

Handwriting On The Wall

Daniel 5:1-31

I. Introduction:

A. Handwriting On The Wall

1. The saying “the handwriting is on the wall” refers to a clear and unavoidable event.
2. Examples: Judgment for their wrong choices is imminent, unavoidable.

B. Belshazzar’s Sin

1. In this passage the handwriting was literally on the wall for Belshazzar that God’s judgment was coming and it was unavoidable.
2. Context: Belshazzar falls at the end of the Babylonian line of kings.
 - (1) – Nabopolassar
 - a. He was the Babylonian king who defeated the Assyrians. He took Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. He was the father of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - (2) – Nebuchadnezzar
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar wasn’t very 1st king, but he took the empire to its greatest heights
 - b. In chapter 4 God humbled Nebuchadnezzar for his pride. He was saved after God humbled him. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. after ruling for 43 years.
 - (3) – Evil Merodach
 - a. He was Nebuchadnezzar’s eldest son. He ruled for two years and was assassinated by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar.
 - (4) – Neriglissar
 - a. The brother-in-law ruled for 4 years. He died, appears of natural causes.
 - b. His son Labashi-Marduk came to the throne.
 - (5) – Labashi-Marduk
 - a. He was young and only ruled for two months. He was assassinated by Nabonidus
 - (6) – Nabonidus
 - a. Nabonidus ruled for 17 years. Babylonian kingdom was destroyed during his reign
 - b. Belshazzar: He was the eldest son of Nabonidus who made him co-regent and left him to rule in the city of Babylon.
 - c. Nabonidus didn’t live in Babylon most of the time he was king.
 - d. Belshazzar was the number 2 man in the kingdom because his father was still alive

II. A Party (Daniel 5:1-4)

A. Sin Is Never Stagnant

1. A person who pursues sin will never be happy with their degree of sin.
2. They’ll want more sin, worse sin. Sin is always connected to a downward path.
3. Nebuchadnezzar was guilty of pride & blasphemy.
4. God humbled him with a mental disorder for 7 years.
5. Belshazzar is not only guilty of pride; he was guilty of:
 - a. Drunken Debauchery
 - b. Idolatry
 - c. Blasphemy against the true and living God.
6. The last of the three is the worst.
7. Nebuchadnezzar took sanctified gold & silver vessels out of the temple in Jerusalem.
8. He brought them back to Babylon. Belshazzar had those vessels brought into the party so he, his wives, his concubines, and his guests could drink out of them.

9. They used vessels, sanctified & set apart for worship of the true God, to worship idols.
10. His blasphemy was offensive to God.
11. Application: If living sinful lifestyle, sin will always get worse, it's a downward path
12. Belshazzar followed the path of sin to its natural conclusion, death.
13. God calls us to repent of our sin & be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. (Matt. 7:13-14)

III. God's Response (Daniel 5:5-9)

A. A Hand Appeared.

1. >1,000 people were in a large banquet hall drinking & engaged in immoral conduct.
2. Archaeologists have discovered a large room, like I described here, in Babylon's ruins.
3. Without warning, a disembodied hand appeared & wrote on the plaster of the wall.
4. The party noise died off & there was silence as the king & the party participants watched this hand writing a message on the wall.
5. The impact on Belshazzar was immediate.

(1) – His Countenance

- a. His countenance changed; his laughter & frivolity changed.
- b. His face went pale with fear.

(2) – Weak Kneel

- a. The king was seated in a place where he could overlook the crowd & party events.
- b. He stood when he saw the hand. In fear & uncertainty, his legs began to shake.
- c. Like kings before him, Belshazzar was superstitious & knew message wasn't good.
- d. Application: Sin seems like no big deal until God comes pronouncing judgment.
- e. Belshazzar was big man on campus until God stepped in bringing reality to the party

B. Called In The Experts

1. Like Nebuchadnezzar did before him, Belshazzar called in the wise men of Babylon.
2. They were tasked with reading the message & interpreting it.
3. Tremendous reward was offered for a person who could read & interpret the message.
4. Offering the person to be “**third ruler**” in the kingdom reminds us he was co-regent & technically he was the 2nd ruler in the kingdom.
5. Wise Men's Failure: Like Nebuchadnezzar's wise men, none could read or understand the message from God.

IV. A Person Recommended (Daniel 5:10-12)

A. The Queen Mother

1. The queen's identification wasn't told, but she was old enough to know about Daniel.
2. She told Belshazzar that Daniel could interpret dreams and things hard to understand.
3. Daniel: Apparently Daniel was no longer prominent or active in government matters.
4. Perhaps he was retired or was demoted after Nebuchadnezzar died.

V. Daniel Appears Before the King. (Daniel 5:13-16)

A. Pride and Arrogance

1. Belshazzar was not humbled by this divine message. His address to Daniel, an elder statesman was derogatory & disrespectful. However, he made the same offer to Daniel.
2. Read & interpret the message & I'll reward you greatly to 3rd position in the kingdom.

VI. Daniel's Reply (Daniel 5:17-24)

- *Daniel replied respectfully, but scolded the young king in the process.*

A. Belshazzar's Sin

- *Young king's sin was pride that led to blasphemy with the sanctified vessels of the temple.*

1. – You knew all this.
 - a. Knowing what happened to Nebuchadnezzar because of pride, you lifted up your heart in pride anyway.
 - b. Application: To know and sin anyway is the height of rebelliousness against God.
2. – Blasphemy
 - a. You have defied God and He has responded to your arrogance!

VII. Interpretation (Daniel 5:25-31)

A. The Babylonian Kingdom will end.

1. In fact, it would end that evening in a matter of hours.
2. You have personally been called to account before God.
3. God has measured your righteousness and you came up short. (**Romans 3:23**)
4. Belshazzar needed to be saved by faith, but he would not.
5. He was measured by God and found guilty.
6. The Medo-Persian army was outside Babylon's walls, diverting the river running through the city, so they could come in under the walls.
7. The walls of Babylon were unguarded. The enemy gained access to the city without a fight. The year was 339 B.C.

B. Two Lessons

1. – Sin Blinds Us
 - a. Sin blinds us to the danger it brings. Sin always brings death & destruction in the end
 - b. Belshazzar was having a party & the walls of the city were unguarded while the enemy was nearby.
 - c. When sin rules our lives, the enemy is close, seeking to destroy us & we don't see it.
2. – Stored Up Wrath
 - a. There are times when sin abounds & it seems like God is doing nothing.
 - b. God is offended by all sin. It is by grace that God allows time for repentance.
 - c. Those who waste their opportunity of grace, store up to themselves the wrath of God