

# The Book of Daniel

## *The Hand Writing on the Wall*

### CHAPTER 5

*Our Bible Class today will recount the (final) feast of Belshazzar.*

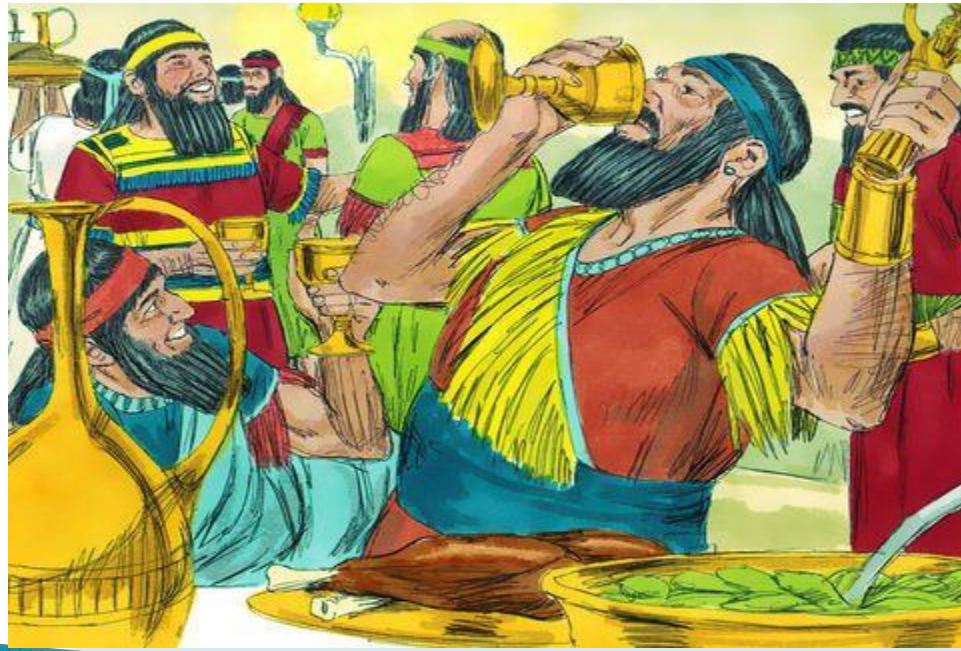
*These are the important discussion points:*

- 1. Belshazzar's vain foolishness;*
- 2. the mysterious hand writing on a wall and it's message; and,*
- 3. Daniel's interpretation*

*Introduction*



*As we saw last week, royal  
arrogance will incur God's  
wrathful judgment.*



*Introduction*

*We also must understand who is  
Belshazzar...  
...and who he isn't!?!*



*Introduction*



## *So, a little background:*

+ Nebuchadnezzar II dies in 562 BC.

+ He was succeeded by his son Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach) (562–560 BC); who was assassinated by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, who reigned from 560–556 BC; Neriglissar's son, Labashi-Marduk (556 BC) succeeded his father, but was assassinated after reigning for only nine months by those loyal to Nabonidas, which included his son, Belshazzar.

# *Introduction*

## *So, a little background:*

- + Nabonidas (556–539 BC) was an Assyrian, not of the royal lineage of Nebuchadnezzar.
- + Belshazzar ruled as a co-regent (553–539 BC) with Nabonidas, his father, since Nabonidas spent most of his time in Tema, far to the south of Babylon, in the Arabian Desert.
- + Why? Due to religion! Nabonidas worship the god Sin; not the patron god Marduk, which made him quite unpopular!!

# *Introduction*



## *So, a little background:*

- + Due to Nabonidus' unpopularity, he installed his son, Belshazzar as his co-regent in 553 BC. According to reliable Babylonian records, Nabonidus returned to Babylon ca. 546 BC.
- + During Belshazzar's impious feast, Nabonidus was leading the Babylonian army against the Medo-Persian army led by Cyrus the Great.

*Introduction*

## *So, a little background:*

+ At the Battles of Opis (Sep, 539 BC) and Sippar (October 9, 539 BC), the Babylonian army was defeated...and as with most despots, Nabonidus flees into the desert.

He later has a change of heart and surrenders to Cyrus the Great after the fall of Babylon and the death of his son, Belshazzar.

# *Introduction*



## *So, a little background:*

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*Intro*

+ According to Jewish law, it was sacrilege to remove the sacred vessels from the Temple and even a greater sin to use them for other than holy purposes. To compound the blasphemy, Belshazzar commanded that all who drank from the vessels worship the images of the gods who were displayed in the hall. Little did Belshazzar realize this act would bring swift, severe, and lasting judgment upon him!



