

Seeing the Handwriting on the Wall - Part Two

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The Finger of God



Last week we looked at the Fleshly Feast of Belshazzar. It was a sensuous feast. It was a sacriligious feast. We studied this maggot of a man doing all that he could do to defy the God of Israel and to desecrate those things that were the holiest objects used in worship. We were reminded that God used the Babylonians to bring judgment on His people when they became so sinful they were indistinguishable from the culture in which they lived. However, today we will see God calling the Babylonians out and we will see the finger of God making a pronouncement of judgment on the Babylonians forever. Belshazzar mocked the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The reward that he reaped was that under his watch the great Babylonian Empire disappeared into the dust bin of history.

You see, God had just about enough of Belshazzar's foolishness. Remember in the fleshly feast Belshazzar and his thousand nobles and their women revved the party up until they were in a drunken orgy. Then Belshazzar called for the holy Jewish articles that had been taken from the Temple and he and his concubines drank from the cups that God had designed. Let us stand and read God's word as we follow the story. Please stand in honor of God's Holy Word.

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. **7** The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise *men* of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and *have* a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

In that same hour (when the Persians and the Medes are flowing in) as Cyrus and his men came pouring in under the 300 ft high walls, the finger of a hand appeared in the hall where the party raged. And in that moment ¹⁾**God writes over all the accomplishments of the Babylonians that had been painted on the wall.**

The text is interesting because it says the fingers wrote the message on the wall but Belshazzar saw only the "back of the hand". It was interesting to me because God only let him see the back of his hand. Think about that hand for a minute. God wouldn't even let Belshazzar see the palm of his hand. It occurred to me that this same hand is the hand that fashioned man out of the clay. Genesis 2:7. This is the same hand that closed the ark when Noah and his family were safely on board. Genesis 7:1-14. This is the same hand and the same fingers that wrote on the tablets of stone and gave that law to Moses. Exodus Ch 34. This is the same hand that wrote on the ground before a woman who had been accused of adultery. John Chapter 8. This is the same hand that was stretched out and nailed to a cross, and finally it was the same hand in which the doubting Thomas put his finger and cried out, "My Lord and My God." John 20:28

The text tells us that this same hand wrote that message and struck terror into the heart of this arrogant king. The text tells us, "The king's countenance changed." He was so distraught he couldn't stand up and he couldn't sit down. You see people, God keeps score. God knows everything that anyone has ever done to you (or that you have done to others). Belshazzar's time had come. This was the hour of his judgment.

Then in verse 7 we see Belshazzar call out once again for his wise men to tell him the interpretation of the dream. I'm not sure what he was thinking but remember guys, this group is 0-3. They've never been able to interpret anything. And why is that? Well the Apostle Paul tells us, 2) **"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.** (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Then Belshazzar promises the wisemen the things that the world promises all of us: To be clothed in purple, to have a gold chain, and to be the "third ruler in the kingdom". Isn't that what we are promised by the world? You see, 3) **the only thing the world can give us is Possessions - Position - Power** Let's read on with me verses 9, 10, and 11.

- 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew *even* paler, and his nobles were perplexed.
- 10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale.
- 11 "There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father 'the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans *and* diviners.
- 12 "*This was* because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned

and he will declare the interpretation.”¹

Verse 10 - Look at what the queen says, "There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods".. This queen was probably not the wife of Belshazzar because his wife would have been down at the orgy. This was most likely the Queen mother (The daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and the wife of Nabonidus). She comes in the hall and she begins to recall the ministry of Daniel as she remembered it happening.

We can tell from this that Daniel is far away and is out of the picture. He was probably demoted. When Belshazzar came to power, he probably put Daniel out of sight and out of mind. But, the Queen mother had never forgotten Daniel's role in the life of her father.

Three times she reminds Belshazzar that Daniel had been instrumental in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. She's telling him that he needs to take note of what she is saying.

Let me pause for a moment and say that this should really make us think about our own lives as Christians. 4) **When you leave earth what will people remember about you?**

1. 5) She remembered that there was a **special** man. In her mind there was a man among men and that man was Daniel. His ministry had made such an impact on her that she immediately thought of him. His influence was enduring.
2. Secondly, she remembered that Daniel was a **spiritual** man. Daniel was a man in whom was the "spirit of God". Oh how I hope that when I'm in my 5th quarter, you guys and others will be able to remember me as a spiritual man.
3. Thirdly she remembered that Daniel was a **superior** man of excellence. He was above others in his character. Listen how she says, "He's a man filled with enlightenment. He's a man of understanding. He was a man of wisdom and knowledge."
4. Lastly she tells Belshazzar that Daniel was **skillful** because he revealed mysteries and he RESOLVED DOUBTS. He could go into the heart of a problem. And she knew that in the midst of all of this madness, there was man that was a godly man who could make sense of it all. She's telling Belshazzar, "Son, you're in over your head and Daniel is the only one who can help you."

