernatural things, is supposed to have been the queen mother, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, in whose memory the wonderful part Daniel had acted in her father's reign would still be fresh and vivid." (9)

9) When Belshazzar met Daniel, he flattered him with the report he'd heard about him. Do you think Belshazzar believed what he'd heard? Why or why not?

A: _____

Belshazzar seems to have been skeptical because he said, "If thou canst read the writing" ([vs 16](#)). He clearly didn't know what kind of a person he was dealing with either, considering that he thought Daniel's services could be bought with gold and scarlet and promotion.

Daniel 5:17-21

10) What is the purpose of the history lesson Daniel gives the king?

A: _____

Daniel gets right to the point and reminds the king of his accountability to God. It is God who gave Nebuchadnezzar his power and made him great, Daniel tells his irreverent grandson. This is the stage Daniel sets for revealing the meaning of the writing on the wall.

At the time of this incident, Daniel was certainly not working for the king, since Belshazzar had not remembered him, nor appreciated his worth. In [Daniel 7 and 8](#) we learn that he had many visions about the future during Belshazzar's reign and in Daniel 8:2 we learn that he was "at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai."

Elam was a province of Babylon that joined up with the Medes and Persians to attack Babylon as predicted by the Bible, so Daniel was already living within an area under Medo-Persian rule.

Daniel comes in and surveys the scene and all becomes clear to him in an instant. He recognizes the vessels from the house of the Lord. He sees the drunken debauchery around him and he sees the writing on the wall and understands the message he is about to give to the king.

Belshazzar tells Daniel he's heard that the "spirit of the gods" was in him and that he had "light and understanding and excellent wisdom," perhaps thinking that to say such things when he had just heard of him, would influence Daniel to help him in his dilemma. The king explains that the wise men could not read the writing and that he needs him to interpret it for him in exchange for the gifts of a scarlet robe, a golden chain about his neck, and a position as third ruler over the kingdom.

Daniel is not bribed by the king's gifts and flattery. He says, "Keep your gifts O King and give your rewards to another, but I will interpret the writing for you."

He then proceeds to give the young despotic king a history lesson, reminding him of how God gave his grandfather a great kingdom, majesty, glory and honor. He reminds him of Nebuchadnezzar's great power and authority, all given to him by the God of heaven. And then he reminds him of what he surely knew, how his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar was humbled by the God of heaven. He reminds him of the "seven times" of judgment - the 7 years that Nebuchadnezzar spent as an animal, until "he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will" ([vs. 21](#)).

Daniel 5:22-24

11) What Biblical principle does Daniel point out to the king in verse 22?

A: _____

Daniel reminds the king that he is responsible for what he knows. (See, for example, [Num 15:27-31](#) and [Luke 12:47-48](#).)

Because Belshazzar knew about God and His dealings with his grandfather, he should have humbled his heart before the Sovereign of the universe. Instead, he persistently chose to turn away from the light and remain in darkness.

“Through the folly and weakness of Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, proud Babylon was soon to fall. Admitted in his youth to a share in kingly authority, Belshazzar gloried in his power and lifted up his heart against the God of heaven. Many had been his opportunities to know the divine will and to understand his responsibility of rendering obedience thereto. He had known of his grandfather’s banishment, by the decree of God, from the society of men; and he was familiar with Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion and miraculous restoration.

But Belshazzar allowed the love of pleasure and self-glorification to efface the lessons that he should never have forgotten. He wasted the opportunities graciously granted him, and neglected to use the means within his reach for becoming more fully acquainted with truth.

That which Nebuchadnezzar had finally gained at the cost of untold suffering and humiliation, Belshazzar passed by with indifference.” (10)



Daniel was not fearful of what the king would do to him if he spoke frankly with him. Perhaps Daniel had known Belshazzar as a child growing up in the palace. He tells Belshazzar “you have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all these things that happened to your grandfather.”

In his rebuke, Daniel reminds the king that his very breath belonged to God and He could take it in a moment, and yet the king had not respected Him in any way.

12) How was the number of vessels that were consecrated to holy service connected to judgment? Calculate the weight in shekels to reveal the connection.

a) What was the combined weight of vessels brought by each prince? _____ (Write the answer from iv below.)

i) Silver charger: _____ shekels ([Num 7:13](#))

ii) Silver bowl: _____ shekels ([Num 7:13](#))

iii) Gold spoon: _____ shekels ([Num 7:14](#))

iv) Total weight: _____ shekels (add i + ii + iii)

b) How many princes each brought this weight in vessels? ([Num 7:84](#)) _____

c) What was the total weight in vessels brought by all the princes for use in the sanctuary?

A: _____ (a) x _____ (b) = _____ (c)

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

The vessels from the Lord were themselves a symbol of judgment against Belshazzar. In [Numbers 7](#), we read about the vessels that were brought by the head of each tribe to be used in the service of the Lord. Each one brought one silver charger weighing 130 shekels, one silver bowl weighing 70 shekels, and one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels. Each man's gift weighed a total of 210 shekels and there were 12 men. $210 \times 12 = 2520$.