*Daniel 5:1-12*



+ What is recorded next is one of the most famous passages of Holy Scripture. Note that the handwriting was in the plaster which enabled all to see it clearly and the message was not only for the king, but for all who participated in the sacrilege. The message brought a look of horror on the face of Belshazzar. The language used to describe Belshazzar's physical reaction is very descriptive. He is scared. He calls his royal soothsayers, as did Nebuchadnezzar with the magicians and astrologers in Chapter 2.

*Daniel 5:1-12*

+ What Belshazzar saw, along with all present, was this:

מִנְאֵת קַלְפָּרִים

*Daniel 5:1-12*



# מנא תקל פרס

+ Belshazzar's "wise men" couldn't understand what the message meant. Oh, they could read the Aramaic; yet, what is written is not in order and, therefore, could have many different interpretations. This became very confusing for them. Which may have led them to disagree and argued over the proper meaning.

*Daniel 5:1-12*

# מנאתקלפרם

+ In reality, the wise men, being unbelievers, could not interpret God's Word. Since, to properly interpret His Divine Word takes humility, prayer, and above all, the guidance of the Spirit.



*Daniel 5:1-12*



# מנאתקלפרם

## THE QUEEN'S ADVICE

**"let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."  
(Daniel 5:12)**

The queen reminded Belshazzar that there was an exceptional person in his kingdom:

- He has the Holy Spirit ["the spirit of the gods/of God"]
- He has superior knowledge and understanding
- He is chief of the wise men
- He can interpret dreams, solve riddles and explain enigmas



Daniel had worked with Belshazzar at least until his third year as governor (Daniel 8:1, 27). However, the king didn't want to deal with someone who disturbed his conscience.

The queen was aware of the influence that Daniel exerted on her father. If anyone in Babylon could help Belshazzar, it was Daniel.

# מנאתקלפרם

[13–16] Belshazzar asked Daniel for the interpretation. He makes the same offer to Daniel as he made to the soothsayers. He is also forced to acknowledge that Daniel was being assisted by His God, the true God.

*Daniel 5:13-23*



# מנאתקלפרם

[17–23] Daniel first scolds the king by refusing to accept his reward; details how God had made Nebuchadnezzar great; and reminds Belshazzar about Nebuchadnezzar's downfall – *pride!*

Then a final rebuke: Belshazzar will receive punishment due to his arrogance before the Only True God.

*Daniel 5:13-23*

מְנֵא מְנֵא תֵקֵל וּפְרָסִין

+ Daniel tells the king the meaning of the words on the wall. The phrase—“MENE, MENE, TEK[E]L, UPHARSIN,” is made up of three Aramaic words.

They mean: “Numbered,” “Numbered”  
“Weighed” and “Divided.”

*Daniel 5:24-28*



# מִנְּא מִנְּא תִּקֵּל וּפְרָסִין



Daniel first tells Belshazzar that his days are numbered. But numbered twice! First, his day as ruler is numbered; secondly, his

very life is numbered.

*Daniel 5:24-28*



# מִנֵּי מִנֵּי תֵקֵל וּפְרָסִין



“Weighed” refers to God’s final judgment. The idea of weighing often has the meaning of judgment. Our courts of law use the symbol of the balance scale to show this concept.

Belshazzar’s deeds were weighed on God’s scale of judgment and he was found wanting...

*Daniel 5:24-28*



# מִנְיָא מִנְיָא תִּקְלָ וּפְרָסִין



Thus, he would be divided, just as a shekel can be divided – known as Peres. Peres, or the plural form: Pharsin, can also mean Persian(s). Therefore, Belshazzar will be

*“Divided!”* Belshazzar’s kingdom would now be divided between the Medes and the Persians.

*Daniel 5:24-28*

# מְנֵא מְנֵא תִּקֵּל וּפְרָסִין

+ It's interesting to note that the three Aramaic words, linguistically, are all puns on weights used at the time; and the order is not "correct." The point of this particular episode was to warn Belshazzar of impending doom. Since he refused to repent and to turn to the True God, his kingdom would now come to an end. This, again, is the judgment of God upon hard-hearted, unrepentant sinners.

*Daniel 5:24-28*



# מִנְיָא מִנְיָא תִּקְלָ וּפְרָסִין

+ Belshazzar gives Daniel royal clothes and proclaims him as a third highest ruler of Babylon; but, alas, the reign of King Belshazzar ends abruptly that very night! The Persians attack, swarm into Babylon, and Belshazzar dies at the age of 62 (*cf. Jeremiah 50:2–3, 24*).

*Daniel 5:29-31*

# Darius the Mede(?)

V.31: “And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.”

This verse fulfills prophecy:

- + Isaiah 45:1-5
- + Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10
- + Ezekiel 34:11-16



*Daniel 5:29-31*