

Seeing the Handwriting on the Wall - Part One

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One of the great losses in our secularized culture is the lack of Biblical reference and understanding among people. Most everyone understands what is meant when a person says, "Well, they've seen the writing on the wall", but very few understand that such a term is straight out of the Bible and is pregnant with meaning.

It means essentially "The gig's up", "the party's over", "the great warning has been given", and "judgment is coming". In short it means, "God is patient just so long with our foolishness and our wickedness. At some point He intervenes in the nonsense of men to stop the madness." Let's review just for a moment where we were when we last studied Daniel.



Remember when we last looked at Daniel almost six weeks ago, we saw Nebuchadnzzzer (Nebuchadnezzar II) having a dream about a magnificent tree that is cut down. That tree represented him and he suffered some sort of insanity and he spent seven years out among the beasts of the field eating grass and sleeping outside until the point when ¹⁾ **his sanity was restored and he acknowledged his sin of pride**. He acknowledged that there is no God like Yahweh, the God of the Jews.

Well, twenty years have passed since chapter 4 and seventy years have now passed since Daniel and his friends were taken into captivity. Daniel is almost 90 years old. Nebuchadnezzar has died, and a series of kings have come and gone replacing him.

First came Amel-Marduk (means "foolish Merodach") who was the son of Nebuchadnezzar II. He was assassinated by his brother-in-law Neriglissar who reigned for a mere four years. (his son Labashi-Marduk takes the throne for 9 months)

Then Nabonidus (son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar). His son was Belshazzar. They were co-rulers, ruling simultaneously. Nabonidus liked being away from the palace

making war. He was always off fighting the Medes and Persians. They eventually captured him so Belshazzar was left to rule and reign alone.¹

Belshazzar was a young despot. Historians tell us that he was a typical rich spoiled brat who was raised thinking the world revolved around himself. He used his wealth and privilege to shower favors upon himself. He was a drunkard. He was sexually promiscuous. In short he was a horrible ruler who was on watch as the Babylonian civilization was thrown into the ash can of history.

I want to mention that we should not be confused by the reference to "Nebuchadnezzar's son". He was in fact his grandson. In the language in which this was written, any ancestor was referred to as a father. They didn't have a word for grandfather or a grandson. Any ancestor is just called a "father".

If you're wondering where Daniel is in all of this I might add that Evil Merodach had exiled all of Nebuchadnezzar's confidants. So Daniel was off somewhere in the kingdom living in obscurity. We will not see him reappear until this account. Stand with me as we read God's Word.

Daniel 5:1-6

5 Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. **2** While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which *had been* in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. **3** Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which *had been* in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. **4** They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone. **5** In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lamp stand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. **6** Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.

Please be seated.

I want you to think of this morning's lesson as the first part of a two part series.²

1-4 ²⁾ **The Feast of Belshazzar - This week**

5-9 The Finger of God - Next Week

Rest of Chapter 5 - The Judgment of God

¹ "List of Kings of Babylon." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 14 Jan. 2017.

² Jeremiah, David, and Carole C. Carlson. *The Handwriting on the Wall*. Dallas: Word Pub., 1992. Print.

Let me point out three things about the Feast of Belshazzar:



1. ³ **First we can see the SENSUALITY OF THE FEAST** According to historians this annual feast to the god Bel was a solemn feast. The hall where this took place has been excavated. It was 60' X 172 '. Archeologists tell us that all the accomplishments of Babylon were painted on the walls. We know it was sensual because of what the text tells us.

Daniel 5:1 tells us that "He drank wine before a 1000 of his lords." This means that Belshazzar had put himself up on a platform. Kings never drank publicly. But Belshazzar was raucous and he's invited everyone to see him. ³



Secondly, concerning the sensuality, we see that he also invited all of the women to the drunken party. It was the custom in that day that this was just not done. We are told in the Book of Esther that when King Ahasueres was entertaining his men, Vashti the queen was entertaining the women separately. Belshazzar had to do it his way.

Scripture tells us he brought in all the women and drank with them as well. I can remember two pieces of scripture that speak to Belshazzar's conduct. Proverbs 34:1-4 says, "It is not for Kings or Princes to drink strong drink" and then in Isaiah 5:25...we read, **22 4)Woe to men mighty at drinking wine,** Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, **23** Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away justice from the righteous man! Folks, according to the biblical and historical record the King and his men drank themselves under the table and with all of the women it broke out into a drunken orgy. Belshazzar was determined this would be a party to be remembered.



