

Writing on the Wall Explained

Daniel 5:13-31

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Daniel 5:1-12 Summary: King Belshazzar was partying with his nobles even using articles taken from the Jewish Temple when a mysterious writing on the wall occurred. This disturbed him greatly and he sought an interpretation but all his wise advisers could not even read it. The queen mother recommended Daniel who had success in rendering interpretations for the king.

What applications do we see from this discussion?

- God has a way of humbling the arrogant and blasphemers.
- God's will be done and He makes sure prophecy will be fulfilled exactly as foretold.

Writing on the Wall Explained, Daniel 5:13-31

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 captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?" ¹⁴ I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. ¹⁵ Now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. ¹⁶ And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

¹⁷ Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation. ¹⁸ O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. ¹⁹ And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. ²¹ Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts,

and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. 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 rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.

²² "But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. ²³ And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.

²⁴ Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.

²⁵ "And this is the inscription that was written:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

²⁶ This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; ²⁷ TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting;

²⁸ PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." ²⁹ Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

v13 – What does it tell us that the king had to ask if the man brought to him was Daniel?

This indicates that the king had nothing to do with Daniel up until this point.

Why does Daniel refuse the gifts of the king?

Given the interpretation of the writing on the wall, the king's gifts would be meaningless.

What was the history lesson Daniel gave the king?

Daniel told King Belshazzar that even though he knew of the history of King Nebuchadnezzar and his hardened heart and his living like a wild donkey, he did eventually acknowledge that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms... but not Belshazzar (v 22).

Whose hand wrote on the wall?

It had to be from the Creator-God Himself.

Why didn't God give Belshazzar a dream like he did his grandfather?

God does not speak by dream or vision to King Belshazzar because this is a man whom He does not intend to reach. God reached out to King Nebuchadnezzar via his dream and visions.

- God would not endure this impious, irreverent, profane, insult to heaven to continue, so He writes His message on the wall of the banquet hall

On what other occasion have we seen writing by the hand of God?

It is likely the One who wrote this message on the wall is the same One who wrote the message in the sand when they brought a sinful woman before Jesus (John 8:1-11)

How was Daniel able to interpret the writing on the wall and the wise men were not?

It was in a language that Daniel recognized, Aramaic. The language the Babylonians spoke was Akkadian. The interpretation would have been from the Holy Spirit to Daniel's human spirit.

What did "Mene" mean?

It meant numbered... the days of the Babylon Empire was over... their number was up.

What did "Tekel" mean?

It meant weighed... its value had been weighed in the balance and had been found wanting

What did "Parsin" mean?

It was the plural form of "Peres" meaning divided, torn in two pieces to be given to the Medes and Persians.

v29 – How did Belshazzar react to Daniel's interpretation of the writing on the wall?

- He conscience confirmed Daniel had read it right and given the correct interpretation.
- Daniel received his reward; a gold chain around his neck, a purple robe over his shoulders and made "third ruler" of Babylon (a short-lived promotion – one night).

Belshazzar's Fall, Daniel 5:30-31

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. ³¹ And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

What became of King Belshazzar?

- He was killed by the Medes and replaced by King Darius.

- The world Empires changed, as God said it would. The Empire of the "Silver Arms and Breast" of the great statue had come into existence, the Medes and Persians (539 B.C.).

It also fulfilled the prophecy in Jeremiah 50...

Jeremiah 50:1-3 – *The word that the Lord spoke against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. "Declare among the nations, proclaim, and set up a standard; Proclaim—do not conceal it— Say, 'Babylon is taken, Bel is shamed. Merodach is broken in pieces; Her idols are humiliated; her images are broken in pieces.' For out of the north a nation comes up against her, which shall make her land desolate, and no one shall dwell therein. They shall move, they shall depart, both man and beast.*

And Isaiah 13, "*The burden against Babylon...*"

Isaiah 13:17-20 – "*Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, Who will not regard silver; And as for gold, they will not delight in it. Also their bows will dash the young men to pieces, And they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb; Their eye will not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, The beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited, Nor will it be settled from generation to generation*

Note: the city of Babylon was not destroyed in 539 BC when the Medo-Persian Empire took over political power but it was abandoned after the Grecian Empire superseded them becoming a heap of ruins.

What observations can be made about God from this segment of Scripture and history?

- Sacred things that belong to God should be respected
- No person is exempt from God's judgment
- God is in control of Empires, Kings, and individuals
- The sudden end of the Babylonian Empire, which came on that fateful night, is typical of the end of Gentile power at the Second Coming of Christ
- We are all responsible to honor God according to what revelation we have
- God weighs the actions of all mankind
- If God held Belshazzar responsible for his actions and lack of belief, how much more will he hold enlightened man responsible in this day and age?

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