Belshazzar was playing with fire by using those vessels of the Lord. The vessels of the Lord were used to judge sin, and now judgment had come upon Belshazzar. By drinking wine from them, Belshazzar had corrupted them. Prov 20:1 tells us “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”

As a result, the “part of the hand” was sent from God to write a message for the king.



Rembrandt, *Belshazzar's Feast*, detail. c. 1635-1638. Via Wikipedia

Daniel 5:25-28

God's sentence, His statement of judgment, upon Belshazzar was made up of numbers which Daniel interpreted as "numbered," "weighed," and "divided." What is the significance of these terms?

Contrary to what most people think, it was not words but numbers that were written on the wall. In fact, it was currency. No wonder the brilliant counselors had no idea what to make of it. They understood many languages, but would not have been familiar with this currency because it referred to a shekel which was Jewish temple money. Even if they did understand it, what could a value of currency possibly mean? The mystery baffled everyone but Daniel. Written on the wall were: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.

According to the concordance definition:

"Mene" literally means 50 shekels.

"Tekel" means 1 shekel.

"Upharsin" means 25 shekels or half of Mene (50).

Therefore what was literally written on the wall was 50 50 1 25.

13) Mene (50) + Mene (50) + Tekel (1) + Upharsin (25) =

_____ **shekels.**

Daniel, and any Hebrew, would have instantly converted the 126 shekels (which was temple money) to gerahs, an ancient Hebrew unit of weight and the regular currency of the day.

14) How many gerahs are in one shekel? Look up this verse to find out: [Ex 30:13](#).

- a) _____
b) How many gerahs are in 126 shekels?

A. $126 \times \underline{\hspace{2cm}} (a) = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} (b) \text{ gerahs}$

You must multiply the number of shekels by 20 because one gerah was equivalent to 1/20 of a shekel. Daniel instantly understood that the fatal numbers on the wall represented judgment and the end of probation for the kingdom of Babylon. He knew this because of the curse of Moses that was playing out on Israel at that very time (Dan 9:11). He also knew this because of the prophecy that had affected King Nebuchadnezzar in [Daniel 4](#). God had predicted that King Nebuchadnezzar would have 7 times pass over him before his mind and kingdom would be restored to him. These 7 times were 7 years (or 2520 days). Nebuchadnezzar had humbled his heart and was restored. Belshazzar hardened his heart and died under God's judgment. The end of the judgment represented by 2520 was determined by the one being judged – either they repented and were restored, or they refused to repent and were destroyed.

15) How many days of chastisement/judgment are represented by 7 times? Fill in the blanks to do the math.

According to the Bible:

A month has 30 days ([Gen 7:11, 24; 8:4](#)), so

a) 30 (days) x 12 (months) = _____ days in a year

A “time” = 1 year ([Num 14:34, Ezek 4:6](#)), so

b) A “time” = _____ days

“Seven times” is:

7 x _____ (b) = _____ (c) days

2520 referred to judgment or punishment as described in [Leviticus 26](#), where the term “seven times” is mentioned four times as a warning to Israel of the punishment they would receive if they strayed from the Lord. The Hebrew word actually means “seven” and is used as a verb denoting action.

The same Hebrew word for “seven” is used in the story of Joseph to describe seven years, but not to describe intensity of punishment, as some hold. Joseph had interpreted the “seven” cows and ears of corn of Pharaoh’s dream ([Genesis 41](#)) as symbols for seven years and the same Hebrew word from Lev 26 is used in Genesis 41. The “seven times” of Nebuchadnezzar’s tree dream in Daniel 4 represented seven years that Nebuchadnezzar would have to experience the chastising of the Lord’s judgment.

When Daniel saw the number 126 shekels written on the wall, he did not need to seek the Lord in prayer. He immediately knew it stood for 2520 gerahs and that this stood for judgment against the kingdom of Babylon.

Daniel 5:26-28

16) How did Daniel know that Babylon would be overthrown by the Medes and Persians? ([Dan 8:1, 20](#))

A: _____

Daniel saw a vision in the third year of Belshazzar's reign and the angel told him the next kingdom would be Medo-Persia.



In [vs. 26-28](#), Daniel outlines the meaning of the writing in clearer language. He turned each number into a sentence: Mene: God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Tekel: Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting. Peres (or Upharsin): Thy kingdom is divided (half of Mene) and given to the Medes and Persians.

Daniel knew it would be the Medes and the Persians because of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the subsequent dreams he himself had had ([Daniel 7 and 8](#)). He must certainly have noticed and been watching the rise of the Medes and Persians (as all of the nations had), and heard of the surrender of Nabonidus, therefore it was very clear that the Medes and Persians would be the next power.

Nebuchadnezzar had received a judgment of "seven times" that gave him time to repent. After the seven-year period when his mind was lost, he regained his intelligence and gave his allegiance to God. But Belshazzar was not going to get that chance because he had known about his grandfather's experiences. He had seen and heard all that had happened, and knew about the God of heaven but had chosen to ignore Him and live against His principles. The time of his judgment had come.

Daniel 5:29-31

17) How do you think Daniel felt when Belshazzar bestowed honors upon him that night?

