

The Writing Is On The Wall

Daniel 5 (Living Bible)

² 5 Belshazzar the king invited a thousand of his officers to a great feast where the wine flowed freely. ³ While Belshazzar was drinking, he was reminded of the gold and silver cups taken long before from the Temple in Jerusalem during Nebuchadnezzar's reign and brought to Babylon. Belshazzar ordered that these sacred cups be brought in to the feast, and when they arrived, he and his princes, wives, and concubines drank toasts from them to their idols made of gold and silver, brass and iron, wood, and stone. ⁴ Suddenly, as they were drinking from these cups, they saw the fingers of a man's hand writing on the plaster of the wall opposite the lampstand. The king himself saw the fingers as they wrote. ⁵ His face blanched with fear, and such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him. ⁶ "Bring the magicians and astrologers!" he screamed. "Bring the Chaldeans! Whoever reads that writing on the wall and tells me what it means will be dressed in purple robes of royal honour, with a gold chain around his neck, and he will become the third ruler in the kingdom!" ⁷ But when they came, none of them could understand the writing or tell him what it meant. ⁸ The king grew more and more hysterical; his face reflected the terror he felt, and his officers too were shaken. ⁹ But when the queen mother heard what was happening, she rushed to the banquet hall and said to Belshazzar, "Calm yourself, Your Majesty, don't be so pale and frightened over this. ¹⁰ For there is a man in your kingdom who has within him the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father this man was found to be as full of wisdom and understanding as though he were himself a god. And in the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar, he was made chief of all the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers of Babylon. ¹¹ Call for this man, Daniel—or Belteshazzar, as the king called him—for his mind is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve knotty problems. He will tell you what the writing means." ¹² So Daniel was rushed in to see the king. The king asked him, "Are you the Daniel brought from Israel as a captive by King Nebuchadnezzar? ¹³ I have heard that you have the spirit of the gods within you and that you are filled with enlightenment and wisdom. ¹⁴ My wise men and astrologers have tried to read that writing on the wall and tell me what it means, but they can't. ¹⁵ I am told you can solve all kinds of mysteries. If you can tell me the meaning of those words, I will clothe you in purple robes, with a gold chain around your neck, and make you the third ruler in the kingdom." ¹⁶ Daniel answered, "Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means. ¹⁷ Your Majesty, the Most-High God gave Nebuchadnezzar, who long ago preceded you, a kingdom and majesty and glory and honour. ¹⁸ He gave him such majesty that all the nations of the world trembled before him in fear. He killed any who offended him and spared any he liked. At his whim they rose or fell. ¹⁹ But when his heart and mind were hardened in pride, God removed him from his royal throne and took away his glory. ²⁰ He was chased out of his palace into the fields. His thoughts and feelings became those of an animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys; he ate grass like the cows, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until at last he knew that the Most High overrules the kingdoms of men and appoints anyone he desires to reign over them. ²¹ "And you, his successor, O Belshazzar—you knew all this, yet you have not been humble. ²² For you have defied the Lord of Heaven and brought here these cups from his Temple; and you and your officers and wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, brass, iron, wood, and stone—gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all. But you have not praised the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny! ²³⁻²⁵ And so God sent those fingers to write this message: **'Mene,' 'Mene,' 'Tekel,' 'Parsin.'** ²⁶ "This is what it means: ²⁷ "Mene means 'numbered'—God has numbered the days of your reign, and they are ended. ²⁸ "Tekel means 'weighed'—you have been weighed in God's balances and have failed the test. ²⁹ "Parsin means 'divided'—your kingdom will be divided and given to the Medes and Persians." ³⁰ Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was robed in purple, a gold chain was hung around his neck, and he was proclaimed third ruler in the kingdom. ³¹ That very night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed, and Darius the Mede entered the city and began reigning at the age of sixty-two.

The Writing Is On The Wall: When God Crashes the Party (Daniel 5)

A. The Setting and the Scene

1. Everyone sometimes feels invincible, much like teenagers often do.
2. There are moments when one might engage in wrongdoing, believing they won't be caught.
3. Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, shared this sense of invulnerability in his fortified city.
4. He celebrated his victories, confident in the security of mighty Babylon.
5. However, Babylon was on the brink of divine judgment.

B. The Tragic Party

1. Belshazzar hosted a night of royal revelry with his friends.
2. Some suggest this feast aimed to boost morale as enemies camped outside.
3. The Medes had surrounded Babylon, waiting just beyond its walls.
4. Others believe the feast honoured a Babylonian god.
5. The night was filled with music, dancing, excessive drinking, and idol worship.
6. Babylonian culture was marked by a lack of restraint.

C. The Night of Triumph and Celebration Became a Night of Terror

1. The celebration was characterized by overindulgence and impropriety.
2. Sacrilege was a significant part of this event, with alcohol playing a role in the downfall.
3. Belshazzar and his guests drank from sacred vessels dedicated to God, committing blasphemy.
4. They felt safe in their sin, but judgment was imminent.
5. As Romans 6:23 states, "The wages of sin is death."

D. The Strange Handwriting on the Wall

1. Suddenly, the revelry halted as mysterious fingers wrote on the wall.
2. This divine intervention captured everyone's attention.
3. God revealed His judgment in a manner similar to how Babylonian kings issued decrees.
4. This act demonstrated that God is the true King.
5. Belshazzar was terrified, his knees knocking together in fear.
6. He called for interpreters, but his advisors had no answers.
7. The queen mother suggested summoning Daniel for guidance.

E. The Queen Offers a Suggestion

1. The queen mother recommended Daniel due to his reputation for wisdom and godliness.
2. She recognized the "spirit of the holy gods" in Daniel (v.11).
3. Unlike the other magicians and soothsayers, Daniel was set apart for his understanding of spiritual matters.
4. Despite being offered a third of the kingdom, Daniel refused any reward, emphasizing his service to God.
5. This raises a question for believers: Do others seek us for spiritual guidance?

F. The Prophetic Revelation

1. Daniel explained the events and laid charges against Belshazzar:
 - He had not humbled himself.
 - He had not learned from his father's mistakes.
 - He had desecrated sacred vessels.
 - He did not glorify God.
2. Daniel then interpreted the writing:
 - MENE: God had numbered the days of Belshazzar's kingdom, bringing it to an end.
 - TEKEL: Belshazzar had been weighed and found lacking.
 - PARSIN: Belshazzar's kingdom would be divided & given to the Medes & Persians.
3. Belshazzar was judged and found wanting, leading to the fall of his kingdom and his death.
4. The saying "the writing is on the wall" originates from this event, signifying impending doom.
5. This serves as a lesson that sin eventually catches up with everyone.

G. Conclusion

1. Reflect on whether God might "crash your party" at any moment.
2. Examine your life for hidden sins, acknowledging they will eventually surface.
3. God demands complete devotion and obedience.
4. Belshazzar's failure to glorify God led to his downfall.
5. We must choose to glorify, praise, and serve the Lord with our lives.

H. God Tried To Get Belshazzar's Attention By Writing On The Wall.

I. How Is God Trying To Get Your Attention?