

## Daniel Chapter 5

### The Handwriting on the Wall

Scripture Reading: Daniel 5:1-16

It's 539 B.C., over twenty years since the events of chapter four. After forty three years of reign, Nebuchadnezzar is gone. Soon the glory of the kingdom of Babylon will be gone also. Nebuchadnezzar's son (Evil-Merodach, or Amel-Marduk ~ II Kings 25:27-30; Jeremiah 52:31-34) succeeded him. Two years later he was killed by a brother-in-law (Neriglissar ~ possibly Nergalsharezer: Jeremiah 39:3, 13). That brother-in-law ruled four years. Then he was killed in battle. Labashi-marduk, his son, became ruler, but was assassinated after only two months. One of his assassins was Nabonidus. Nabonidus (Son-in-law to Nebuchadnezzar) reigned seventeen years. Nabonidus ruled the Babylonian empire. He appointed his son, Belshazzar to rule the city of Babylon. Belshazzar was the coregent, serving as king when his father was away on military campaigns. This explains how Daniel was given the position of 3<sup>rd</sup> ruler in Babylon (Dan. 5:7, 29).

Chapter 5 explains what happened to Belshazzar while his father Nabonidus was captured in battle with the Medes & Persians for 4 months.

#### **A Blasphemous Feast    Vs. 1-4**

Over a thousand people are feasting and drinking. In the spirit of the moment, Belshazzar brings the special vessels that were captured from Jerusalem's temple and uses them to honor his false pagan gods. Though Belshazzar's father has been defeated in battle, yet he revels! The city of Babylon is considered to be impregnable. They had food stored enough for 20 years, but this mockery of God will not be ignored by God.

#### **A Burst of Fear    Vs. 5-9**

A supernatural appearance of a hand writing something on the wall completely changed Belshazzar's mood. The party is now ruined. The words are unintelligible, yet the affect is fear and trembling. Belshazzar must know what these words mean, but none of the regular counselors can help him.

#### **A Bad Future for Belshazzar    Vs. 10-29**

Belshazzar's queen had to inform him of the man Daniel. He evidently had been put aside, during the years of murder and treason within the kingdom. Oh, that Daniel's godly counsel had been desired by Nebuchadnezzar's successors! Daniel explains the mysterious words:

**Mene, Mene** (Mee'-nay) = God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end.

**Tekel** (Tee'-kel) = you are weighed in the balances and found wanting (lacking).

**Upharsin / Parsin (Peres - Pee'-res – the singular of Parsin)** = Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

This message wasn't for someday, maybe. It was a message for here and now! The city of Babylon was invaded that night and Belshazzar was killed.

## **A Big Future for Daniel Vs. 30-31**

One of the last things Belshazzar did was to reward and to promote Daniel. This brought no credit to Belshazzar, but God used it to advance Daniel and to use him in the next kingdom of the Medes and Persians. Daniel will now be dealing with a man named Darius. Chronologically, the next event is found in the ninth chapter, approximately one year later (see Daniel 9:1).

So, what is more significant – “The **handwriting** on the wall” or “The **hand** writing on the wall?”

Is it the bad news or the source of the bad news that should concern us the most? Belshazzar was frightened at the sight of a mysterious hand that was writing on the wall. The message was unclear, but the delivery of that message was unsettling. God’s messenger, Daniel, had to interpret that message. How strange that Belshazzar gained nothing from the interpretation, but merely promoted the messenger! What was more significant – the message of doom concerning Belshazzar’s life and his kingdom, or the message of Belshazzar’s failure to learn from his grandfather’s example and to humbly live in the fear of the one true God? He did not respond to the revelation of his pride and blasphemy. Rather, he merely honored the messenger. Respecting the prophet, while dishonoring God, gained Belshazzar nothing.

People become numb to the message of judgment and destruction. Many nod their heads and tip their hats to religion while completely ignoring the gravity of the Gospel message. We need to understand the awfulness of sin. The Gospel is good news to you, only if you respond with faith and repentance. The fact of impending death and the future judgment by a Holy God can only find resolution through faith in the Son of God who died for our sins. God wants to save us from our sin, not just save us from hell?

### **See the handwriting on the wall for all mankind:**

II Corinthians 5:10-11; Hebrews 9:27-28; Matthew 7:21-27; John 3:14-21; Acts 3:19; 17:30-31; 26:13-20; I Thessalonians 1:9-10; Galatians 1:3-4 cp. Romans 1:16-18, 28-32; 2:1-16; 3:19-20; 5:8-11; II Thessalonians 1:7-10; II Peter 2:4-9; 3:10-12; Revelation 20:10-15; 21:5-8; 22:12-17.