

# “THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL”

## Daniel 5

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### INTRODUCTION

Nearly 70 years has passed since Daniel and the other captives were taken into Babylon, and many years also since Neby had been “turned into a cow!” The list of Babylonian kings is as follows:

- Nabopolasser: 625-605 BC
- Nebuchadnezzar: 604-562
- Amel-Marduk—562-560 (Jehoiakim released under his rule—II K. 25:27ff)
- Neriglissar: 560-556 (Assassinated his brother-in-law Amel-Marduk)
- Labashi-Marduk: 556 (Killed by conspirators)
- Nabonidus (556-39)

Verses one and two have raised some historical questions.

- 1) Who is Belshazzar—did he even exist? (His name has been found in historical records.)
- 2) How can Belshazzar be king when we know from historical records that Nabonidas was king?
- 3) How can he be called Neby’s “son” when he was from a different dynasty?

We should also note a matter of chronological interest: Daniel saw the visions of chapters 7 & 8 **twelve years** before the events of this chapter occurred (553 BC when Belshazzar took his position as regent.)

*The feast was in progress; revelry was high; raucous behavior; then, suddenly!!!*

The Handwriting on the Wall—lives have been weighed and found wanting.

**Time may be shorter than you think!**

#### I. THE FEAST OF INSOLENCE (1-4)

We know of similar great feasts held by the Persians, Greeks, etc.

The Purpose of the feast:

- **Bolster their courage**
- Reassert their faith in the Babylonian gods
- Demonstrate insolence against the God of Israel (note verse 22; consider the events of Daniel 4 which Daniel mentions in vv. 20-21)
- Note what **wine—alcohol**—can do to people!
- Compare false doctrine—using the holy things of God in a profane way.

- Compare also the phony use of spiritual things in hypocritical lives.

II. THE STRANGE INSCRIPTION (5-9)

- A. God's Response (5) (fingers of a man's hand, writing on the wall opposite the lampstand where all could see on the white plaster)
- B. The King's Reaction (6, 9) (brightness—color—gone from his face; alarming thoughts; hip joints go slack; knees knock together!)
- C. The Recall of the wise men—cf. under Neby (7-8)

**Note that the ungodly can never understand God's holiness!**

III. THE QUEEN'S IDEA (10-16)

Her identity—the Queen Mother

- A. Advice Given (10-12)—So often the godly are purposefully or conveniently forgotten.
- B. Advice Followed (13-16)

IV. DANIEL'S INTERPRETATION (17-29)

- A. Rejection of Rewards (17)—he would give a totally unbiased interpretation
- B. Review of the Past (18-21)

- 1. Neby was great due to God—but found that he was small (18-21)
- 2. You, Belshazzar, are small, but think you are great! (vv. 22-23)

C. Reminder of the Present (22-23)

- 1. You have exalted yourself against the Lord of Heaven.
- 2. You have shown sacrilege to His holy vessels from the temple.
- 3. You have praised blind, deaf, and ignorant idol-gods.
- 4. You have not glorified the only God who sustains your life and controls your ways.

D. Reading of the Inscription (24-28)

- 1. Mene=either mina—50 shekels—from a verb meaning “to number”
- 2. Tekel=possibly shekel—from a verb meaning “to weigh”
- 3. Upharsin=possibly half-shekels (peres—singular)—from a verb meaning “to divide”
- 4. Your kingdom is numbered and put to an end (26)
- 5. You have been weighed on the divine scales of justice and found deficient (27).
- 6. Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians (Paras—word play).

E. Results forthcoming (29-30)

- 1. Daniel's Reward (29)  
Purple—of royalty; gold necklace—wealth and honor; **3<sup>rd</sup> ruler in kingdom**—position right after his own!

2. Belshazzar's death (30)

**The honors of this world are short-lived and useless.**

3. Darius the Mede received the kingdom a about 62 years of age.

#### CONCLUSION

Is. 21:9—"Fallen, fallen is Babylon, and all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground."

Jeremiah 51:57-58. The city fell on *October 11 or 12, 539 BC* **as God Said!!**

Note the immorality and profanity of our day; the doctrinal deviation; luxuries and lust hold sway.

**Can you see the handwriting on the wall?**