

The Writing on the Wall

During a feast mocking God with temple vessels, a mysterious hand writes on the wall. Daniel interprets the message: God has numbered Belshazzar's kingdom and brought it to an end. That very night, the prophecy is fulfilled.

Daniel 5:1-31

CHARACTERS: Belshazzar, Daniel, Queen Mother, Darius the Mede

THEMES: Pride comes before the fall, God's judgment, Accountability, Prophecy fulfilled

KING BELSHAZZAR GAVE a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

This was not mere feasting—it was deliberate sacrilege, mocking the God of heaven by using His holy vessels for drunken revelry and praising gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking.

The king summoned his enchanters, astrologers, and diviners. 'Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.'

But none of the king's wise men could read the writing or tell the king what it meant. King Belshazzar became even more terrified, and his nobles were baffled.

The queen, hearing the voices, came into the banquet hall. 'There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him,' she said. 'In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians. This man Daniel has a keen mind and knowledge and understanding. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.'

So Daniel was brought before the king. Belshazzar said, 'Are you Daniel? I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.'

Daniel answered, 'You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.'

Then Daniel gave a sermon to the king: 'O Belshazzar, you knew all this about Nebuchadnezzar. You knew how God humbled him when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride. But you have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from His temple brought to you, and you drank wine from them while praising gods of silver and gold. But you did not honor the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways.'

Then Daniel read the inscription: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN.'

The interpretation: 'MENE means God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. TEKEL means you have been weighed on

the scales and found wanting. PERES means your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.'

Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom.

The hand had written judgment, and judgment came swiftly. The kingdom that Daniel had prophesied would succeed Babylon—the chest and arms of silver in Nebuchadnezzar's dream—had arrived.