A: _____

Daniel was surely not impressed by Belshazzar's show of honor. He knew the king's reign had come to its end and his honors were meaningless.

Though Belshazzar did as he had promised and gave Daniel a gold chain and scarlet robe and made him the third ruler of the kingdom, Daniel knew it was a useless gesture. Nevertheless, since Nabonidus was the first ruler, and Belshazzar the second ruler, that would make Daniel the first ruler once both of those were killed by the incoming Medes and Persians.

That very night God's judgment on Babylon was fulfilled. Cyrus, the general of the Medes and Persians, had the seasonally low waters of the Euphrates river diverted, and under the cover of darkness his men waded under the city walls where they found the river gates still open.

This was foretold by the prophet Isaiah nearly 200 years earlier:

Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut. Isaiah 45:1

Once inside, Cyrus's troops slew the unsuspecting guards and took control of the city. Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, was slain that night.

"The question naturally arises, Why did not the conquering army destroy Daniel, who was the third ruler in the kingdom, at this critical moment? The answer is simple and natural. When the kingdom was taken and Belshazzar slain, Nabonidus, the first ruler, at the head of an army, was surrounded by the enemy in another part of the kingdom. [This left Daniel sole ruler in Babylon.](#) He, knowing that over one hundred years before, Isaiah had prophesied that Cyrus should take the kingdom, was ready to welcome him whom God had said should build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem.

There is also good reason to believe that Daniel and Cyrus were not strangers. When excluded from the council of Belshazzar, Daniel had spent a portion of his time at Shushan, the capital of Elam. Elam had revolted from Babylon, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah. (Is 21:2; Jer 49:39).

Daniel may have formed an acquaintance with Cyrus, and showed to him, as the high priest did to Alexander on a certain occasion, the prophecy that pertained to himself, and also revealed to him the way God had said he should enter Babylon. It is evident from the wording of the decree given in the first chapter of Ezra, that Cyrus was familiar with these prophecies." (11)

Daniel lived long enough to see the first part of Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image fulfilled. As prophesied in [Daniel 2](#), Babylon did come to an end and another kingdom, Medo Persia, took its place.

Personal Reflection

Though Paul was probably not thinking of Belshazzar when he wrote his letter to the Romans, his description of what happens when people push the truth aside describes the consequence of Belshazzar's willful forgetfulness:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Rom 1:18, 21

If we fail to embrace the light, we will find ourselves in darkness.

Prayer

Merciful Father, remind me of the light You've shined on my path and forgive me for times when I've gone my own way. Help me to embrace the truth and walk in it. Amen.

Further Reading

[The Day-for-a-Year Principle:](https://amazingdiscoveries.org/read/articles/the-day-for-a-year-principle)

<https://amazingdiscoveries.org/read/articles/the-day-for-a-year-principle>

[The Story of Daniel the Prophet:](https://amazingdiscoveries.org/ebook/168/show)

<https://amazingdiscoveries.org/ebook/168/show>

Answer Key

1. Israel's enemies were often cruel and merciless in their treatment of Israel.

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Psalm 137:1-5

Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones. Jer 50:17

2. Yes, the Babylonians understood that God was punishing Israel.

All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, even the Lord, the hope of their fathers. Jer 50:7

3. We must be faithful through the trial, but God will deliver His people.

For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Jer 30:3-9

4. Babylon was to be overthrown and was never again to be inhabited.

Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eyes shall not spare children.

And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged. Is 13:17-22

Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple.... Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. Jer 51:11, 28

5. God's people were warned to flee. "*Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.*" Jer 51:6
6. Using the holy vessels of God's temple at his drinking party brought judgment upon Belshazzar and his kingdom. (See Gen 15:16, Mt 23:32.)
7. They were troubled and astonished because they didn't know what the writing meant.
8. Daniel was forgotten by the king and his courtiers.
9. Answers will vary. It seems he didn't believe all he'd heard about Daniel because he said, "If...".
10. Daniel reminded Belshazzar of his grandfather's experience with God to show him that he was accountable to God.
11. We are accountable for what we know and should act accordingly.
12. a-i) 130, a-ii) 70, a-iii) 10 a-iv) 210 shekels
 - a. 210
 - b. 12
 - c. 2520
13. 2520
14. a) 20, b) 2520
15. a) 360, b) 360, c) 2520
16. An angel told him that the next kingdom would be Medo-Persia.
17. Answers will vary. Belshazzar's honors were worthless to Daniel.

References

1. Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 36.
2. Ibid.
3. *Stephen N. Haskell, The Story of Daniel the Prophet (Battle Creek, Michigan: Review and Herald Publishing Company, 1901), page p. 75-76.*
4. Ibid. page 76,77.
5. Stephen N. Haskell, *The Story of Daniel the Prophet (Battle Creek, Michigan: Review and Herald Publishing Company, 1901), page 77.*
6. PK 523.
7. Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, 96.
8. *Story of Daniel the Prophet, S.N. Haskell page 79*
9. Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, 96
10. PK 522.
11. *Story of Daniel the Prophet, S.N. Haskell p. 86.*



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