2) **SACRILEGE OF THE FEAST** - Notice the sacrilege of the feast. V. 2 While he drank of the wine he commanded that the Holy

mentary; Daniel. Nashville, TN: Broadman &

Vessels of the Jews be brought out from where they were hidden. Remember Nebuchadnazzar had taken the Jews and their Holy Vessels. When you took the holy things of your enemies' gods it was a put-down. In Belshazzar's drunkenness ⁵⁾ **he asked that the Holy Vessels be brought to him so that he could desecrate them.** He wanted to drink to the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and of stone, and he wanted to do so out of the holiest of vessels dedicated to the God of the Hebrews. This is going to be enough for God. Someone has described Belshazzar's mental state as follows:

"The moment had arrived for this maggot of a man to do a god defying act. The erotic dancing suddenly stopped. The musicians put their instruments down, and the house lights were turned up. Belshazzar took the goblet and filled it with wine from his own private wine supply. And smirking with arrogance he slopped the crimson liquid to his lips. As it dribbled down his beard and he glared around the room with the 'there I've done it look' as if possessed by the devil he was honoring. He has done it, a thousand people gasped! Suddenly a cheer broke out blasphemously applauding the daring act. Belshazzar sunk down in his elegant seat. The music and the erotic dancing began again. Ah.....at last he felt like a man". end of quote. ⁴

Dr. Sise in his book "Voices of Babylon. Explains, "This was as far as it could go. God was done. This was the end. That is the sacrilege of the feast. Imagine how we would feel if someone came down to our communion table, walked in here drunk, poured a shot of whisky into one of our communion cups and then made a toast to the devil.

3) THE SURENESS OF PROPHECY -Lastly, I want to talk about the fortelling of the feast. This is important because it reminds us that ⁶⁾ **God's Word is true and dependable.** Jeremiah prophesied in detail what would happen: Look at Jeremiah 50:1-3, 9 Scripture tells us that Babylon would be conquered by a nation from the north. Listen as I read,

50 The word that the Lord spoke against Babylon *and* against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. **2** "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.' **3** 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. **10** And Chaldea shall become plunder; All who plunder her shall be satisfied," says the Lord.

You may want to look up Jeremiah 51:11 and 28 that specifically tell the reader that the Medes and the Persian will bring Babylon to ruin.

⁴ Ibid; Dr. David Jeremiah

And remember when we learned that the walls were 300 ft tall and 87 feet wide. Listen again to what God's Word has to say. Jeremiah 58 describes how those walls will be utterly broken.

And lastly, prophecy tells us that Babylon will fall by military cleverness and the drying up of water:

51:36 Therefore thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will plead your case and take vengeance for you. I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry.



They took great precautions. They had stored enough food and water to last for 20 years. Cyrus had decided to besiege the city but he couldn't do it forever. So he formulated a plan.

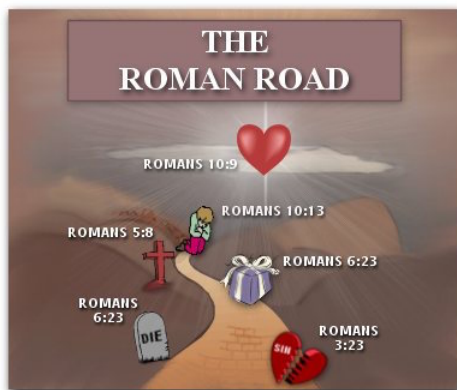
Cyrus took his best men and divided them in half. Half were at the place where Euphrates came in, and half where the Euphrates went out. Then

with the rest of the men he built a sluice canal to divert the river.

So on the night of the orgy, Cyrus diverted the river. The waters began to recede and one of the soldiers got in and realized he could walk under the wall where the river entered the city. And the army of Cyrus walked in on the river bed into the city.

THE BIG IDEA TODAY IS: God wants us to have a relationship with Him. This involves getting our eyes off of self (like Belshazzar) and putting them on Him. Secondly, God wants us to seek His will for our lives and to do it.

1) So how do we have a relationship with Him?



1. Realize that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23
2. Understand that the wages (the earned result) of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)
3. Realize that Jesus is your and mine only hope for salvation. Romans 5:8 says that God loved us even while we were yet sinners, and Christ died for us.

4.. Believe in your heart that Jesus is your only hope for salvation. (Romans 10:13 tells us that "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

2) How do we obey Him? Start with the Great Commandment, read His Word, and do what the Holy Spirit tells you to do. -

Let us Pray

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