

Character Study: Daniel
Part 5 – Belshazzar and the Writing on the Wall
Daniel 5:1-31

What's happening?

- Chapter 5 of Daniel picks up our story years after the death of King Nebuchadnezzar. A new king, named Belshazzar, was ruling over Babylon.
- King Belshazzar hosted a great feast in which people drank from vessels taken from the temple of the Lord and praised various false gods. At this feast, the king had an experience which terribly frightened him. He saw the fingers of a man's hand appear and write a message on the wall of the palace. (5:1-6)
- Terrified, the king called for someone to give its interpretation. Daniel was eventually brought in and told that he would be given great rewards and the third highest position in the kingdom if he could give the meaning. (5:7-12)
- Daniel explained how King Nebuchadnezzar had been humbled by God, but that Belshazzar still remained full of pride. Through his actions, the king had lifted himself up against the Lord of heaven. (5:13-23)
- The phrase on the wall was "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." Daniel explained MENE meant: "God has numbered your kingdom and finished it." TEKEL meant: "You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting." And PERES meant: "Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians." (5:24-28)
- Belshazzar rewarded Daniel as he had said, but later that night the king was killed. Darius the Mede took over the kingdom. (5:29-31)

What's God doing?

> Babylon had a new king, but a similar problem. Belshazzar, like Nebuchadnezzar, was full of pride. The God of heaven needed to teach this king who the true God was. This was a fulfillment of prophecy (Dan. 2) and another example of God's sovereignty over mankind.

What's to learn?

→ Daniel had experienced more blessings than this powerful king of Babylon. God's hand was on Daniel, but His judgment was on Belshazzar. Regardless of the riches this world may offer, we see the ultimate question in life is whether or not we are on God's side.