14 - So, Belshazzar ushers him in. The king's in there with that holy chalice in his hand and Daniel comes in and Belshazzar asks him, "Say, you're not the same Daniel that came when we brought these vessels from the Temple in Judah are you?"

¹ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.* (1995). (Da 5:9–12). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Don't you see what's happening. Daniel is not in front of Belshazzar. This is Belshazzar in front of Daniel. Belshazzar is on trial.

15 - Belshazzar reports that he's out of options. He figures he'll call on God.

16 - He tells Daniel that he'll reward him if he'll tell him the meaning of the inscription. And as I said above, he offers Daniel - Position - Possessions - and Power

17-29 - Daniel has no sympathy for the Belshazzar. He doesn't love Belshazzar like he did old King Nebuchadnezzar. Remember how we read that Daniel's heart was sad when he told old Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the dreams. He said something like, "Oh King Nebuchadnezzar, I wish the things that are going to be done to you would instead be done to your enemies." But, Daniel had no love for Belshazzar. Why? Because Belshazzar had desecrated the sacred things of Israel and had dared to profane the holiness of his God.

Daniel knew he was about to pronounce the fall of Babylon itself.

I imagine that Daniel looked at Belshazzar with something between pity and disgust and he addresses the king. Let's look at the dialogue.

1. Let me paraphrase his answer, "No king, you keep your gifts. I don't want them and I don't need them. Keep your stuff, your prestige, your power, and your possessions because these things don't mean anything to a man of God. You foolish man, don't you remember hearing about how God took down your grandfather because of his pride, and look at you.... you've outdone him beyond measure." He points his finger at Belshazzar and he says in v.22 "But THOU hast not humbled thy heart though thou knewest all of this." He knew it all but he chose to sin.

He did this sacrilege not by accident, but on purpose. He knew what he was doing and he wanted to do it. Did you know that God judges us by what we know? Heb 10:29 says, "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? "

Daniel (remember his name means "God is my Judge") is saying:

1. Belshazzar I charge you with pre-meditated sin

2. I charge you with profane sacrilege. V. 23 You have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven... If you've not been listening let me say it clearly, you don't mock God and live long to tell about it.

3. Daniel charges him with violating the 1st commandment. "Thou shalt have no other gods but me." "Belshazzar you've violated that commandment"

V. 25-29 Then Daniel reveals the message.

6) **Mene Mene Tekel Upharsi (old southern preacher who interpreted it as money money tickles the parson.... I'll keep this for a future sermon on giving)**

Mene Mene - Belshazzar.... you're number is up. You are finished!

Tekel - You are weighed in a balance....it means "You're kingdom is weighed and it is too light. You don't measure up. There's no substance. You are a flake."

Upharsim - your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians.

You're weighed - You're lacking - Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians - "Belshazzar, you are finished".

The Fall of Babylon

Verses 30-31 Scripture presents the passing of the Babylonian kingdom in two verses. Historians tell us that it all happened on the 16th day of Tishri. That is October 11-12 in 539 BC. Babylon joined the kingdoms who have forgotten God which have ended up in the ash bin of history.

Hittites - Egyptians - Assyrians - Medo-Persians - Greeks - Romans - Spain - France German - Russia - Japan....I ask you today: Will America turn its back on God and follow these kingdoms into the ash bin of history? I pray not, but I believe someday it will. Let's speak out while we are still free to speak.

Isaiah 40:15 says, " Behold, the nations *are* as a drop in a bucket, And are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing."

We think we're so great but we're just a drop in the bucket. This passage reminds us that the wicked nations will pass away. We too are just a drop in the bucket. We are like dust on a balance scale.

Isaiah 21:9 And look, here comes a chariot of men *with* a pair of horsemen!" Then he answered and said, "Babylon is fallen, it is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground.

Reader, you may not have a clue of what I am talking about this morning. If you do not, I know the way to avoid the wrath of God. Today is the day to put your confidence in Jesus' death on the cross for you. Do this and then follow the Holy Spirit's direction for your life.

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